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Innovative Educational Design: The Development of Autonomous Schools

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Innovative Educational Design: The Development of Autonomous Schools

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ABSTRACT

Innovative Educational Design: The Development of Autonomous Schools

captures an educator's journey in developing an economically integrated, urban

Expeditionary Learning charter school, an autoethnography of an educator embracing an

entrepreneurial spirit and traversing the years prior to opening a school and obtaining

unanimous approval from the authorizing board of education. Autoethnography provides

the researcher with an opportunity to turn scholarly interests inward, bringing personal

experiences to center stage revealing the culture of founding school leaders. Similar to an

ethnographer describing the culture of a group of people and learning what it is like to be

a part of the group from the viewpoint of members of that group, the researcher describes

experiences designing an autonomous Expeditionary Learning charter school in an urban

environment in the Rocky Mountain region. Autoethnography adheres to the

anthropological and social approaches to scientific inquiry, providing opportunities for

the autoethnographer to reflect upon, analyze, and interpret story within the broader

sociocultural context. Personal memory data, self-reflective data, and external data were

utilized to explore the aspects of the researcher's experiences developing an

Expeditionary Learning charter school that would best support future education

entrepreneurs in designing autonomous schools. An additional purpose of this

autoethnographic study is to illuminate the problems and possibilities for preparing

effective school leaders and providing early career support to nurture their professional development. With insights into the researcher's experiences founding a downtown school, the author identifies important aspects of school design, including school culture, leadership, educational program, teaching, and governance and reveals the hidden competencies school leaders need to possess to succeed in an increasingly changing educational landscape. The author hopes that this autoethnography will reveal the complexities facing autonomous school leaders as they navigate state and district level authorization processes and, in the process, provide an opportunity for new knowledge, insight, and transformation for the author, the reader, and the field of choice and innovation in education.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

You may say that I'm a dreamer. But I'm not the only one.

–John Lennon

I have a dream for education. I believe there are many educators who share in my dream. We unite at conferences and presentations across the globe, sharing our passion for supporting the success of each and every child, incubating innovative ideas, and communicating inspiring success stories about what matters most: the precious lives we have been given the privilege to impact. Collaboration ignites the flame within us providing us with the energy to return to our individual work burning brightly. Together, these individual flames possess the ability to join together igniting a fire that burns so brightly it can brighten the darkest days and the dreariest circumstances. I dream that schools will be places where our youngest citizens can also burn brightly shining in their own unique and individual ways.

Figure 1: K-12 teachers engaged in professional development experiences emphasizing how the brain learns.

I dream of schools where every individual; including staff, children, families, and communities, is united by a common purpose. In an article titled, "The Question of

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Excellence," Marge Scherer reminds us that when you have a purpose, you know that everything you do counts. When individuals within the school community act as though everything they do counts and when they realize that they have the power to make a positive contribution to the lives of others, they act with intention. I refer to these leaders as "moving trains," which I define as an individual or organization who is highly motivated to lead, inspire, and elevate our profession by doing good work -- work that is good in quality, good for the soul, and good for the world. "Intentional teachers are thoughtful, reflective people who are conscious of the decisions they make and the actions they take; they live and teach by the principles and practices they value and believe in" (Miller, 2008, p. 4). When we consciously make decisions, our actions become more deliberate aligned with our purpose. Every interaction we have with students, colleagues, staff, administration, parents, and community members has the ability to make or break someone's day. When we make a conscious commitment to making their day, we commit to joining forces, celebrating our strengths as individuals, and utilizing these strengths to serve our community and to influence our world. Andy Hargreaves (2014) refers to these as uplifting actions. "Uplifting actions are infectious; their effects spread out and influence others. We uplift others when we uplift ourselves, and vice versa. We lift each other's spirits, raise each other up to higher moral ground, and surpass ourselves" (Hargreaves, 2014, p. 10). It takes a conscious commitment and deep self-knowledge to accomplish uplift. Most important to achieve uplift, we must be mindful of our actions, as they act as models for our students and influence those around us as Gandhi said, "You must be the change that you wish to see in this world."

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Dedicated to all spiritual activists, truth seekers, and peaceful warriors. Worldwide.

1st verse: Once upon a time not long ago / there was a boy who would grow and become a great soul / he lived in India and his name was Gandhi / he believed in human rights and he felt so strongly …

Chorus: Be the change that you wanna see / in the world, just like Gandhi
… you see, Gandhi-ji was a very great leader / but before all that he was shy and meager / as a young child he was just like you and me / before he became

Mahatma Gandhi / the word "Mahatma" it means great soul / and its inside of us just waiting to unfold / if you follow your heart and act real bold / next time it'll be your story that's told!

Chorus: Be the change that you wanna see / in the world, just like Gandhi[1]

We need to teach kids, through our actions and words, as well as through educational experiences that everything they do in the world counts that they can "be the change."

Figure 2: A second grade teacher gathers her students for instructional read aloud, aligned with their writing genre study, reading objectives, and character development goals. She helps them "choose to matter." With enthusiasm, passion, and excitement, she collaborates with instructional coaches, colleagues, and district leaders, opening her classroom to create a laboratory for learning.

I dream of schools where we place a greater emphasis on raising human beings than on raising test scores. As educators, we must have a common understanding of what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. We must also understand that we are professionals in a human field. As humans, we are all unique. As educators, we see their strengths and their challenges. We

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[1] To hear MC Yogi's "Be the Change," please follow the link: http://www.mcyogi.com/video/

provide children with chances to discover what they do best and then provide them with an expansive ecosystem of learning opportunities. In nature, science defines an ecosystem as a group of interconnected elements formed by the interaction of a community of organisms with their environment ("Ecosystem", 2015). In today's educational landscape, definitions of learning are being expanded as technology redefines our expectations of the learning experience. As a result, the term ecosystem of learning is used to describe "the combination of technologies and support resources available to help individuals learn within an environment" (Kelly, 2014). In an increasingly individualized educational system, we meet each and every child where they are at nurturing their development along a continuum of lifelong learning, customizing their educational experience around their individual needs and aspirations. We assess our learning objectives to inform future instructional decisions and celebrate success along the way. I dream that educators are empowered to engage in this work to "be the change."

I dream of a society where children are more familiar with poets than athletes, inventors than video games, scientists than movie stars. I dream that educators take their responsibilities incredibly seriously: acting with intention, acting as professionals who do better each day because of what they learned the previous day, and acting as if each child can and will make a difference in the world. I dream that each and every human being embraces an empowered stance on life, greeting each day with wonderment and joy, actively using their talents and passions to contribute to the world.

An Opportunity Arises

It is this dream that motivates and inspires me to wake up every day, eager to influence – to make a positive difference in the lives of others, and therefore in the world. It was this dream that inspired me to design an economically integrated school that serves students in a large urban area within the Rocky Mountain region. After 13 years in education, serving in a variety of roles from a K-6 teacher, gifted and talented facilitator, instructional coach, administrative intern, adjunct professor, and board member, the opportunity came to design the school of my dreams – to be unleashed from the confines of what was required by "the district" and to engage the community in the design process to create a school designed by families, for families. Two years later, I continue to wonder whether this was the right choice: Is the development of autonomous charter schools the answer to address the failures of our current public educational system? Until now, I thought it was.

The purpose of this research is to utilize autoethnography to investigate important events and processes that were significant in my development as the founding leader of an autonomous Expeditionary Learning charter school. The current body of research focuses on the theory of action (Miech, 1996), curriculum development (Weiss, 1995; Carnaghan, 2014), literacy development (Kirkpatrick, 2004), student achievement (Van Winkle, 2008), transformative learning (Logan, 2013), environmental education and sustainability (Riordan & Klein, 2010), professional development (Klein & Riordan, 2009, 2011), and day-to-day life in EL schools (Sharpswain, 2005; Heath, 2013). While research continues to emerge regarding Expeditionary Learning and the charter school

movement, little has been studied on the development of autonomous Expeditionary

Learning schools. As a result, this study expands upon the literature in Expeditionary

Learning by articulating my experience as an educational leader embracing an

entrepreneurial spirit to develop an economically integrated, urban Expeditionary

Learning charter school. The following serve as my research questions that guide this

autoethnographic study, including an accompanying clarification of terms:

Question One: What aspects of my experience developing an Expeditionary Learning

charter school would best support future education entrepreneurs in designing

autonomous schools?

Expeditionary Learning (EL) schools possess more than 20 years of experience

helping new and veteran teachers in all settings, building their "capacity to ignite each

students' motivation, persistence, and compassion so they become active contributors to

building a better world and succeed in school, college, career, and life" (Expeditionary

Learning, 2014). Public, charter, and innovation schools in the Rocky Mountain region

have adopted the Expeditionary Learning school model. According to the United States

Department of Education (2012), a public school is an institution that provides

educational services and has grade level configurations, teachers providing instruction,

located in one or more buildings or sites, has an assigned administrator, receives public

funds as primary support, and is operated by an education agency. Berman et al. (2000)

define a public charter school as a publicly funded school that is governed by a group or

organization under a legislative contract, or charter, with the state or jurisdiction. This

legislative contract provides charter schools with autonomy within structure. "Charter

schools are public, nonsectarian schools that do not have admissions tests but that operate under a written contract, or *charter*, from a local school board or some other organization, such as a state school board" (Nathan, 1996, p. xiii). The charter school movement has introduced competition into the education system and has inspired redesign efforts in neighboring public schools also seeking greater autonomy from district mandates. The Innovation Schools Act was passed in 2008 in the state where this research occurred. This Act provides a pathway for schools and districts to allow more autonomy to make school-level decisions, develop innovative practices, and better meet the needs of individual students (Colorado Department of Education, 2015). The Act allows a public school or group of public schools to submit an innovation plan to its' local board of education that is designed to increase student outcomes and strategically align the school's resources with their approach to teaching and learning. Once approved, school district boards of education must submit the innovation plans and waiver requests to the State Board of Education for approval.

These school models are spawning innovation efforts throughout the educational system. As a result of the increasing efforts to incubate innovation in education, I use the term autonomous charter school to support readers in making connections between this autoethnography and their work in autonomous schools, innovation schools, and charter schools. I use the words "incubating innovation" to describe both the conditions and process aiding in the development of an idea ("Incubate," 2015).

Education entrepreneurs or individuals possessing an entrepreneurial spirit often lead these innovative efforts. According to dictionary.com, an entrepreneur is "a person

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who organizes and manages any enterprise, especially a business, usually with considerable initiative and risk." In the literature review, I introduce the term "edupreneur" to capture the distinction between a business entrepreneur and an education entrepreneur.

As an advocate of constructivist learning, I believe in learning by doing. Throughout my life, my experiences have always been my greatest teachers. I believe it is by doing that we come to know others as well as ourselves and that we build our capacities growing in our knowledge of self. Combined, these things work synergistically to allow us to live with passion and influence others in positive ways that impact others and the world. I have always been a passionate educator and champion for children and believe education provides the greatest leverage in empowering individuals to become architects of lives that transcend the ordinary. Similar to an architect, individuals plan, design, and build their lives one experience at a time. As a result, I hope utilizing autoethnography will provide me with an opportunity to apply an analytic lens to my experiences as an educator and support current and future school leaders in "uplifting" the educational system (Hargreaves, 2014).

Question Two: How can my experience designing an autonomous Expeditionary Learning charter school illuminate the problems and possibilities for preparing future school leaders and providing early career support to nurture their professional development?

In 1991, there was not a single charter school in the nation (Nathan, 1996). According to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, charter schools are the fastest-

growing school choice option in the U.S. public education system. Over the past five

years, student enrollment in public charter schools has grown by 70 percent. While

research on charter schools continues to grow, a search for "charter schools and

autoethnography" on EBSCO HOST's Academic Search Complete provides no results.

This study aims to provide first-hand descriptions of my experiences designing an

economically integrated, urban school. By attempting to understand the significance of

my experiences in designing an autonomous charter school, I hope to address the

complexities facing autonomous school leaders as they navigate state and district level

authorization processes and, in the process, provide an opportunity for new knowledge,

insight, and transformation for the author, the reader, and the field of choice and

innovation in education.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Related Literature

This kind of innovative school…is an example of how all our schools should be.

–President Obama

In his first visit to a public school since his inauguration, President Barack

Obama, with First Lady Michelle Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, spent

the afternoon of February 9, 2009 at Capital City Public Charter School an Expeditionary

Learning school. President Obama explained the reason for his visit,

> A, we wanted to get out of the White House; B, we wanted to see you guys; but
>
> C, the other thing we wanted to tell everybody is that this kind of innovative
>
> school, the outstanding work that's being done here by the entire staff, and the
>
> parents who are so active and involved, is an example of how all our schools
>
> should be.

Deborah Bond-Upson, Expeditionary Learning Schools President and CEO, responded,

> President Obama has seen what we see daily at Expeditionary Learning Schools –
>
> students faces full of excitement and understanding about how and what they
>
> learn. With Secretary Duncan's leadership we anticipate real progress for
>
> rigorous, innovative schools like ours.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of Expeditionary Learning, including the

influence of Kurt Hahn's work and constructivist learning theory on the development of

Expeditionary Learning's theoretical framework, Expeditionary Learning Design

Principles and Core Practices. In the second section, I describe "Evidence of

Effectiveness" celebrates what we currently know about the effectiveness of the

Expeditionary Learning model. Last, I situate Expeditionary Learning within the context

of the nation's charter school movement.

Expeditionary Learning: A Comprehensive Overview

Expeditionary Learning (EL) arose from a grant composed by Outward Bound

and the Harvard Graduate School of Education awarded by New American Schools

Development Corporation in 1991. Expeditionary Learning has drawn its ideas and

practices from a variety of sources, yet the central practices and beliefs are rooted in the

life and work of Kurt Hahn (Farrell, 2000). Farrell cites the teaching practices central to

Expeditionary Learning, including

> picking projects that seem impossible to students and then accomplishing them,
> joining very high standards with the expectation that everyone is going to succeed
> and help others succeed, doing a minimum of instruction with a maximum of
> application, breaking down complex tasks into small steps, working in small
> groups, modeling what you are trying to teach, changing the context, gradually
> stepping back and letting the students take charge. (Farrell, 2000, p. 2-5)

These teaching practices -- "the commitment to service, the focus on bringing out the best

in people, the importance of craftsmanship, adventure, and active learning" -- define

Expeditionary Learning and are rooted in the life and work of Kurt Hahn (Farrell, 2000,

p. 7). Today, Expeditionary Learning is known as a comprehensive school model

"committed to creating classrooms where teachers can fulfill their highest aspirations and

students can achieve more than they think possible" (Expeditionary Learning, 2014b).

Expeditionary Learning partners with school districts and charter school boards to open

new schools and transform existing schools. At the time of this writing, the EL network

consists of more than 160 schools and 4,000 teachers serving 53,000 students in 33 states

(Expeditionary Learning, 2014b). The Expeditionary Learning model addresses every

aspect of the school; including curriculum, culture, pedagogy, assessment, school

structure, family relationships and community relationships (Cousins, 1995). In the EL

model, Outward Bound and constructivist learning theory combine to nurture the

development of students in the areas of scholarship, service, adventure, and character.

Expeditionary Learning: Design Principles

The Expeditionary Learning model is built upon ten design principles reflecting

the educational values and beliefs of Kurt Hahn, founder of Outward Bound. These

principles animate the EL school model for transforming teaching, learning, and the culture of schools.

1. The Primacy of Self-Discovery

Learning happens best with emotion, challenge, and the requisite support. People discover their abilities, values, passions, and responsibilities in situations that offer adventure and the unexpected. In Expeditionary Learning schools, students undertake tasks that require perseverance, fitness, craftsmanship, imagination, self-discipline, and significant achievement. A teacher's primary task is to help students overcome their fears and discover they can do more than they think they can.

2. The Having of Wonderful Ideas

Teaching in Expeditionary Learning schools fosters curiosity about the world by creating learning situations that provide something important to think about, time to experiment, and time to make sense of what is observed.

3. The Responsibility for Learning

Learning is both a personal process of discovery and a social activity. Everyone learns both individually and as part of a group. Every aspect of an Expeditionary Learning school encourages both children and adults to become increasingly responsible for directing their own personal and collective learning.

4. Empathy and Caring

Learning is fostered best in communities where students' and teachers' ideas are respected and where there is mutual trust. Learning groups are small in Expeditionary Learning schools, with a caring adult looking after the progress and acting as an advocate for each child. Older students mentor younger ones, and students feel physically and emotionally safe.

5. Success and Failure

All students need to be successful if they are to build the confidence and capacity to take risks and meet increasingly difficult challenges. But it is also important for students to learn from their failures, to persevere when things are hard, and to learn to turn disabilities into opportunities.

6. Collaboration and Competition

Individual development and group development are integrated so that the value of friendship, trust, and group action is clear. Students are encouraged to compete, not against each other, but with their own personal best and with rigorous standards of excellence.

7. Diversity and Inclusion

Both diversity and inclusion increase the richness of ideas, creative power, problem-solving ability, and respect for others. In Expeditionary Learning schools, students investigate and value their different histories and talents as well as those of other communities and cultures. Schools and learning groups are heterogeneous.

8. The Natural World

A direct and respectful relationship with the natural world refreshes the human spirit and teaches the important ideas of recurring cycles and cause and effect. Students learn to become stewards of the earth and of future generations.

9. Solitude and Reflection

Students and teachers need time alone to explore their own thoughts, make their own connections, and create their own ideas. They also need to exchange their reflections with other students and with adults.

10. Service and Compassion

We are crew, not passengers. Students and teachers are strengthened by acts of consequential service to others, and one of an Expeditionary Learning school's primary functions is to prepare students with the attitudes and skills to learn from and be of service.

Figure 3: Expeditionary Learning Design Principles

Expeditionary Learning: Core Practices

After seven years working to transform and establish quality schools, Expeditionary Learning wrote core practices to provide the concrete and practical guidance that teachers and school leaders need to breathe life into the EL Design Principles. Core Practices describe the inspirational success of the work of EL educators across the country and reflect EL's desire to strive for continuous improvement. The Expeditionary Learning Core Practices address five key dimensions of life in a school: curriculum, instruction, assessment, culture and character, and leadership.

Expeditionary Learning's approach to curriculum and instruction makes content and skill standards come alive for students by connecting learning to real-world issues and needs. The Expeditionary Learning model provides academically rigorous learning expeditions, case studies, projects, fieldwork, and service learning projects to children of all backgrounds and ability levels inspiring students to think and work as professionals do, contributing high-quality work to authentic audiences beyond the classroom. Expeditionary Learning emphasizes the following Core Practices (2011):

1. Mapping skills and content.
2. Designing learning expeditions that include: formulating guiding questions; selecting case studies; designing projects and products; incorporating fieldwork, experts, and service learning; producing high-quality student work; and teaching global skills and knowledge.
3. Planning and delivering effective lessons that include: differentiating instruction; utilizing culturally responsive pedagogy; teaching reading and writing across the disciplines; teaching mathematics; teaching science, social studies, and the arts; teaching and promoting fitness and wellness.
4. Building a community of learning, fostering character, and establishing structures for knowing students well.

Core Practice 1: Mapping Skills and Content

Teachers and school leaders work collaboratively to ensure that a set of school-wide, standards-based curriculum maps acts as the foundation for all planning and instruction. Specific standards, learning targets, and assessments are identified within each expedition. Concept maps describe a vertical sequence of learning expeditions and projects and they define the key content and skills that need to be addressed at each grade level and discipline. Highly efficacious teachers with the support of Expeditionary Learning School Designers develop these concept maps. They are revised and refined throughout the year to support student achievement. Each curriculum map is also designed with an intentional alignment to the rich resources available in the surrounding school community. Expeditionary Learning curriculum maps are focused on standards alignment, skills and concepts, and content to be learned and assessed within each expedition, ensuring that all students have access to a high-level curriculum.

Core Practice 2: Designing Learning

Designing learning expeditions that include: formulating guiding questions; selecting case studies; designing projects and products; incorporating fieldwork, experts, and service learning; producing high-quality student work; and teaching global skills and knowledge.

Learning expeditions are the signature Expeditionary Learning curricular structure. Examples include: "Building Homes for Families: Studying Houses to Learn About Our Community and the World" (kindergarten), "Kindergarten Tools: An Expedition into Tools and Their Uses" (kindergarten), "Gone Fishin': An Expedition into

the Life of Seth Green, the Life Cycle of Salmon, and the Genesse River Biome" (2nd Grade), "How Do You Get Money from a Stone? Rocks and Minerals as a Resource" (3rd Grade), and "Top Gear: Cars, Science, and Simple Machines" (5th Grade). Learning expeditions make content standards come alive for students. These long-term, in-depth studies offer real-world connections that inspire students toward higher levels of academic achievement. Learning expeditions involve students in original research, critical thinking, and problem solving, and they build character along with academic scholarship. They take multiple, powerful elements of the Expeditionary Learning model and join them together: guiding questions, kickoff experiences, case studies, projects, lessons, fieldwork, experts, service learning, and a culminating event featuring high-quality student work. All of these strategies can also be used independently, outside of full learning expeditions.

In EL schools, students typically engage in 1-6 learning expeditions per year. These learning expeditions range from 4-12 weeks in duration and comprise a significant portion of daily instructional time for students. All learning expeditions are interdisciplinary and integrate skills of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and research, as well as critical thinking, creative thinking, problem solving, and collaboration. Numeracy and other math skills are integrated when there are genuine connections. Learning expeditions are often constructed or customized by individual teachers or teaching teams and are refined and assessed for quality through school-wide structures that involve leadership and faculty in critique and support. Teachers plan backward, using the principles of Understanding by Design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) constructing

expeditions that begin with the end in mind and are centered on Common Core State Standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2015).

Through in-depth studies centered on engaging topics, students possess a depth of knowledge and immersion in content rich vocabulary, which supports English Language Learners, increases students' reading comprehension, and enhances the vocabulary students utilize in their written and oral language. These in-depth studies also provide opportunities for differentiation and enrichment for Gifted and Talented students.

Core Practice 3: Planning and Delivering

The planning and delivering of effective lessons that include: differentiating instruction; utilizing culturally responsive pedagogy; teaching reading and writing across the disciplines; teaching mathematics; teaching science, social studies, and the arts; teaching and promoting fitness and wellness.

Lessons are the building blocks of all curricular structures. Whether planning a single lesson or a series of lessons, teachers attend to each lesson with care to ensure engagement and achievement for every student. Effective lesson planning begins with naming clear learning targets, which articulate specific learning goals in student-friendly language (e.g., I can improve my score on the number game by working with my partner. I can use figurative language to paint a picture in my writing.). Teachers make decisions about which practices to use during lessons based on their professional knowledge of individual students, in order to support all students to make progress. They employ strategies to ignite student curiosity and document student understanding, and they maximize opportunities for student voice, critical thinking, and leadership. Thoughtful

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lesson design promotes student engagement, collaboration, and awareness of their learning process and growth. The utilization of effective instructional practices promotes equity and high expectations. Effective lessons foster character by inspiring each student to develop craftsmanship, perseverance, collaborative skills, and responsibility for learning. They promote critical thinking by asking that students make connections, perceive patterns and relationships, understand diverse perspectives, supply evidence for inferences and conclusions, and generalize to the big ideas of the discipline studied.

In EL schools, differentiation is a philosophical belief and an instructional approach through which teachers proactively plan to meet students' varied needs based upon ongoing assessment. Teachers utilize flexible groupings of students and design respectful tasks that allow for different approaches to the same goals. Each classroom builds a culture that honors diverse needs and holds all students accountable to the same long-term learning targets, putting equity at the center of the school's commitment and vision.

Core Practice 4: Building, Fostering, and Establishing

This core practice focuses on building a Community of learning, fostering character, and establishing structures for knowing students well.

Expeditionary Learning schools build cultures of respect, responsibility, courage, and kindness, where students and adults are committed to quality work and citizenship (Expeditionary Learning, 2011). School structures such as crew, community meetings, exhibitions of student work, and service learning ensure that every student is cared for

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and known, that student leadership is nurtured, and that contributions to the school and world are celebrated.

Collectively, these core practices describe actual practices documented in Expeditionary Learning schools across the country and are informed by the success stories of educators and Expeditionary Learning's areas of research and professional development (Expeditionary Learning, 2011). Through utilizing the Expeditionary Learning Core Practices, students and staff are supported to do better work and be better people than they thought possible: building a community of learning, fostering character, establishing structures for knowing students well, engaging families and the community in the life of the school, creating beautiful spaces for learning, and promoting adventure (Expeditionary Learning, 2011).

Expeditionary Learning: Evidence of Effectiveness

Borman, Hewes, & Brown (2002) reviewed 29 Comprehensive School Reform models with respect to their evidence base, design characteristics, and indicators of student achievement. The authors described the research base for Expeditionary Learning as showing "highly promising evidence of effectiveness," (Borman, Hewes, & Brown, 2002, p. 34) and rated EL as 4th highest of all 29 models assessed. Since this meta-analysis was published, the evidence base for Expeditionary Learning models has grown, supported by both the research literature as well as by data from EL schools themselves. The evidence for Expeditionary Learning models can be classified into three key domains: EL student achievement and school test performance; EL student engagement; and EL teacher practice and professional development.

Evidence for the effect of Expeditionary Learning participation on student achievement and test performance indicates that EL students have outperformed their peers on state and mandated tests, in some cases by considerable margins. An early study of Expeditionary Learning by the Center for Research in Educational Policy found that a Colorado-based EL school, The Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning, consistently outscored non-EL schools from the four state districts from which its students were drawn across all grade levels for each of 5 years on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (Sterbinsky, 2002). In reading in particular, these EL students scored an average of 11.9% higher in reading than their non-EL peers (Sterbinsky, 2002). Recent studies have provided additional strong evidence for EL student achievement (UMASS Donahue Institute, 2011a and 2011b). The UMASS Donahue Institute (2011a) compared the performance of students from EL elementary schools to their non-EL state district peers over the course of two school years. The study found that EL schools produced statistically significant student achievement gains in English/language arts and math (UMass Donahue Institute, 2011a). While these achievement gains are important for all students, they are particularly significant for populations that have lagged behind others, including English Language Learners, students receiving Free and Reduced Lunch, Hispanic, and African American students. Another 2011 study conducted by the UMass Donahue Institute found that EL schools in New York had made substantial progress toward closing the achievement gap in English/language arts and math for these groups of students between 2006 and 2010 (UMass Donahue Institute, 2011b). In some

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cases, the study found that the achievement gap was fully closed for students in EL

schools (UMass Donahue Institute, 2011b).

Student engagement increases as a result of Expeditionary Learning's focus on

critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative learning. Students participating in

EL programs are highly engaged in their own learning as well as the world around them

through civic engagement, and social and environmental service (American Youth Policy

Forum, 2002). In 2002, the American Youth Policy Forum surveyed 28 leading school

reform models and gave EL a "five star" rating for being highly compatible in linking

community service to academics and building an ethos and belief of service to others

(American Youth Policy Forum, 2002, p. 59). Similarly, the Academy for Educational

Development found a strong level of student engagement (Academy for Educational

Development, Inc., 1996).

Teachers play a critical role in the implementation of the Expeditionary Learning

model (Expeditionary Learning, 2014). Teaching practices and professional development

are central conduits through which the ideals and principles of EL flow. The Center for

Research in Educational Policy report (2002) highlights the unique pedagogical approach

of EL teachers, finding that in comparison to other schools with similar demographics,

teachers at an EL school used significantly more coaching and project-based learning and

significantly less direct instruction and independent seatwork than their non-EL

colleagues. Additionally, the Academy for Educational Development found that EL

teachers reported that their classroom practices changed markedly with EL, noting

increased collaboration with other teachers, systematically addressing content and skill

learning in designing expeditions, and developing clear criteria for assessing student work (Academy for Educational Development, 1996). The success of EL teachers in implementing these approaches to support the high levels of student achievement discussed previously owes to the strong foundation of professional development that EL provides. The National Staff Development Council described Expeditionary Learning as a leading professional development association and mentioned Expeditionary Learning's heavy emphasis on content development and the rigorous expectation of adult learning and collaboration among all teachers (National Staff Development Council, 2002).

The Nation's Charter School Movement

As the popularity and evidence base for the Expeditionary Learning model continues to grow (Expeditionary Learning, 2014b), it is interesting to juxtapose this growth with the charter school movement. In 1991, New American Schools Development Corporation provided a grant to create Expeditionary Learning. Outward Bound and the Harvard Graduate School of Education collaborated on the winning proposal, with input from organizations including Facing History and Ourselves, Project Adventure, and the Technical Education Research Center (Expeditionary Learning, 2014a). Two years later, ten Expeditionary Learning demonstration schools open in New York, Boston, Portland (ME), Denver, and Dubuque. Over the following 21 years, Expeditionary Learning attracts the attention of RAND Corporation (1998), Public Education and Business Coalition (1999), American Youth Policy Forum and National Staff Development Council (2001; 2002), Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2004), President Barack Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama, and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (2009),

New York State (2012), Federal Government Investing in Innovation grant (2013),

Teacher of the Year (2014), EquiP (Educators Evaluating the Quality of Instructional

Products, 2014), State of Connecticut (2014), and most recently recognition in the

President's State of the Union address (Expeditionary Learning, 2014a).

Ideas and people change history. After reading *Education by Charter:*

Restructuring School Districts by Ray Budde, American Federation of Teachers

President, Albert Shanker first proposed the creation of charter schools, publicly funded

institutions that operate with greater autonomy to experiment with new ways of educating

our youngest citizens (Kahlenberg, 2008). Budde recommends school districts provide

innovative teachers with permission to create innovative, new programs and to report

back on their discoveries similar to the explorers of hundreds of years earlier. It is the

thirst for knowledge, intellectual curiosity, and hints of success that fuel innovative

visionaries to achieve the extraordinary. Shanker, inspired by his scholarly studies,

gained insight and innovative ideas similar to the edupreneurs of today. The term

edupreneur was one that I readily identified with as the founder of an autonomous charter

school. I enjoy challenging the status quo and taking risks. I possessed a strong desire to

innovate and lead my own journey, rather than simply doing what I was told

implementing district mandates throughout my administrative career. Googling the term

"edupreneur" yields about 55,500 results" in 0.23 seconds. In a blog post titled *The Rise*

of the Edupreneur, "being an edupreneur means creating a new capacity" (Vander Ark,

2013, para. 3). They are described as having different profiles and backgrounds, but most

are mission-driven typically smart, driven, and impact oriented, making working with

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edupreneurs a rewarding experience. Edupreneurs build impact organizations and products in spite of big barriers and limited financial resources. For the purpose of this research, I refer to edupreneurs as individuals who are working in the field of education, taking responsible risks, creating new capacities, and "disrupting" the system. According to Clayton Christensen, disruptive innovation occurs when an entrepreneur "figures out how to break a trade-off by giving more of one without requiring us to accept less of the other" (as cited in Horn & Staker, 2015, p. xviii). Often, this involves toppling paradigms. An innovation that is disruptive allows a whole new population of consumers at the bottom of a market access to a product or service that was historically only accessible to consumers with a lot of money or skill (Christensen, 2015). Therefore, using this definition, charter schools may be considered disruptive innovations to the public school system, promising to provide access to a high quality education that historically served advantaged families.

The stories of edupreneurs and disruptive innovators, similar to autoethnographic scholars, possess the power to ignite a spark within an entire system. The story of passing the first charter school legislation in the United States includes champions possessing a vision of a new way of educating our children, politicians who decided to provide a chance to promising ideas despite organized disposition, and empowered educators who believe in themselves and the power of education. Arguably, edupreneurs have existed throughout history; today some serve as charter school leaders.

A public charter school is a publicly funded school that is typically governed by a group or organization under a legislative contract, or charter, with the state or jurisdiction

(Berman, et al., 2000). The charter exempts the school from certain state or local rules and regulations. In return for flexibility and autonomy, the charter school must meet the accountability standards stated in its charter. A school's charter is reviewed periodically by the group or jurisdiction that granted it, and can be revoked if guidelines are not followed or if the accountability standards stated in the charter are not met (Berman, et al., 2000). The first law allowing the establishment of charter schools was passed in Minnesota in 1991 (Nathan, 1996). As of the 2011-12 school year, charter school legislation had been passed in 42 states and the District of Columbia. Despite legislative approval in Maine and Washington, no charter schools were operational in these states in 2011–12. Charter school legislation has not been passed in Alabama, Kentucky, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, and West Virginia (Nathan, 1996).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2000), from the 1999–2000 school year to 2011–2012 school year, the percentage of all public schools that were public charter schools increased from 1.7 to 5.8 percent, and the total number of public charter schools increased from 1,500 to 5,700. In addition to increasing in number, charter schools have generally increased in enrollment size over time. From school year 1999–2000 to 2011–2012, the number of students enrolled in public charter schools increased from 0.3 million to 2.1 million students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000). During this period, the percentage of public school students who attended charter schools increased from 0.7 to 4.2 percent. Between school years 2010–

2011 and 2011–2012, the number of students enrolled in public charter schools increased from 1.8 million to 2.1 million (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000).

According to charter school enrollment data obtained from National Center for Education Statistics, in school year 2011–12, among all states California enrolled the largest number of students in charter schools (413,000, representing 7 percent of total public school students in the state), and the District of Columbia enrolled the highest percentage of public school students in charter schools (39 percent, representing 29,000 students). After the District of Columbia, Arizona had the second highest percentage (13 percent) of charter school enrollment as a percent of total public school enrollment.

From school year 1999–2000 to 2011–12, charter schools experienced changes in their demographic composition similar to those seen at traditional public schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000). The percentages of charter school students who were Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander increased (from 20 to 28 percent and from 3 to 4 percent, respectively). In contrast, the percentage of charter school students who were White decreased from 42 to 36 percent, and the percentages who were Black and American Indian/Alaska Native decreased as well (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000).

The percentage of students attending high-poverty charter schools—schools in which more than 75 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)—increased from 14 percent in school year 1999–2000 to 31 percent in school year 2011–2012 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000). Over the same period, the percentages of students attending

charter schools with lower percentages of students qualifying for FRPL decreased

(National Center for Education Statistics, 2000).

According to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, since the first

charter school opened in Minnesota in 1992, the charter school movement has grown to

more than 5,277 schools operating nationwide in 2010-2011, serving 1.7 million students.

2012-2013 data reflects an increase of 727 charter schools nationally, representing

approximately 6% of all public school students (National Alliance for Public Charter

Schools, 2014b). According to the State Department of Education, as of October 2014,

214 charter schools are authorized in the state where this research was conducted

(Schlieman, Personal Communication, October 24, 2014). These schools serve

approximately 12% of the state's public school students adding up to nearly 100,000

students. Locally, in the district where this research was conducted, there are 81 charter

and innovation schools (2014-2015 school year), which is expected to grow to about 95

schools in the 15-16 school year (Michalec, Personal Communication, December 5,

2014).
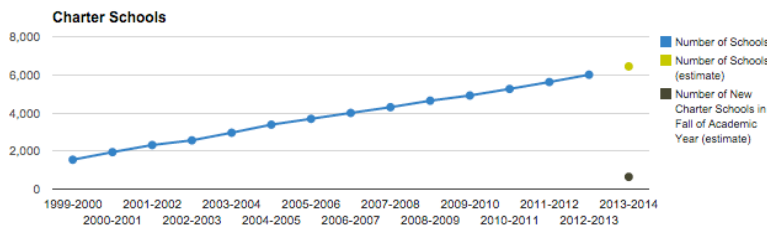
Figure 4: Total number of charter schools according to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

Given the state's charter-friendly landscape, and the city's expected growth of another

100,000 residents in the next 10 years (Hancock, 2014), it is likely that more charter

schools will be seeking authorization in upcoming years. Understanding the complexities

of autonomous school development will be beneficial to policy makers, authorizers,

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boards of education, district officials, school leaders, educators, as well as parents and

families as they navigate and make decisions regarding our public school system.
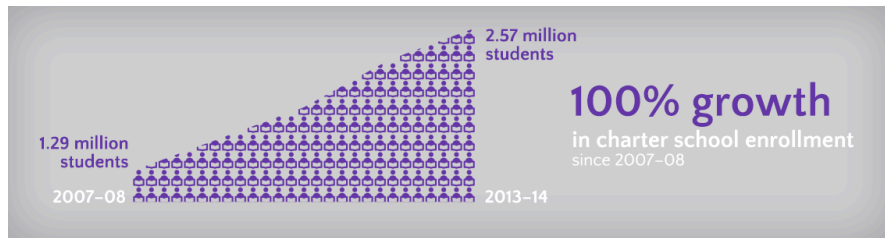
Figure 5: Retrieved from National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.

The development of autonomous schools inspires individuals to imagine the

possibilities, to envision what is possible with fresh eyes. As the educational landscape

evolves to include greater opportunities for autonomy within structure, including public

schools, charter schools, and innovation schools, so does the need to expand our

understanding of the lives and experiences of autonomous school leaders.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Autoethnographic writing does not merely tell stories about yourself garnished with
details, but actively interprets your stories to make sense of how they are connected with
others' stories. In the interpretive process, you gain new knowledge and insight about
yourself and others and become transformed.
– Heewon Chang

Innovation surrounds us. Similar to disruptive innovators, edupreneurs living

within the confines of our educational system wonder, "How do we reinvent education?"

As previously defined, edupreneurs are individuals who are working in the field of

education, taking responsible risks, creating new capacities, and "disrupting" the system.

Similar to how leaders across industry sectors such as Google, Facebook, Apple, and

Zappos ponder how to design in response to users' needs; edupreneurs ponder how to

design schools in response to the needs of our youngest citizens, their families, and the

communities within the legislative landscape and context of innovation and current

research. In seeking to understand my professional and personal journey, I turned to

autoethnography as a methodology to bring my personal story to center stage as a means

to actively engage readers, inspiring them to respond and, through individual and

collective action, inform local and national dialogue and decision-making.

Conceptual Framework

According to Heewon Chang, "autoethnography is a qualitative research method

that enables researchers to use their autobiographical and contextual data to gain a

hermeneutical understanding of the societal context and, in turn, a sociocultural meaning

of self" (Chang & Boyd, 2011, p. 13). Chang grounds the method of autoethnography on

four assumptions:

> (1) culture is a group-oriented concept by which self is always connected with others; (2) the reading and writing of self-narratives provides a window through which self and others can be understood; (3) telling one's story does not automatically result in the *cultural* understanding of self and others, which only grows out of in-depth cultural analysis and interpretation; and (4) autoethnography is an excellent instructional tool to help not only social scientists but also practitioners – such as teachers, medical personnel, counselors, and human services workers – gain profound understanding of self and others and function more effectively with others from diverse cultural backgrounds. (Chang, 2008, p. 13)

The Concept of Self

In this study, culture is defined as "a product of interactions between self and

others in a community of practice" (Chang, 2008, p. 23). The concept of self has been

viewed differently in different time periods and cultures (Chang, 2008). This

autoethnography explores self as a starting point for cultural acquisition and transmission.

I adopt a postmodern view of self, inviting readers to view self as a "'fragile' and

interdependent being" (Chang, 2008, p. 24). "The positionality of self to others is socially

constructed and transformable as the self develops its relationship to others – especially

strangers and enemies – and reframes its views of others" (Chang, 2008, p. 29). As a

result of the intersections between culture, self, and others, autoethnographers must

undertake the task of exploring the relationship between self and others.

To understand my situated self (the self within given contexts), I collected a broad

range of personal data about my experiences designing an Expeditionary Learning charter

school, which has shaped who I am as well as contextual data about the societal and

institutional culture in which I have been situated. Personal memory data collected

includes chronicling and inventorying self (Chang, 2008). In order to chronicle the events

that transpired developing the downtown school, I conducted a detailed review of annual,

weekly, and daily routines employed when developing an autonomous Expeditionary

Learning school. To inventory myself, I reviewed and analyzed an extensive list of

proverbs, quotations, and notes from meetings with mentors to explore my informal

college, places where significant learning transpired outside of traditional scholarly

environments. Additionally, self-reflective data, data resulting from "introspection, self-

analysis, and self-evaluation of who you are and what you are" (Chang, 2008, p. 95) were

reviewed. This included reviewing field journals and engaging in reflective exercises

during the research process. Additionally, I situate the internal findings within the

societal and institutional culture in which my story is situated. This external data was

represented by textual artifacts including official documents and personally produced

texts. Official documents included charter school applications from two authorizers, four

grant applications, and various charter school applications from across the nation utilized

as mentor texts throughout the process. These documents address the following school-

based components of school design: culture, leadership, educational program, teaching,

and governance. Additionally, personally produced texts including brochures and

marketing materials, meeting agendas, school documents, voice memos, and photographs

were reviewed and analyzed.

Story: A Vantage Point Revealing The Culture of School Leaders

Stories or narratives have been shared in culture throughout human history. According to Daniel Pink, "Most of our experience, our knowledge and our thinking is organized as stories." Often stories contain autobiographical components featuring the storyteller's ancestors, families, friends, or communities. Autobiographical storytelling, also called self-narration, sometimes takes the form of written narratives. According to Chang, these writings, focused on self, have increased in volume in recent decades. They've taken the form of a variety of genres including autobiography, memoir, journal, personal essay, and letter. The authorship has become increasingly diversified, including more historically underrepresented populations over the last three decades. Themes adopted by the writers of self-narrative reflect the widespread diversity of its authorship. The writing process includes memory search activities and evokes self-revelation and self-analysis through personal stories, making self-discovery a possibility for writers (Chang, 2008).

Autoethnography

Autoethnography differs from the complex and diverse landscape of self-narratives. "Stemming from the field of anthropology, autoethnography shares the storytelling feature with other genres of self-narrative but transcends mere narration of self to engage in cultural analysis and interpretation" (Chang, 2008, p. 43). The methodology provides researchers with an opportunity to turn their scholarly interests inward on themselves, bringing personal stories to center stage revealing the culture of a group of people. Similar to an ethnographer describing the culture of a group of people

and learning what it is like to be a part of the group from the viewpoint of members of that group, usually through observations (Johnson & Christensen, 2012) I describe my experiences designing an autonomous Expeditionary Learning charter school in an urban environment in the Rocky Mountain region. "Autoethnography offers a unique vantage point to the understanding of the social through the self…" (Chang, 2011, p. 11).

Autoethnography "combines cultural analysis and interpretation with narrative details" (Change, 2008, p. 46). Ellis & Bochner (2000) define autoethnography as "autobiographies that self-consciously explore the interplay of the introspective, personally engaged self with cultural descriptions mediated through language, history, and ethnographic explanation" (p. 742). In making connections between my personal experiences and the current context of our educational system, I hope to emphasize what Reed-Danahay refers to as "the self and the social" in his 1997 book, *Auto/Ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social.* I use the term "self" in reference to my ethnographer self similar to authors Chang, Ellis, Bochner, and Reed-Danahay.

In contrast, when anthropologist Heider first introduced the term "auto-ethnography" in 1975, "self" referred to informants. In his study of Dani people, he refers to their cultural accounts of themselves the Dani autoethnography. The term was used in a similar way when Butz and Besio (2004) discussed the colonized people's self-understanding. Hayano (1979) and Wolcott (2004) utilized the term "autoethnography" when studying and describing their "own people."

Autoethnography adheres to the anthropological and social approaches to scientific inquiry, providing opportunities for autoethnographers to reflect upon, analyze,

and interpret their stories within their broader sociocultural context. According to Chang, autoethnography is ethnographical and autobiographical at the same time. "Ethnographical" is emphasized over "autobiographical" to highlight the ethnographic research methods and concern about the cultural connection between self and others representing the society. This ethnographic orientation distinguishes autoethnography from other self-narratives such as autobiography, memoir, journal, diary, personal essay, or letter.

Reed-Danahay (1997) utilizes the label autoethnography to embrace a broad scope of writings such as: (1) "native anthropology" produced by native anthropologists from the group who were formerly studied by outsiders; (2) "ethnic autobiography" written by members of ethnic minority groups; and (3) "autobiographical ethnography" in which anthropologists interject personal experience into ethnographic writing (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p. 2). Since the early use of autoethnography by anthropologist Heider (1975)

> autoethnography has been adopted by scholars of various disciplines such as anthropology (Jacobs, 2011; Reed-Danahay, 1997), communication (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), education (Boyd, 2008, 2011; Hernandez, 2011; Nash, 2002; Poplin, 2011), English (Munro, 2011), leadership studies (Ngunjiri, 2010), nursing (Wright, 2008), social work (Grise-Owens, 2011), and sociology (Denzin, 2006; Richardson, 1992, 2000), among others. (Chang & Boyd, 2011, p. 13)

Ellis & Bochner define autoethnography as "autobiographies that self-consciously explore the interplay of the introspective, personally engaged self with cultural descriptions mediated through language, history, and ethnographic explanation" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 742). They present a wide variety of labels that possess an autoethnographic orientation, including: autobiographical ethnography, autobiology,

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auto-observation, autopathography, collaborative autobiography, a complete-member research, confessional tales, critical autobiography, emotionalism narratives of the self, ethnobiography, ethnographic autobiography, ethnographic memoir, ethnographic poetics, ethnographic short stories, evocative narratives, first-person accounts, impressionistic accounts, indigenous ethnography, interpretive biography, literary tales, lived experience, narrative ethnography, native ethnography, new or experimental ethnography, opportunistic research, personal essays, personal ethnography, radical empiricism, reflexive ethnography, self-ethnography, self-stories, socioautobiography, sociopoetics, writing-stories (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739-740). The variety of terms and labels reflect the complexity of autoethnography.

The variety of autoethnographic studies in the literature does not place an equal emphasis on autobiography (content) and ethnography (inquiry process). Ellis and Bochner (2000) offer an insightful triadic model to illustrate the complexity of the autoethnography nomenclature. They state that "Autoethnographers vary in their emphasis on the research process (graphy), on culture (ethno), and on self (auto)" and that "[d]ifferent exemplars of autoethnography fall at different places along the continuum of each of these three axes" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 740).

Some autoethnographies place more value on the ethnographic process while others on cultural interpretation and analysis; and others favor self-narratives. Keeping in mind the triadic balance cited above (Ellis & Bochner), I utilize autoethnography as encouraged by Chang (2008): ethnographical in methodological orientation, cultural in

interpretive orientation, and autobiographical in content orientation. Together, these ingredients work together to compose an "auto-ethno-graphy."

Similar to ethnography, autoethnography refers to both a process and a product (Chang, 2008). Autoethnographers follow a similar ethnographic research process: systemically collecting data, analyzing and interpreting data, and producing scholarly reports. Like ethnographers, autoethnographers seek to achieve cultural understanding through analysis and interpretation. It is about "searching for understanding of others (culture/society) through self" (Change, 2008, p. 49). Autoethnographers utilize the richness of their personal experience as primary data, intentionally integrating it into the research process, celebrating the individual story within the context of the bigger story. Ultimately, it pursues the ultimate goal of cultural understanding underlying autobiographical experiences:

> To achieve this ethnographic intent, autoethnographers undergo the usual ethnographic research process of data collection, data analysis/interpretation, and report writing. They collect field data by means of participation, observation, interview, and document review; verify data by triangulating sources and contents from multiple origins; analyze and interpret data to decipher the cultural meanings of events, behaviors, and thoughts; and write ethnography. Like ethnographers, autoethnographers are expected to treat their autobiographical data with critical, analytical, and interpretive eyes to detect cultural undertones of what is recalled, observed, and told. At the end of a thorough self-examination in its cultural context, autoethnographers hope to gain a cultural understanding of self and others directly and indirectly connected to self. (Chang, 2008, p. 49)

Benefits of Autoethnography

According to Chang (2008), the benefits of autoethnography include (1) a researcher and reader friendly methodology; (2) enhances cultural understanding of self and others; and (3) possesses the power to transform self and others to "motivate them to

work toward cross-cultural coalition building" (p. 52). While interest in and support of autoethnographic research methods are increasing, criticism and scrutiny exist. Autoethnographers should look vigilantly for appropriate application of this methodology and avoid the following potential pitfalls:

> (1) excessive focus on self in isolation from others; (2) overemphasis on narration rather than analysis and cultural interpretation; (3) exclusive reliance on personal memory and recalling data as a source; (4) negligence of ethical standards regarding others in self-narratives; and (5) inappropriate application of the label "autoethnography." (p. 52)

"When a personally meaningful topic is chosen and investigation is contextualized appropriately in the sociocultural context of the researcher, autoethnography can powerfully engage readers in not only the autoethnographers' worlds but also others in them" (Chang, 2008, p. 52). In an attempt to engage readers, I bring my personal story to center stage through adopting an "autobiographical ethnography" approach described by Reed-Danahay (1997) in which anthropologists interject personal experience into ethnographic writing. I utilize the strategies suggested by Chang (2008) to collect autoethnographic data; including personal memory data, self-reflective data, and external data.

Personal Memory Data

"Personal memory is a building block of autoethnography because the past gives a context to the present self and memory opens a door to the richness of the past" (Chang, 2008, p. 71). In this study, I use chronicling and inventorying self as strategies to capture personal memory data to reveal the past. Chronicling the past includes conducting a detailed review of annual, weekly, and daily routines employed when developing an

autonomous Expeditionary Learning school. This strategy illuminates the evolution of the development of the downtown school.

Additionally, I utilize the analysis of proverbs, quotations, and notes from meetings with mentors to conduct an inventory of self. The inventory activity involves collecting, evaluating, and organizing data (Chang, 2008). The process of collecting bits of information involves recalling significant events and writing them down to convey the story. Once the events have been collected, I evaluate and organize them by selecting and deselecting them based upon their importance. "The inventorying activity brings together data collection, analysis, and interpretation" (Chang, 2008, p. 76). This practice shed light on my informal college the wise and trusted words I leaned on to successfully obtain unanimous board approval in the process of developing the downtown school.

Self-Observational and Self-Reflective Data

While personal memory data opens a door to the richness of the past, self-reflective data results from "introspection, self-analysis, and self-evaluation of who you are and what you are" (Chang, 2008, p. 95). Self-observational data captures my actual behaviors, thoughts, and emotions at the time of data collection.

> One way of learning about yourself is observing your own daily or weekly routines for a designated period of time: for example, what you do in solitude or in company of others, what you say, what you feel, what you think, whom you include and exclude in your interactions, where you frequent, and which material objects are necessary in your present life. (Chang, 2008, p. 90)

Systemic self observation gives access to "covert, elusive, and/or personal experiences like cognitive processes, emotions, motives, concealed actions, omitted actions, and socially restricted activities" (Rodriguez and Ryave, 2002, p. 3) and surfaces information

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that is "taken-for-granted, habituated, and/or unconscious matter" (p. 4). While this technique is intended for use with other research subjects, Chang notes its adoptability as a data collection strategy for autoethnography. For the purpose of this autoethnography, I reviewed my field journal, personal journal, and notes captured on my iPhone. Chang states, "All recording methods are useful for different reasons and different occasions. You can mix and match, using your researcher judgment and imagination" (Chang, 2008, p. 91). This data revealed my behaviors, thoughts, and emotions at time intervals throughout the development of the downtown school.

Additionally, self-reflective data resulting from introspection, self-analysis, and self-evaluation of who and what I am was used to collect a variety of behavioral cognitive, and emotional data about myself occurring during the time of this study. Ethnographic field journals were kept from July of 2011 to the present recording the researcher's private and personal thoughts and feeling pertaining to the development of the downtown school. In this autoethnography, I utilize field journal entries, self-analysis, and self-reflective data to focus on data from the period of time when I developed an autonomous EL school. Throughout the development of the EL school, I kept a field journal recording private and personal thoughts and feelings related to the school design process, as well as objective data capturing the timeline of events. In the process of self-analysis I extract my personal values and preferences after reviewing my field journal and completing various reflective exercises such as Writing Exercise 6.3 in Chang's Autoethnography a Method: "List five values, in order of importance, that you consider

important in your life. Give a brief definition of each in your own term. Select the most important one and explain why it is important" (p. 97).

External Data

Last, I situate these internal findings within the societal and institutional culture in which my story is situated. To accomplish this, I utilize textual artifacts acquired throughout the process. "Artifacts are the material manifestations of culture that illuminate their historical contexts" (Chang, 2008, p. 107). Artifacts informing this study include officially produced documents such as the downtown charter school application, charter school applications from two authorizers which I evaluated as a reviewer, four state start-up grant applications, and various charter school applications from across the nation that I utilized as mentor texts throughout the process. In addition to official documents, I utilize personally produced texts including brochures and marketing materials, meeting agendas, school documents, voice memos, and photographs.

Autoethnography as Arts-Based Research

The term *arts-based research* originated at an educational event at Stanford University in 1993 and is used to describe what research guided by aesthetic features might look like (Barone & Eisner, 2012). Elliot Eisner, professor of art and education at the Stanford Graduate School of Education, with the support of the American Educational Research Association, created a two and a half day institute dedicated to the exploration of major themes and ideas in arts based research. "What started with a glimmer became a beacon for many educational researchers looking for another way to think about research and how it can be conducted" (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. ix and x).

Leaning on the premises, principles, and procedures employed by artists, arts-based

research uses the arts as a way of promoting understanding, of diversifying perspective,

and securing insight (Barone & Eisner, 2012).

"…arts based research is an effort to employ the expressive qualities of form in

order to enable a reader of that research to participate in the experience of the author. Put

even more simply is this: Arts based research is a process that uses the expressive

qualities of form to convey meaning" (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. xii). Barone and Eisner

(2012) identify ten important concepts and ideas that underlie arts based research. These

include:

> 1. Humans have invented a variety of forms of representation to describe and
> understand the world in as many ways as it can be represented.
> 2. Each form of representation imposes its own constraints and provides its own
> affordances.
> 3. The purpose of arts based research is to raise significant questions and
> engender conversations rather than to proffer final meanings.
> 4. Arts based research can capture meanings that measurement cannot.
> 5. As the methodology for the conduct of research in the social sciences expands,
> a greater array of aptitudes will encounter forms that are most suited to them.
> 6. For arts based research to advance, those who prepare researchers will need to
> diversify the development of skill among those who are being taught.
> 7. Arts based research is not only for arts educators or professional artists.
> 8. In arts based research, generalizing from an n of 1 is an acceptable practice.
> 9. The aim of arts based research is not to replace traditional research methods; it
> is to diversify the pantry of methods that researchers can use to address the
> problems they care about.
> 10. Utilizing the expressive properties of a medium is one of the primary ways in
> which arts based research contributes to human understanding. (Barone & Eisner,
> 2012, pp. 164-172)

Barone and Eisner further explain that arts based research is more concerned with

"puzzlements than certitudes" (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 172).

Autoethnography and arts based research are fairly new methodologies being employed by researchers. As a result, it is my hope that this autoethnography helps explore the parameters and possibilities of autoethnography as a form of arts based research. Beliefs about what constitutes legitimate research methodology have profound ramifications for understanding human behavior and social interaction. American philosopher, Nelson Goodman reminds us that each construction of the world with a specific form of representation yields a different world (as cited in Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 165). While many believe there is one world and many ways to see it, Goodman challenges us to consider that there are many worlds and many ways to see them. He argues there are as many worlds as there are ways to describe them; therefore emphasizing inventive or creative aspects of inquiry. Perhaps autoethnography can be used to describe the world, blurring the distinctions between qualitative research and arts based research as both methodologies grow in popularity.

CHAPTER FOUR

Historical Background Information

Courage is the first of human qualities because it is the one, which guarantees all others.

– Winston Churchill

This autoethnography was incredibly difficult for me to write. I sat amidst my field journals rereading hurtful words that I spent over a year trying to forget. "You're just an educator." "You're a dime a dozen." "Consider yourself lucky to have this job" (Field Journal, 2012). I sat in solitude revisiting experiences through my field journal and email correspondences, alone with my ideas, afraid to tell my story. I stayed in this intimate space for months, years actually, interrupted only by the nagging deadlines of the dissertation process. I revisited words that I recorded in detail to capture critical conversations, reread email correspondences that devalued my role as an educator, yet amidst these words lies a powerful story of being transformed and reclaiming my voice and personal identity as an empowered educator. I will not disrespect individuals, regardless of how they treated me. I have always carried a strong moral compass, informed by lessons learned from my British mother. As a result, I will maintain the dignity and respect of individuals involved. What I decided to write about and what I decided to omit are based on the moral compass I carry. It is therefore not a tell-all autoethnography disclosing the dirty details of my experiences. I have selected aspects of the story that would best serve future education entrepreneurs, current school leaders

facing similar circumstances in their work, and individuals preparing future school leaders as aspects of this story informed one of the preparation programs I was enrolled in during this process. It was courage that propelled my writing, and I believe it is courage that we must cultivate to lead extraordinary lives.

This is not a story about how to start a charter school. Handbooks and guides are readily available and yield 42,900,000 results with a simple Google search. Through chronicling the significant events that occurred throughout the process of developing the downtown school, I hope to inspire readers to generate ideas that can come to life in the context of their work and to provide enough insight for readers to make connections between my experiences and their work. One of the most important lessons I've learned in this journey is that you only have one person to account to and that is yourself. You have to go to bed at night with your own thoughts and conscience. I need to tell my story with pride because as much as the story has been shadowed by negative thoughts and the experiences of surrendering my dream, there is a beautiful story to be told. I need to admit that I am a part of that story and that it is my duty to tell that story. Above all, I need to know in my heart that regardless of who reads this story, I have conveyed my experiences and truths with honesty and integrity while maintaining the dignity and respect of those involved in the process. Throughout the writing process, I had to reflect upon what the founding team would be comfortable with sharing in the public domain and what they would not, and that is what is mine to protect.

This autoethnography is therefore a collection of anecdotes of a road well traveled. A road traveled with no regrets and many lessons learned. Most teachers and

educational leaders may never experience what I experienced, and therefore my story is one of change and transformation, a slow metamorphosis of rooting to rise, words inspired by my yoga practice and captured in the artwork below. "Root to Rise" was a mantra I carried throughout my journey as the founding school leader. I would replay these words in my mind when I felt uncertain, insecure, and when I was floating on cloud nine. In the months after surrendering my position as the founding school leader, I played with various artistic representations of this mantra. Eventually, the tear art captured below was created, and now serves as a reminder of who I am, of the aspects of my self that no one can take away from me, of my ability to reinvent myself regularly throughout the chapters of my life, and of the dreams I carry. The process of artistically representing the concept of "root to rise" reminded of who I was before embarking on this journey, and continues to serve as a reminder of who I am when I feel emotions of uncertainty, insecurity, and vulnerability arise. Simply stated, the words "root to rise" supported me in
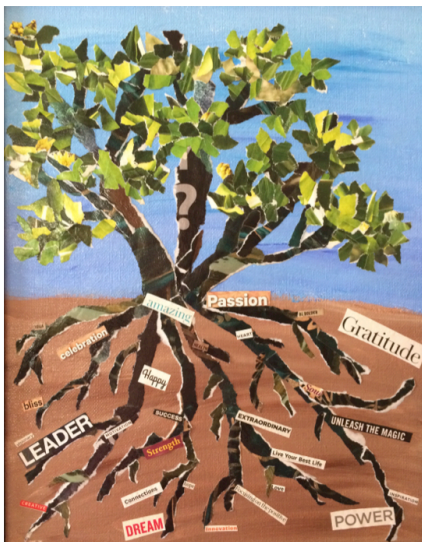
my journey and helped heal me in the months after deciding to resign.

Figure 6: Root to Rise: A piece I created to remind myself of who I am, inspired by my yoga practice and Vrksasana (Tree Pose), which reminds me how difficult it is to obtain balance. Yet when rooted in who you are, you can achieve success in the posture.

My readers get to decide what aspects of the story he or she can identify with or lessons they can learn from my story. It is my hope that they too will "root to rise" and show up fully present, and wide-awake to live extraordinary lives.

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It would be incorrect for me to assume this is the only story of the development of

this school. I played a particular role in the development of the school for a period of

time, but there are many others who came before me, worked alongside me, and carried

the work forward after my departure. Similar to innovations and technological

developments, the journey of developing a school is a networked endeavor. As Walter

Isaacson communicates in *The Innovators*, progress is a team sport. He cites an image

that applies to all innovation, which can also be applied to school development:

> The process of technological development is like building a cathedral. Over the
> course of several hundred years new people come along and each lays down a
> block on top of old foundations, each saying, 'I built a cathedral.' Next month
> another block is placed atop the previous one. Then comes along a historian who
> asks, 'Well, who built the cathedral?' Peter added some stones here, and Paul
> added a few more. If you are not careful, you can con yourself into believing that
> you did the most important part. But the reality is that each contribution has to
> follow onto previous work. Everything is tied to everything else. (as cited in
> Isaacson, 2014, p. 260)

This autoethnography includes some of the individuals who made significant

contributions to the development of the school during the period from June 2011 through

October 2012, the years prior to the school opening and serving children and families in

August 2013. In an effort to create a coherent story and maintain the confidentiality of

individuals, fictional names have been used to replace individuals who participated in the

development of this downtown school. The intent of this writing is not to pay tribute to

each and every individual who has engaged in the development of the school, rather to

communicate the aspects of the story that will inspire, influence, and elevate others. If I

change one life by touching another with my story, I will have achieved my goal. I

choose to carry positivity and gratitude for the experiences I had along my journey. This

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has been a healing journey, a journey that continues to support my transformation as an educator and citizen of the world.

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Surrounded by binders filled with artifacts neatly filed and tabbed, a pile of field journals, chart paper capturing the big ideas that presented themselves after multiple reviews of these documents, I begin writing. Filled with fear, wondering what aspects of my story would be revealed amidst these pages. The process of founding a school has left me feeling more vulnerable and insecure than I have ever been in my entire life. There, I've said it. That feeling has shook through me each and every day since July 2011 when I was selected to lead the development of a downtown school in the Rocky Mountain region. While I wish this story had a happy ending, it does not. It captures the tireless hard work that left me hospitalized for three days, the feeling of incredible success receiving unanimous board approval, and the loss of a dream that I have carried for over a decade. This autoethnography captures the tireless work that occurs behind the scenes prior to opening a school. As someone who always focuses on the bright side, I can't allow that to be the whole story. In the journey, I have also experienced transformational growth and expanded my ability to empathize and understand others regardless of their circumstance.

I was living downtown in a historic loft with my baby girl when opportunity came knocking. I've always been taught that when opportunity knocks, it is hard work that answers. I was ready… Or so I thought. When checking my mail one afternoon, I noticed a meeting announcement inviting downtown residents to become a part of the

development of a downtown school posted beside the array of mailboxes. While my daughter was only one year old, I decided it wasn't too soon to start planning for her education. After all, as an educator with over a decade of experience, I was highly intrigued in the variety of school models emerging in education. I checked my calendar and decided to attend. I entered the room excited in hopes that I would be able to stay downtown and raise an urban baby.

It was a hot June day, and I was glistening with a glaze of sweat as I entered the cool, air conditioned building. I was buzzed in from the foyer and directed to the elevator, which delivered me to the building's community room. Approximately fifteen chairs were situated in a circle beside a fireplace. I was immediately welcomed by Sybil's smiling face and introduced myself. Sybil had a vision and was in the initial stages of organizing parents in the downtown area. She was a vibrant, talkative, no-nonsense mother of two who loved living downtown and wanted nothing more than a nearby grocery store and a high quality school for her children to attend. This urban setting had neither of these amenities. As a result, she used her community organizing spirit to rally the troops. In her outreach efforts, she met a retired woman named Mildred who was well-known in the downtown community and had supported the development of the nearby children's museum. Together, they appeared to be the dynamic duo. They were well networked, persistent, and seemingly unstoppable. As individuals introduced themselves to each other and took their seats, Sybil and Mildred welcomed everyone and introduced the featured speakers.

One individual presented on the topic of socioeconomic integration and shared success stories of schools who were "creating great choices in the right places" (Field Journal, 2011). The schools he presented shared a common theme: they possessed a high percentage of students who qualified for free or reduced lunch (FRL). He shared stories of their school models and the strategies they employed in achieving varying degrees of socioeconomic integration. Experts in the various school models also presented an overview of the models. Attendees commented on each model and eventually the group came to consensus that Expeditionary Learning was best aligned with the educational experiences they desired for their children. After the presentations, I watched the room and continued noting my thoughts in my journal. When most of the guests had left, I reconnected with Sybil and Mildred, this time giving my background in education. We immediately hit it off, and I was invited to their upcoming meeting at Mildred's loft.

At the time, I was working as a gifted and talented facilitator and instructional coach after completing my internship with a principal who I deeply admired to "turnaround" a low-performing school. Mass Insight Education defines the term "turnaround" as "a dramatic and comprehensive intervention in a low-performing school that: (a) produces significant gains in achievement within two years; and (b) readies the school for the longer process of transformation into a high-performance organization" (as cited in The School Turnaround Field Guide, 2010, p. 4). Approximately 50% of the staff relinquished their position each year, and they had experienced seven school principals in the past nine years. The work was arduous. The culture could be considered toxic. We drank too much. We found joy in the children to inspire the hard work that permeated our

days. We established systems and structures that were yielding gains in student achievement. Yet in the end, the work wasn't joy-filled and didn't ignite a fire within. The idea of starting a school from scratch enticed my mind and made my heart dance with delight. I couldn't stop thinking about it. Time passed and I continued imagining the possibilities for what I nicknamed "Gigi's school." I began taking great pride in the fact that I was creating a school for my child and for all children. I felt like I was carrying Dewey's words in my pocket as I proceeded through the journey of developing the school: "What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy" (Dewey, 1902, p. 3). I filtered each and every decision through this democratic ideal and carried this as a critical aspect of the school's development.

When the day finally arrived, I briskly walked the two blocks to Mildred's loft. I arrived early in anticipation of meeting the individuals the dynamic duo had rallied together to pull this off. Together, five passionate and committed individuals enjoyed homemade soup and we each constructed our own panini sandwiches. Two real estate developers, a retired educator/school founder, and Sybil, and Mildred. We were all neighbors living within blocks of each other, yet I had never met any of them in the eight years I'd lived downtown. I presented a handout capturing my educational background and shared my passion for education and our downtown community (please see Appendix A). It felt like a perfect fit. After orally presenting my resume, they immediately began commenting and engaging in dialogue. It felt as if I wasn't in the room. The conversation

quieted, and they unanimously announced that they'd be thrilled if I'd join the effort as the founding school leader. My heart rate rose, and I could barely contain myself. I was excited to embark upon an adventure that I felt I had been preparing for over the years: an adventure that I felt such purpose and passion for as my first formal experience as a founding school principal. The sound of it had a distinct ring to it and I possessed a source of pride that I vividly remember. Life didn't feel quite the same after that moment.

We immediately began event planning and decided to host a bar-b-que to announce my position as the founding school leader. I spent days crafting my speech, scratching out parts and making revisions in anticipation of the big day. After studying Nel Noddings in my doctoral program, I immediately adopted her view that "caring is the very bedrock of all successful education" (Noddings, 2005, p. 27). In all of my greatest learning experiences, it was caring that engaged me as a learner: caring about the content, caring about its application in the real world, caring about the individual teaching me, and caring about my performance and achievement. As a yoga practitioner, I've been taught to act with intention, so this seemed a fitting place to start. I believed it was caring about our city, our community, and our future students that would operationalize our collective efforts and result in success. My goal that afternoon was to "establish a culture of care among our prospective parent community" and to "utilize every interaction as an opportunity to demonstrate a culture of care" (Field Journal, 2011).

> Welcome! It's great to see the beginning of our school community joining together. Thank you for joining us on the beautiful Denver day! I found this group of organized parents serendipitously through my desire to be a part of forming a

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high quality school for my own daughter. I love and live in LoDo and am excited to see our school become a hallmark of our city.

I came into the field of education in 1997 as an accounting and finance major. I enrolled in a child development course and became fascinated by how the brain learns. After completing the course, I applied for a job as a teacher's aid in a full inclusion kindergarten classroom at the local Jewish Community Center. I'll never forget my earliest memories of teaching and nurturing the development of these children. One morning, Dylan was having a seizure and I asked Malik to go and ask the class how many kids wanted a grilled cheese sandwich for lunch. Dutifully, Malik went to assist with lunch count and came back to report, "All the girls want to have a girl cheese sandwich, but the boys want to know what they're going to have." It was through that course and these experiences with young children that I fell in love with the field of education.

Three states, 4 districts, and five schools later, here I stand excited to serve the children and families of Denver by creating a school focused on caring relationships. I believe caring relationships are the heart of the school and am excited that KIDDO (Kids in Downtown Denver Organized) has focused on building intergenerational relationships within our community. I also believe learning should be a joy-filled, personally meaningful experience and believe that parents selected the Expeditionary Learning model for this reason.

The synergy that exists among our dream team is incredible. We have people on our team that have devoted their careers to starting schools, people who are

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committed to seeing a high quality urban school on the streets of downtown

Denver, and people who have utilized their talents and connections to accomplish

everything from selecting potential locations, examining schools and curriculum

models, getting the word out, creating brochures, and establishing partnerships

with organizations and businesses downtown. We would love to see each and

every one of you contribute by assisting us in getting the word out and collecting

intent to enroll forms. Together, we will create an intergenerational school that

embraces diversity and is focused on caring relationships and nurturing our

children's individual needs. (Field Journal, 2011)

That was the moment it became real to me. While I loved meeting the dynamic

individuals who were envisioning a downtown school, meeting prospective families,

sharing in their enthusiasm, and watching our future students run and play elevated my

spirits and inspired my scholarly studies and daily activities. Prior to stepping foot out of

bed, I began each day by reviewing my agenda and recording an intention in my journal.

Looking back, this practice carried me through the highs and lows of developing the

school. It was a practice that allowed me to bring a spirit of excitement and adventure to

each day's work.

In the days following the barbeque, we discussed the transition of leadership.

Mildred had been leading what we later referred to as the executive committee meetings,

and now that I had been selected as the school leader, it was time for me to assume that

role. Mildred began parading me around, communicating my accomplishments and

introducing me as the school leader. Together, we met with civic leaders, local business

leaders, executive directors of foundations, non-profit leaders, leaders of local and national organizations, and neighbors. I meticulously tracked each and every meeting and began compiling a list of contacts. As the weeks passed, it was time to prepare to lead my first executive committee meeting. While I had led many meetings before, this seemed different. It brought both excitement and anxiety. In hindsight, I realize there is a big difference in leading what you know and walking into an unknown world completely unaware of what you don't know. There's a difference between leading educators, or those who you perceive to be like you, and leading individuals in the business world. This was the moment when I began to see that we operate in very different capacities. The words "team meetings," used in the elementary school settings I had been a part of, were replaced with "executive committee meetings," something that sounded much more formal and sophisticated, reflective of the business world. The words inspired a spirit of professionalism that began to permeate my performance. In preparation for leading my first executive committee meeting, Mildred and I met to discuss what had been accomplished in the previous months and develop the agenda.

Responsibility was shared among the members of the executive committee who had led previous meetings, and myself. I brought a formalized structure to the work and named our committee to distinguish it from the founding governing board and various subcommittees that we'd later need to establish. While we were too small to refer to ourselves as committees, the work began to take on the following committee structures and we slowly began to invite more people to our executive committee meetings and recruit individuals to support the development of the school:

- Best Practices in Elementary Education, School Structure

- Facilities Identification, Tenant Improvements, Building Codes

- Budget and Finance

- Strategic Marketing and Community Outreach

- Donations, Grants, and Fundraising

I viewed this as my opportunity to begin establishing systems and structures that would both establish a culture of care and support our success. As a result, each meeting I led contained a structure similar to one utilized by one of my professors, that I replicated as a teacher and continue to utilize with my graduate students: warm-up, instruction, cool down. Upon review of the executive committee meeting agendas, our meetings possessed the following structure:

- Warm-Up

- Prospective Locations Updates

- Fundraising Updates

- Networking/Meeting Updates (This later became Marketing and Outreach as the school design was articulated in greater detail.)

- Charter School Application/Grant Application Updates

- Future Meeting Dates

- Cool Down (Field Notes, 2011).

As the school leader, I utilized warm-ups to help people get to know each other, establish a culture of care among the executive committee, and make connections to the purpose of the meeting. Examples included:

- If a beverage could be used to describe your personality, what would describe you and why?

- What are your interests in seeing a school develop downtown? What special talents do you possess that will support our collective efforts?

- What is something exciting that has happened since our last meeting (Field Notes, 2011)?

These warm-ups united us as a community, infused laughter into our work, and provided a foundation for relationships to deepen.

Two downtown real estate developers who served led the prospective locations updates on the executive committee. Bob and Dave would work collaboratively between meetings to compile of a list of facilities in the downtown area that were available or becoming available in the future, and present it to the committee. As they led us through the list of available facilities, we'd discuss the pros and cons of each location and gave them a rating of A, B, or C based on safety, access for parent drop off and pick up, and proximity to cultural facilities and parks. We knew the district did not have a school building for us, so we assumed the responsibility of locating one and preparing for its renovation. Having two downtown developers serving on the executive committee was an incredible asset to our planning and preparation.

Fundraising and networking were constant areas of focus and as a result, each and every executive committee member assumed responsibility for supporting these efforts. In my field journal, I reference Daniel Pink's *A Whole New Mind* throughout the pages dedicated to fundraising and marketing and outreach.

The last few decades have belonged to a certain kind of person with a certain kind of mind – computer programmers who could crank code, lawyers who could craft contracts, MBAs who could crunch numbers. But the keys to the kingdom are changing hands. The future belongs to a different kind of person with a very different kind of mind – creators and empathizers, pattern recognizers, and meaning makers. These people – artists, inventors, designers, storytellers, caregivers, consolers, big picture thinkers – will now reap society's richest rewards and share its greatest joys. (Pink, 2006, p. 1)

In *A Whole New Mind*, Daniel Pink explains how abundance, Asia, and automation are changing the world and as a result, he identifies six senses that assist in developing the whole new mind this new era demands. These senses will increasingly determine who soars and who stumbles. They include design, story, symphony, empathy, play, and meaning (Pink, 2006).

Design: In today's society it is crucial and personally rewarding to create a product, service, or experience that is both functional and beautiful.

Story: As our lives brim with information and data, it's not enough to provide an effective argument. The essence of persuasion, communication, and self-understanding has to be combined with the ability to also create a compelling narrative.

Symphony: As white collar work requiring focus and specialization gets routed to Asia and reduced to software, there's a new premium of the ability to put all of the pieces together, creating symphony. "What's in greatest demand today isn't analysis, but synthesis-seeing the big picture, crossing boundaries, and being able to combine disparate pieces into an arresting new whole."

Empathy: In a world of logical thought and analytic tools, what will distinguish those who thrive will be their ability to understand and care for others, and the

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ability to build positive relationships.

Play: We must balance seriousness with play. Research has cited the health and professional benefits of laughter, lightheartedness, games, and humor.

Meaning: We live in a world of material plenty. As a result, we have been freed of day-to-day struggles and have been liberated to pursue more significant desires: purpose, transcendence, and spiritual fulfillment. (Field Journal, 2011)

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Looking back, I realize that collectively, these six senses supported our efforts in developing the school. Our fundraising efforts relied upon our ability to utilize empathy to build relationships and make connections with prospective donors. We had to utilize the power of story to create a compelling vision for the school. This supported our networking, marketing, and outreach efforts, and engaged individuals in carrying the story in their own conversations to expand our influence in their networks. The power of story supported the development of partnerships with local businesses and organizations who volunteered to display our school brochures, donate a portion of sales to the school, or simply introduce us to their networks, expanding our influence in the downtown community.

The school application and grant application updates were always the highlight of the agenda for me personally. It felt like the only time I was able to showcase my expertise. I felt like I was "flying by the seat of my pants" and constantly "learning by doing" in all other aspects of school development (Field Journal, 2011). I felt prepared to lead a school, yet to create a school from scratch often felt like a daunting task. I felt like

I needed a background in "business management and entrepreneurship" (Field Journal, 2011).

I chose to kickoff my first executive committee meeting by establishing norms. The agenda excerpt included the following:

Warm-Up: Establishing Norms

What are the characteristics of high performing, innovative groups? What are the norms under which we want to operate?

2011 Quality Standards for Developing Charter Schools

The members of the founding committee are committed to working together collaboratively. Processes are in place to hear all opinions, to respect dissenting opinions, and to move forward with effective decision-making, e.g. through a code of conduct, decision-making process, etc.

I used this as an opportunity to introduce the executive committee to the Quality Standards for Developing Charter Schools (MS Word document obtained from Colorado League of Charter Schools, 2011). These include the following sub-categories: charter school knowledge and best practices, community outreach, founding committee, commitment to accountability, and application. At the conclusion of that meeting, we discussed the need to incorporate a founding board and announced that Mildred and I would facilitate meetings with prospective board candidates, noting that the executive committee would make the final decisions. Additionally, we agreed to create job descriptions and a list of expectations to support our solicitation of candidates (Executive Committee Meeting Notes, October 20, 2011). Our meeting took place during the

afternoon lunch hour. As a result, the conclusion of each meeting was always a hurried

rush back to work and filled with excitement about our individual roles moving forward.

Over time, our warm up was replaced with "Accomplishments & Celebrations:

Everyone provides an overview of whom they've met with since our last Executive

Committee Meeting" as our relationships deepened over time (Executive Committee

Meeting Agenda, September 15, 2011). This structure allowed us to hear about the

significant events that had transpired since the last meeting and energized our meetings.

In the initial months, activities focused on incorporating a founding board, establishing

the mission and vision of the school, developing business partners, examining census

data, articles of incorporation, and family and community involvement. We discussed

school logistics, including assessing and reporting student outcomes. *How should we*

communicate student progress? Should we have report cards and grades? "Even things I

thought I knew, I realized were simply structures employed by districts I'd worked for. If

I didn't have to use report cards and grading, would I? Even the things I once knew are

up in the air" (Field Journal, 2011). I believe in celebrating student achievement,

including risk-taking, persistence, thinking flexibly, collaboration, kindness, etc. In my

teaching practice, I wrote qualitative feedback on my students' report cards and then

insert them into report card folders with my comments facing forward, and the district

required grades on the reverse. As a result, I questioned the purpose of the report card and

what should be included in a child's report card. Capturing parent perspectives was an

essential aspect of developing the school. These conversations allowed me to gather

individuals' perspectives, including parents, and design the school in response to the needs of the community.

One of the first activities I facilitated with the executive committee and prospective parents related to the school design were to explore school mission and vision statements. After a thorough review, I selected those that aligned with the expressed desires of prospective parents, were progressive in nature, and aligned with the Expeditionary Learning model (see Appendix B). After compiling compelling mission and vision statements, I brought them to the executive committee for review and discussion. Additionally, I brought a few drafts that captured my vision for the downtown school to give us a starting place in crafting our school's mission and vision. Having utilized a similar process when designing an innovation school, I find it best to have examples and documents for individuals to comment on and use to inspire our writing, rather than starting from a blank page. This also provides a platform for all individuals to contribute their thinking as they can comment on examples provided, generate new ideas, or revise drafts. After multiple iterations, I arrived at the following statement of our mission and vision (Downtown Denver Expeditionary School Charter School Application, 2012):

> Our Mission
> The mission of Downtown Denver Expeditionary School is to ensure that each student achieves academic and personal excellence; becomes a wide-awake, joyful learner; and learns to be a responsible citizen of the world. Downtown Denver Expeditionary School engages all students in personally meaningful programs, which meet the highest educational and ethical standards within a caring, collaborative learning community. By using the resources of the entire city, we graduate global citizens who are:
> - caring, and committed to personal and civic responsibility,
> - self-directed,

- intellectually curious,
- systems thinkers able to assess problems with an informed capacity to make a positive difference in the world.

Our Vision: From the Heart a Masterpiece is made
- We believe in empowering children to be architects of lives that transcend the ordinary through exploring their unique strengths, talents, and needs.
- We believe engaging parents, family, and community in a culture of care is an essential element of a high quality educational system.
- We believe that the diversity of our students, staff, and community strengthens and enriches our downtown community.
- We believe teaching and learning should be a joy-filled, personally meaningful experience.
- We believe in educating the whole child: social, emotional, physical, and academic through interdisciplinary learning expeditions emphasizing the arts and mathematics to promote creative and critical thinking.
- We believe multiple means of formative and summative assessments (portfolios, student-led conferences, academic and character narratives) inspire students, teachers, and staff to elevate their performance.
- We believe schools are thinking and learning organizations that strive for continuous improvement, promoting intergenerational opportunities for learning to occur in planned and unplanned events.
- We believe education expands opportunities and improves the human condition. (Mission, Vision, and Operating Principles, December 6, 2011)

I gained inspiration from disruptive innovators in the business and health care sectors, as well as school leaders whose work is represented in the mission and vision statements contained in Appendix B. This became a huge source of pride for the founding school community and me. The words were carefully selected and reflected our collective beliefs about education. To date, one of the best things I feel I've written are the following words: "empowering children to be architects of lives that transcend the ordinary." Each word was carefully crafted to reflect what I feel is incredibly important in living a wide-awake, joy-filled life. We must choose to live empowered lives and support children in knowing that they possess the power to achieve anything imaginable;

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that they are the architects of their lives, carefully building their lives one experience at a time. "Our only limitations are those we set up in our own minds" (Napoleon Hill).

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Early in my career, I recall learning about the power of words. I learned that I should ask, "What questions do you have?" rather than "Who has a question?" The latter implies, what idiot did not understand me? Whereas the former implies that learning is complex and that questions are a natural part of the learning process. In all aspects of school design, words matter. Consider the use of the word "job" versus "career" when recruiting staff. I also believe that our words matter beyond our roles as educators. In Hawk Nelson's song, *Words* (2013), he writes:

> They've made me feel like a prisoner
> They've made me feel set free
> They've made me feel like a criminal
> Made me feel like a king
>
> They've lifted my heart
> To places I've never been
> And they've dragged me down
> Back to where I began
>
> Words can build you up
> Words can break you down
> Start a fire in your heart or
> Put it out

As a school leader, the words you use influence the entire culture of the organization. They can make people feel like prisoners or feel set free; they can lift others up or drag them down. In today's educational landscape of accountability and evaluation, I think being mindful of our words is more important than ever. The power of words were

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revealed throughout the pages of the downtown charter school application and reflected in the careful construction of the school's mission, vision, and operating principles.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Planning for the development of the school largely informed by the Charter School Application Guide (Denver Public Schools, 2012b) and the Call for New Quality Schools (Denver Public Schools, 2012a) announced by the district authorizer. This was the fifth annual Call for New Quality Schools announced by the district. From 2007 to 2011, 20 new schools had been introduced into the district, with 13 more in the pipeline for the 2011-2012 school year (Call for New Quality Schools Letter from the Superintendent, February 3, 2011). The Call for New Quality Schools captured the strategic priorities and regional demands for new schools, including the district's mission and vision, proposal approval criteria, facility considerations for new schools, priority programmatic needs, priority regional needs, new school startup support, community engagement, an overview of the proposal submission and review process, applicant questions, and district contact information (Denver Public Schools, 2012a). The Charter School Application Guide included instructions for submitting the school application, an overview of the process including key dates, formatting and submission requirements, identification of general resources, and an overview of the professionals represented on the review team (Denver Public Schools, 2012b). The Guide contains questions requiring a narrative response in the following areas: culture, leadership, instructional program, teaching, and governance.

Sounds simple enough. I had studied all of these aspects of school leadership. I was prepared. I had a little over a decade of experience in education under my belt. Yet each and every day, I would position myself at coffee shops across the community, settle in, and begin addressing each and every question in the Guide (Denver Public Schools, 2012b). Each and every day, I'd question myself: *Am I on the right track? Is this what would be best for Gigi and children in our downtown community? If I didn't have to do it this way, what other possibilities can we imagine? How will we monitor and measure our actions to identify if we're making progress and truly serving students?* The mind masturbation (a term introduced to me by a mentor describing my actions during this process) seemed never ending. Occasionally, I'd meet with other school leaders, many who had less experience in education than I did, yet they had experience in the business world. They seemed so confident, almost arrogant at times. It left me feeling as if I didn't know what I was doing, as if I was the only one asking questions. We all seemed to be parroting similar language: Extended school day/year, blended learning, flipped classroom … Yet I wondered, *Is this truly what is best for our children? How do we know? We are creating autonomous schools, yet all doing the same thing. How is this innovation?* I had an incredible mentor, Bennie, who always pushed me to the edges of my thinking. He'd ask thought-provoking questions and share stories of his educational experiences (all of which pushed the boundaries of traditional schooling). His mentorship allowed me to do the same.

The school application earned such a high score by the applicant review team that it qualified for "distinction status" and has subsequently been distributed to school

leaders to use as an exemplar. As a result, I have included highlights that reflect the level of quality that authorizers expect to be delivered and share insights and experiences that may support and inspire others embarking on a similar journey.

Figure 7: Excerpt from charter school application cover page.

Paying attention to detail was a critical aspect of the writing process. I wanted the presentation of my work to reflect the level of care and attention I would demonstrate in interactions with children and families, staff, and the community. As a result, we had founding children draw images of downtown to capture their perspectives. These images became prominently displayed on my business cards, letterhead, and the cover of the school application. It's often the little things that put children and our purpose at the center of what we do. This small detail allowed each and every member of the team to consciously focus on our collective purpose. The more we worked collaboratively, the more our language coalesced, uniting around our mission and vision. This was important as we continued focusing on student recruitment efforts. Prospective parents had insightful questions and we had to be equipped with a common language that captured the promise we hoped to deliver on when the school was approved. Once again, I'll return to the importance of words. We would often find ourselves saying, "If the school is approved..." I found myself correcting our team, reframing our language to include, "When the school is approved…" While we honestly didn't know if the school would be approved, we had

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to manifest our success and believe in ourselves in order to actualize our success:

"Whatever the mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve" (Napoleon Hill). Our

words reflect and influence the culture of the organization. One of my favorite quotes

reminds me of the importance of our words and corresponding thoughts: "Watch your

thoughts; they become words. Watch your words; they become actions. Watch your

actions, they become habits. Watch your habits, they become character. Watch your

character; it becomes your destiny" (Frank Outlaw). In the case of school development,

"your thoughts become words, your words become actions, your actions become habit,

and together, you form your school culture" (Field Journal, 2012).

School Culture

Our number one priority is company culture. Our whole belief is that if you get the
culture right, most of the other stuff like delivering great customer service or building a
long-term enduring brand will just happen naturally on its own.
– Tony Hsieh

"I believe success is defined by the culture of the organization, and therefore

school culture is one of the most important aspects of the school design" (Field Journal,

2012). Converting teaching into a more collaborative and collegial profession, breaking

down the walls of classroom isolation, is an aspect of school life that can be achieved

through attending to school culture (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). As a result, I created a set

of operating principles to accompany the schools' mission and vision. This idea was

largely inspired by Tony Hsieh, American Internet entrepreneur and venture capitalist,

best known as the CEO of the online shoe and clothing shop Zappos.com. When asked to

describe the Zappos culture, Tony states:

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To me, the Zappos culture embodies many different elements. It's about always looking for new ways to WOW everyone we come in contact with. It's about building relationships where we treat each other like family. It's about teamwork and having fun and not taking ourselves too seriously. It's about growth, both personal and professional. It's about achieving the impossible with fewer people. It's about openness, taking risks, and not being afraid to make mistakes. But most of all, it's about having faith that if we do the right thing, then in the long run we will succeed and build something great. (Lim & Bey, 2010, Foreword)

As an individual who has always been enticed by the idea of working at companies like Google, Virgin, Apple, Amazon, and Zappos, I wanted to recruit and attract the best talent in the world by mirroring their practices. While I cannot provide the freedom and flexibility to work from remote parts of the globe, trips to a private island, massages and free soda machines, or large year-end bonuses, I can create the best school culture where individuals will find joy and personal reward in delivering what Tony refers to as WOW. Richard Branson, founder of Virgin Group and the only person in the world to have built eight billion-dollar companies from scratch in eight different sectors (Branson, 2012) states in his book *Like a Virgin: Secrets They Won't Teach You at Business School*, "Let's get right to the point: good people are not just crucial to a business, they are the business!" (Branson, 2012). My inspired passion for caring for people is reflected in the school's operating principles.

Our Operating Principles
An exceptional school acts with intention and purpose, articulating both what it wants to achieve and how it will accomplish its goals. The following themes inspire our culture of care and support the attainment of our educational objectives. These principles permeate and affect every aspect of the school:

1. Depth in Leadership
At Downtown Denver Expeditionary School, we are all leaders of our own learning. We will establish a collaborative leadership team consisting of passionate and talented individuals who will assume stewardship of public funds, and possess a high capacity for serving the school in the following areas: school

leadership, administration and governance; school culture; professional culture and performance management; curriculum, instruction, and assessment; financial, business, and school operations management; parent and community engagement; facilities management.

2 . Top-Notch Faculty

Teachers are the heart of our learning organization, and the most talented are being recruited. DDES' attractions include an exciting and intentional educational design utilizing the city as our campus, an ethic of professional excellence, and a culture of care. DDES teachers are efficacious professionals with a high capacity for analyzing and interpreting data, making instructional decisions based on students' individual needs, developing interdisciplinary curriculum, and intentionally contributing to a positive school culture.

3 . City as our Campus

Downtown Denver has a rich variety of resources available to our school community. The Downtown Denver Expeditionary School has cultivated community partnerships with the following organizations: Children's Museum of Denver, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Denver Art Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art, The Harmony Project, and Think360 Arts. These partnerships will allow DDES students to utilize the city as our campus, creating purposeful learning opportunities to engage, motivate, and inspire children to explore the connections among disciplines. Through these experiences, students will recognize the interdisciplinary nature of knowing and learning. Every experience is an opportunity for learning to occur.

4 . Frequent Assessment of Educational Results

Downtown Denver Expeditionary School will utilize highly advanced student assessment systems. The most important of these will be real-time, in-class assessments to help teachers monitor the effectiveness of their day-to-day instruction. Our leaders, teachers, and students embrace the power of student-engaged assessment practices to build student ownership of learning, focus students on reaching standards-based learning targets, and drive achievement. This approach to assessment is key to ensuring that DDES students achieve educational equity. Students continually assess and improve the quality of their work through the use of models, reflection, critique, rubrics, and work with experts. DDES faculty engage in ongoing data inquiry and analysis, examining everything from patterns in student work to results from formal assessments, disaggregating data by groups of students to recognize and address gaps in achievement.

5 . Passion Pursuits

Downtown Denver Expeditionary School will provide opportunities for students to pursue a personal passion, learning to make educational decisions and grow in

their knowledge of self. Passion Pursuits provide members of the community (LoDo retirees, parents, and local businesses) with an opportunity to volunteer their time and talents to share their personal passions and expertise with students. These classes may include Spanish, Sign Language, floor hockey, dance, running club, yoga, gardening, nutrition and cooking, baking, logical reasoning, etc. During this time, DDES faculty will have time allocated to engage in school-wide professional development aligned with our school design, mission, and vision.

6. Leading, Inspiring, and Elevating our Profession
We will advance education by setting an example as an effective, diverse, and accountable school; by continuously investing in ways to become better at what we do; and by making available our discoveries, large and small, to colleagues in the cause of education. DDES faculty possesses an ethic of excellence and cares deeply for our educational system. We achieve great results through learning, reflection, and intentional practice. As a result, DDES provides our faculty and staff members a special place to pursue the science and art of teaching. We want to align the rewards of teaching more closely with the value it brings to society, provide teachers opportunities to deepen their skills, and be a place where careers, in and out of the classroom, can flourish. To accomplish this, DDES teachers will engage in participatory action research as a component of their ongoing professional development and commitment to our community. Participatory action research is a reflective process of progressive problem solving led by individuals working collaboratively as a part of a community of practice to improve the way they address students' needs and solve problems. The purpose of participatory action research is to improve our instructional strategies, practices, and knowledge of the learning environment through intentional planning, action, and fact-finding about the intended and unintended results of the action. At the conclusion of each school year, DDES faculty will invite parents, students, community members, and professionals from nearby schools and universities to showcase our professional learning.

7. A Commitment to Research and Development
A school design, and masterpiece, is never finished. The Downtown Denver Expeditionary School will utilize ongoing research and development to ensure increasing quality in its program. Every five to seven years, we will do a complete review of our school design. In between these major design efforts, there will be upgrades in the adoption of new technologies, new courseware, etc. as well as new partnerships established within our community.

Downtown Denver Expeditionary School's operating principles, combined with its educational objectives, will lead to success in providing an exceptional education for the children we serve. (Mission, Vision, and Operating Principles, December 6, 2011)

In addition to the mission and vision, the Application Guide (Denver Public Schools, 2012b) also required descriptions of the planned culture for the school and how this culture will promote a positive academic environment, reinforce student intellectual and social development, and align to the goals of the district's 2020 plan. In response, I wrote:

DDES embraces the vision of the Denver Plan and is eager to lead, inspire, and elevate our profession, embracing the challenge of creating an economically integrated school where all students achieve at high levels. Downtown Denver Expeditionary School is founded on Nel Nodding's care theory, which permeates the three core values of our learning organization.

- *Diversity*: DDES believes that the diversity of our students, staff, and community strengthens and enriches our downtown community. DDES will represent the diversity of Denver, composed of students from various ethnic, socioeconomic, cultural, and academic backgrounds. The concept of *diversity* encompasses acceptance and respect. This concept permeates Downtown Denver Expeditionary School's Culture of Care. At DDES this means caring for ourselves as individuals, caring for each other, caring for our community, caring for our educational system, and caring for our global community. In a culture of care, we grow to understand and accept ourselves and others; embracing diversity as a strength. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment that allows us to move beyond tolerance to embrace and

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celebrate the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual and within our school community. Ensuring the success of all students is a central institutional value of our school.

- *Access and Equity*: DDES believes that it is our moral obligation to create equal opportunity and support for all children; including children of poverty, students learning English as a second language, and students with special needs.

- *Empowerment.* At DDES, we believe in in empowering children to be architects of lives that transcend the ordinary through exploring their unique strengths, talents, and needs. We support the development of children's imagination, creativity, and empathy. Our children will be equipped with the ability to think critically and creatively to thrive in the 21st century. By internalizing the habits and behaviors that demonstrate responsibility, they will be empowered to lead successful, productive lives.

At Downtown Denver Expeditionary School, our school culture is driven by the ten core values we live by:

1. Deliver achievement through care.

2. Embrace and drive positive change through collaboration and innovation.

3. Create joy-filled, personally meaningful experiences that elevate the achievement of all children.

4. Be creative and open-minded.

5. Pursue growth and lifelong learning.

6. Build open and honest relationships with communication and outreach.

7. Build positivity and a family spirit.

8. Do more with less.

9. Be passionate and determined to succeed, collectively and individually.

10. Be humble.

We have developed a school model founded on Expeditionary Learning design principles that is research-based, field-tested, and carefully designed to meet the needs of the students of Denver. By ensuring that our at-risk children become successful, high-performing elementary students, DDES will become part of the broader effort to ensure an excellent education for all of Denver's youth. Downtown Denver Expeditionary School builds a culture of care, respect, responsibility, courage, and kindness, where students and adults are committed to quality work and citizenship. School structures and traditions such as crew, community meetings, exhibitions of student work, and service learning ensure that every student is known and cared for, that student leadership is nurtured, and that contributions to the school and world are celebrated. These structures support the needs of all children, including students with special needs, English Language Learners, and any students at-risk of academic failure. Through the following Expeditionary Learning Core Practices, students and staff are supported to do better work and be better people than they thought possible: Building a Community of Learning, Fostering Character, Establishing Structures for Knowing Students Well, Engaging Families and the Community in the Life of the School, Creating Beautiful Spaces for

Learning, and Promoting Adventure (Excerpt from Charter School Application, April 2012).

In this work, establishing a strong connection between what we aimed to accomplish, its relevance to the community we intended to serve, and the goals of our district authorizer reflected our commitment to supporting the success of various stakeholders, including children and families, educators, community constituents, as well as our district authorizer and state.

<center>***</center>

In an educational era where we are facing a teacher shortage (Colorado Department of Higher Education, 2015; United States Department of Education, 2014), I think school culture is a critical aspect of our educational system that we need to attend to. Nationally, a 23% decrease has been shown in the number of credentialed teachers between 2008-2012 (United States Department of Education, 2014). There are a lot of lessons we can learn from the business and health care sectors to recruit and retain the talent we need to breathe life into the educational system, attain our goals, and find joy and passion in our work. Hargreaves and Fullan invite teachers to the forefront of change, "More and more people care about the quality of teaching. And this is putting teachers and teaching at the forefront of change" (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012, p. xii). The time to elevate our profession is now. In developing the school, I felt a strong sense of urgency to be a positive example of what is possible in education.

> To teach like a professional or teach *like a pro*, as they say in the language of sports, is a personal commitment to rigorous training, continuous learning, collegial feedback, respect for evidence, responsiveness to parents, striving for excellence, and going far beyond the requirements of any written contract. But

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teaching like a pro, day in, day out, cannot be sustained unless all your colleagues teach like pros too. (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. xiv)

I believe that to create school culture, you must possess a strong understanding of yourself. What do you value? What is your purpose? What environment will best support you (and your team) in achieving this purpose? The answers to these questions lie in the culture you create. The answers are often unspoken, and sadly unattended to in many of the schools where I've worked. Similarly, in the development of the school, this felt like one of the least valued aspects of the school design among the founding board of directors. While they wouldn't explicitly communicate that it doesn't matter, it was a topic often referred to as "fluff" and disregarded in favor of topics that carried weight with our district authorizer, state accountability systems, and topics addressed in grant applications.

One of the greatest joys I found in developing the downtown school was in defining the culture and visioning exactly what I wanted to create for teachers. This was largely prompted by conversations with Bennie (Field Journal, 2011) and a book titled *If You Don't Feed the Teachers They Eat the Students*, which was presented by a group doing a book study in my principal preparation program (Class Notes, 2008). While we often focus our attention on children and families, attending to teachers is also a critical aspect of school culture that was not addressed in school and grant applications and their corresponding rubrics. While I knew we would often fall short of our aspirations in the initial stages of development, I had faith that it was teachers who would be the keepers of the vision and bring it to life in our daily practices. As a result, keeping teachers in mind became a source of inspiration that sustained me in the work. Perhaps if more founding

school leaders possessed a depth and breadth of teaching experience, we'd place greater value on teachers and employ systems and structures to support their success in the classroom benefitting students and improving teacher retention simultaneously.

In addition to planning for teachers, planning for school culture involved researching our targeted student population. We solicited support from a downtown non-profit business organization to conduct a census analysis identifying the number of young children living in or near the downtown corridor to support the school application. Additionally, we addressed the requirements articulated in the Charter School Application Guide (Denver Public Schools, 2012b), including identifying the region where we planned to locate the school; grade levels and ages of the children we proposed to serve; anticipated demographics including the percentage of Free and Reduced Lunch, Special Education, and English Language Learners; how serving this population meets district and community needs; and any enrollment priorities we had established (Charter School Application Guide, 2012b).

After serving on three applicant review teams and three start-up grant review teams in the years following the development of the downtown school, planning for special populations is an area that continues to attract debate and discussion as it is among the weakest areas of applications (Applicant Review Team Rubric and Notes, 2013 and 2014). Depending on the allocation of points on the rubric, it can often determine whether to approve a school proposal or award a start-up grant. Deep parent and community engagement are cornerstones of charter school statute, and as a result, school development must showcase significant support from parents, community

members, and organizations. Looking back, two promising practices that I utilized

include: documenting volunteers and the hours they committed to developing the school

and keeping an intent to enroll database. The database was used to capture names,

addresses, children, their gender, and date of birth, the year they'll enter school (many

pregnant parents were interested in the school and as a result, this became important to

document), the grade level they'll enter, their home school, and the region they

represented in the district authorizer's Call for New Quality Schools. Below are two data

displays that represent this data and informed our thinking about prospective locations,
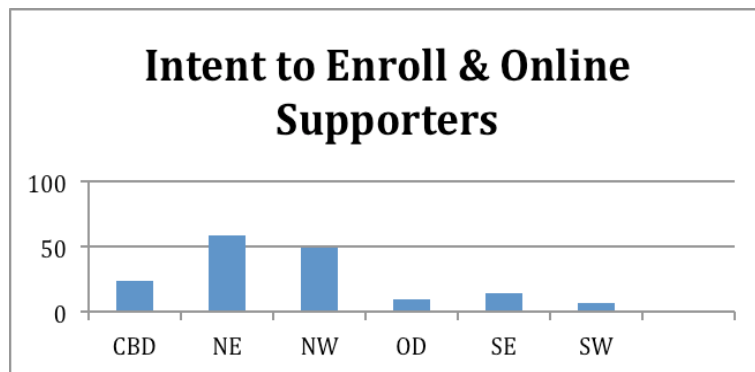
staffing, and grade level configurations.

Figure 8: As of March 23, 2012, we had collected 163 Intent to Enroll forms and 270 Facebook Followers. CBD= Central Business District, NE=Northeast, NW=Northwest, OD=Out of District, SE=Southeast, SW=Southwest.
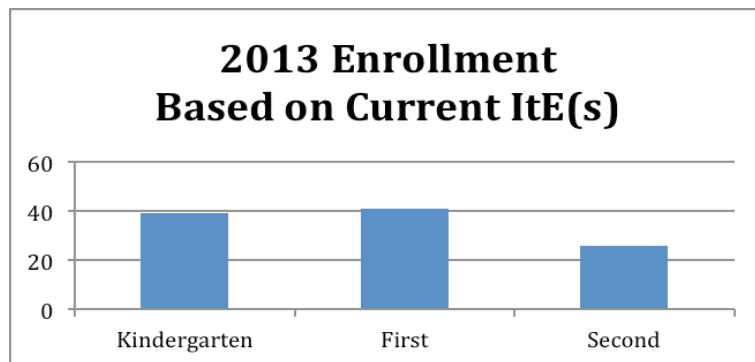
Figure 9: Grade level distribution based on Intent to Enroll forms.

While establishing relationships with families is a top priority, my focus was often equally spent establishing roots in the school community. When creating school documents, engaging in email correspondence, and writing the charter school application, I would often sit and work at local coffee shops and find opportunities to become known in the community. This practice allowed me to introduce myself to business owners and prospective families and supporters. Many of these conversations resulted in having our school brochures displayed in their establishments. One local business owner located in a prominent area of the downtown community offered to display brochures and donate a portion of sales to the school for an entire week as a back to school event! These mini successes helped me believe that a school that technically only existed in my heart and mind was going to become a reality. It also provided additional evidence of support and demand for the school to the authorizer, which was noted as one of the strongest aspects of our school application.

> Network. Network. Network. Always be mindful of the network of support you are capturing throughout the journey. And don't be afraid to reach out and ask for support. This may include displaying school brochures, hosting events, or simply writing a letter of support. While there are many activities a founding school leader engages in, these were two of the greatest lessons learned from my experience. (Field Journal, January 2013)

I find it interesting to note that this is an aspect of school design that is was not taught in my principal preparation program. In recent years, in my work supporting and coaching principals, I have noticed that it appears to be a new idea and inspires a paradigm shift in

their thinking about school leadership. In the state where this research transpired, the State Model Evaluation System 2013-2014 Principal Pilot Report found principals obtained the lowest evaluation ratings on Standard 6, External Leadership (Colorado Department of Education, 2015b). This Standard includes the following Elements: "Family and Community Involvement and Outreach," "Professional Leadership Responsibilities," and "Advocacy for the School" (Colorado Department of Education, 2015a, p. 3). Schools are an integral part of the community and the community possesses assets that can support school goals, elevating both the community and the school. We become so focused on the operations of the school that it is easy to forget that the school is nestled amongst local businesses and community assets such as civic and cultural facilities, nonprofit organizations, and community events. In thinking about this, I arrived at a phrase that showcased how important this was for me: "City as Our Campus" (Field Journal, 2011). "What if a child's school day was spent outside of school? Similar to real life, where you learn in each and every encounter from your informal college?" (Field Journal, 2011). This vision caught on among the founding team and as a result, we began identifying prospective partners and locations that could enrich our students' school experiences. In the downtown area where the school was being proposed, there are large parks, community gardens, two creeks with adjacent walking paths beside them, and an enticing array of arts and cultural facilities. These spaces and places are positioned to extend learning beyond the school walls, not simply for the sake of field trips or picnics at the end of the year as I had experienced in my teaching years, but as places where children can spend significant portions of their school days. Imagine the concept of

"home away from home" and replacing the words "home" with "school." These nearby

spaces and places possessed the potential to become a child's "school away from school"

(Field Journal, 2011). I contacted leaders from every art gallery in the downtown area. I

scheduled meetings to learn more about their educational programs and goals. I aligned

our efforts and found ways where we could enrich each others' work and support our

individual and shared goals. I captured an excerpt from Stephen Covey's *The 3rd*

Alternative and referred to it in email correspondences, meetings, and in my personal

meditations.

> Synergy is a miracle. It is all around us. It is a fundamental principle at work throughout the natural world. Redwood trees intermingle their roots to stand strong against the wind and grow to incredible heights. Green algae and fungus united in the lichen colonize and thrive on bare rock where nothing else will grow. Birds in a V formation can fly nearly twice as far as a lone bird because of the updraft created by the flapping of their wings. If you put two pieces of wood together, they will carry exponentially more weight than each piece can bear separately. Tiny particles in a water drop work together to create a snowflake that is absolutely unlike any other snowflake. In all these cases, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.
>
> One plus one equals two-except in a synergistic situation. For example, a machine that can exert 60,000 pounds per square inch (PSI) on a bar of iron will break it. A bar of chromium of the same size will break at about 70,000 PSI. A bar of nickel will break at about 80,000 PSI. Added up, that's 210,000 PSI. Therefore, if mixed into one iron bar, iron, chromium, and nickel will withstand 210,000 PSI, right?
>
> Wrong. If I mix iron, chromium, and nickel in certain proportions, the resulting bar of metal will withstand 300,000 PSI! Subtracting 210,000 PSI from 300,000 PSI, we're left with 90,000 pounds of strength that seems to have appeared from nowhere. The metals together are 43 percent stronger than they are separately. And that's synergy. (Covey, 2012, p. 12-13)

After meeting with leaders from these art galleries, I articulated a vision:

What if leaders from each and every one of these facilities joined together and imagined how they could collectively support the downtown school, a school that was conveniently located in their backyard? A school where we didn't have to have money for transportation, funding for field trips, etc. A school where students could walk to their facility. An opportunity to engage their families in the arts and cultural facilities? (Field Journal, 2011)

This was an aspect of the school design that ignited a fire in my soul. Looking back, I realize that all autonomous schools seem to have some aspect of the school design reflective of the passions of the school leader. Whether it is an all boys school, a school focused on health and wellness, sustainability, or soccer, or a school integrating the arts using the "city as our campus," we all bring aspects of ourselves to the work.

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I was developing the school after completing my doctoral coursework when I should have been working on my dissertation, which had an entirely different focus at the time. In my doctoral program, I had a professor who studied under Elliot Eisner at Stanford, who had studied under John Dewey at Harvard. As a result, I was greatly influenced by the principles of constructivist learning and was a strong believer in arts education. In the process, I have also learned that it's important to identify your sources of inspiration and where you are obtaining information. In my experiences developing the downtown school, I met many individuals who had learned to simply parrot what the authorizer wanted to hear with little attention to the depth and complexity of teaching and learning (Field Notes, 2012).

As a result of my personal love for the arts, and as a result of my scholarly

studies, I searched for quotes to capture the importance of arts-education. I landed on the

following, which inspired me to design and facilitate an Arts Partnership Summit:

> "Children, like us, seldom voluntarily pursue activities for which they receive
> little or no satisfaction. Experiencing the aesthetic in the context of intellectual
> and artistic work is a source of pleasure that predicts best what students are likely
> to do when they can do whatever they would like to do" (Eisner, 2002, p. xiii).
> Any practice can have aesthetic qualities. "It falls to those of us in education to try
> to design the situations in which children's efforts became increasingly more
> sophisticated, sensitive, imaginative and skilled." (Eisner, 2002, p. xiv) (Field
> Notes, 2011)

Leaders from the art galleries were able to rally around the idea of a school

focused on providing opportunities for children to experience the aesthetic in the context

of intellectual and artistic pursuits utilizing their facilities as our campus. All of us

seemed to be madly in love with the idea. I selected a date when all of us were available,

solicited a few teacher volunteers to help with set up and logistics, secured a free location

at one of their facilities and asked the manager of a neighboring restaurant if he'd be

willing to cater the event for free. One of the things I learned along the way was to ask.

The worst they can say is no, and you're right where you started. In this case, he was an

arts enthusiast and responded with an emphatic, "Yes!" He hurried to the kitchen (going

during an off hour is helpful if you're interested in employing this on your own) and

brought out his head chef. We began brainstorming ideas and landed on a variety of

appetizers and desserts, a perfect compliment to our two-hour lunch meeting. I believe if

people are volunteering their time, talent, and energy to extend beyond the requirements

of their job description, you should make it fun, make it relevant, and make it rewarding

(and inspiring, if at all possible). The words I used in email correspondences, invitations,

and even on the agenda reflected my intent (See Appendix C). Given that I did not have a

predetermined outcome for the meeting, I included the following words at the bottom of

the agenda in large, colored font:

Until We Live It

It is so tempting to want the answers before we begin the journey. We like to

know our way. We like to have maps. We like to have guides. But we are more

like a breathing puzzle, a living bag of pieces, and each day shows us what a piece

or two is for, where it might go, how it might fit. Over time, a picture starts to

emerge by which we begin to understand our place in the world. (Nepo, 2011, p.

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I wanted to create a culture where we imagined the possibilities, where we crafted a

vision of what was possible regardless of what we'd experienced, within the culture of

care that was becoming a well-known part of the school. Ironically, none of these

individuals had sat at the same table before. As a result, we spent time introducing

ourselves, making connections, and laughing. We generated ideas for integrating the arts

into the curriculum. Many of these organizations had mapped their exhibitions and

experiences to state and national standards. As a result, the ideas were rich and directly

related to the academic goals of the school. The culminating activity included crafting a

letter of support for the school. Once the ideas had percolated and been captured on chart

paper, this was an easy task. At the conclusion of the meeting, I had added to the body of

evidence evidenced in letters of support to include in our charter school application.

In addition to wondering why learning had to occur within the walls of the school and classroom between the hours of 8:00 and 3:00, I wondered why after school care had to consist of snack time, homework completion, and children playing board games selected from a closet when it could take place at one of the nearby arts and cultural facilities. In a meeting with the Director of Education at nearby Children's Museum, I realized that they were in the process of writing a grant to extend their influence and resources to school children. As a result, we collaboratively constructed the application and developed a plan for children to walk or take a bus (depending upon where we secured a school facility) to the museum after school.

Given the Director of Education's depth of expertise in curriculum development, and my recent experience facilitating the Arts Partnership Summit, I asked if she'd be interested in co-facilitating or sponsoring a curriculum development summit where we'd work with prospective teachers and Expeditionary Learning School Designers to design the curriculum during the planning year prior to the school opening, often referred to as Year 0. She enthusiastically agreed. I drafted an overview of our proposed collaboration to be included in the school's application and sent it to her for feedback.

DDES teachers and school leaders work collaboratively to ensure that a set of school-wide, standards-based curriculum maps acts as the foundation for all planning and instruction. All DDES curriculum will be developed using Colorado Academic Standards and Common Core Standards through an Understanding by Design backwards planning model with Expeditionary School Designers and DDES staff. Specific standards, learning targets, and assessments will be

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identified within each expedition. Concept maps describe a vertical sequence of learning expeditions and projects and they define the key content and skills that need to be addressed at each grade level and discipline. The maps for Downtown Denver Expeditionary School will be developed by highly efficacious teachers who volunteer their time to attend a Curriculum Partnership Summit in February 2013. This Summit will be facilitated by Colleen Stanevich, Expeditionary Learning School Designer; Sarah Brenkert, Director of Education, Children's Museum of Denver; and Jennifer Arzberger, Executive Director, Downtown Denver Expeditionary School. DDES Curriculum Maps will be crafted through ongoing professional development at the beginning of each school year and revised and refined throughout the year to support student achievement. Each curriculum map will be designed with an intentional alignment to utilize the rich resources available in downtown Denver, allowing DDES students to use the city as our campus. DDES curriculum maps are focused on standards alignment, skills and concepts, and content to be learned and assessed within each expedition, ensuring that all students have access to a high-level curriculum. Please refer to Appendix L for a snapshot of Downtown Denver Expeditionary Schools' Scope and Sequence. (Excerpt from Charter School Application, 2012, pages 21-22)

Opportunities such as the Arts Partnership Summit and Curriculum Partnership Summit brought the culture of the school to life. As was often the case, individuals were incredibly excited to support the development of a downtown school and became active advocates for the school. These events occurred as a result of immersing myself in the

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community, making connections between our shared interests, and dreaming big. Coincidentally, "the having of wonderful ideas" is one of the Design Principles of Expeditionary Learning (Expeditionary Learning Core Practices, 2011). Bringing the mission and vision to life through intentional actions was something that inspired me throughout my journey. Acting with intention and aligning my intentions with my actions is a practice I carry with me inspired by my yoga practice. I also believe it is a critical practice for school leaders to employ.

Leadership

The need for a dramatically more skilled and highly educated workforce in a global knowledge economy – combined with profound changes in students' and families' life circumstances – have created unprecedented demands on education leaders.
– Tony Wagner

The work of acting as the founding executive director was empowering, gratifying, personally rewarding, exhilarating and absolutely exhausting. In the early stages of the journey, I didn't know what I didn't know. Similar to entering a doctoral program, your passion, thirst for leaning, and desire to make a difference fuel and excite you, yet somewhere along the way you have the revelation that you really do not know nearly as much as you thought you did. I had the same revelation in my experiences founding a school. I often wondered about the daily routines of extraordinary leaders. While I have read numerous authors on leadership, including Carnegie, Covey, Kouzes and Posner, Maxwell, Rath, Sinek, etc., I have not come across a book that divulges the details of their daily lives. I have always wondered what their morning routines consisted of, what they do when they feel defeated, how they celebrate their accomplishments, and how they keep a sense of balance in their lives.

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While a day in the life of a school leader is interesting, James Nehring (2002) has detailed it in his story of creating his ideal school in the book *Upstart Startup*. In his narrative account, Nehring details his day and ironically it mirrors my experiences: 5:00 am wake up, hustle and bustle throughout the day attempting to meet each and every demand for your time, departing at 5:00 pm to grab dinner before a 7:00 pm meeting. In an attempt to shine a spotlight into my daily routine, I highlight the rituals that sustained me throughout the process. They continue to be practices that support me in times of celebration and struggle, and it is my hope that they inspire the reader to consider small shifts they can make to improve their quality of life, achieve balance, and achieve a level of happiness that fuels success. Additionally, I include an excerpt from the Charter School Application to support readers in planning for this aspect of school design.

Upon review of self-reflective data, data resulting from "introspection, self-analysis, and self-evaluation of who you are and what you are" (Chang, 2008, p. 95), contained in the pages of my field notes, the following practices were my greatest sources of self care: meditation, yoga, music, painting, guzzling "Superfood smoothies," reading and collecting quotations, and seeking words of inspiration in books and poems. I will describe meditation and yoga in greater detail as these practices were less familiar to me, and in reflection were what enabled me to conquer the highs and lows of the experience.

The bookends of each day were dedicated to quieting my mind and creating a positive focus. I searched YouTube using the search term "meditation for…" and examined the list of possibilities: meditation for positive thinking, success, sleep, anxiety, deep relaxation. You name it, it can be found on YouTube. My favorite was an eighteen

minute guided meditation uploaded by TheHonestGuys. This process can be time

consuming, so I quickly learned to evaluate my options by looking for the number of

views, and attending to the individual who posted the video. I frequently watched

"Guided Meditation – Blissful Deep Relaxation" by TheHonestGuys (2011), possessing

over 3.8 million views. I also enjoyed Deepak Chopra and Louise Hay's posts.

Eventually, I started watching YouTube videos by Chade-Meng Tan as well as a host of

TED Talks while doing my hair and makeup in the morning. Given that my reading list

was related to the questions contained in the Charter School Application Guide, I had

little time to read books of personal preference. Yet these were the types of books that

sustained and inspired me. I also began following these individuals on Facebook. Their

posts provided sources of inspiration and became short mantras I could focus on

throughout the day. According to Deepak Chopra (2014), the word mantra has two

parts: *man*, which is the root of the Sanskrit word for mind and *tra*, which is the root of

the word instrument. A mantra is therefore an instrument of the mind, a powerful sound

or vibration that you can use to enter a deep state of meditation, allowing the mind to

experience deeper levels of awareness. This practice helped me focus my mind on the

positive, quiet my mind from the internal banter reviewing all of the day's events and

tomorrow's to-do list, and achieve a deeper night's sleep. Waking 5-10 minutes early to

meditate also helped me attract one good thing after another rather than being in response

mode; responding to emails, phone calls, and requests for meetings. Instead, I was

proactively taking charge of my day.

Yoga and meditation provided me with the ability to do what Google's Chade-Meng Tan refers to as "search inside yourself." Tan, author of *Search Inside Yourself: The Unexpected Path to Achieving Success, Happiness (And World Peace)*, describes the multiple benefits of breathing, mindfulness, and meditation including its ability to reduce stress (which everyone working in today's educational landscape can use), increase well-being, heighten focus and creativity, promote optimism and resiliency, and experience peace, compassion, and happiness while doing so (Tan, 2012). Additionally, Nel Noddings places self-knowledge as "more powerful than the inert knowledge of others that we gain from books and lectures" (Noddings, 2005, p. 118).

While it was difficult to make time for fitness, yoga was a priority that helped me process through difficult decisions. I would carry problems into the yoga studio, and after an hour, had turned the problem into a potential opportunity or decided to "let it go," a lesson Disney's Queen Elsa later taught the world in the award-winning movie *Frozen* (Del Vecho, 2013). Immediately after exiting the studio, I would turn to my yoga journal, captured on a notes page in my iPhone (2012), and record lessons learned and words of wisdom to inspire my success. "Be like clay. Mold yourself to become what you need in this moment. You don't have to hang on to things that don't serve you." "Play under the sky." "Bring consciousness to our conduct." "Inhale strength. Exhale fear. What you're afraid of will always be there. Walk into the fear. Release attachment to an outcome." These mini lessons sometimes felt like saviors. Short words and phrases that when combined with the physical practice of yoga, allowed me to process anything I encountered on the journey. The best lesson I've learned to-date, came from my favorite

yoga teacher Sarah Crow, who referenced the book *How Yoga Works*, in her opening of class:

> We all have mental chatter. There's even a Sanskrit word for it, vritti that the ancient yogis came up with thousands of years ago to describe the whirlpool of thoughts that constantly swirl through your mind. The mind naturally creates perspectives. When this occurs, we must ask ourselves, "Is it true? Does it matter?"

I found it interesting to think about how we create perspectives and how those perspectives inform the creation of our reality.
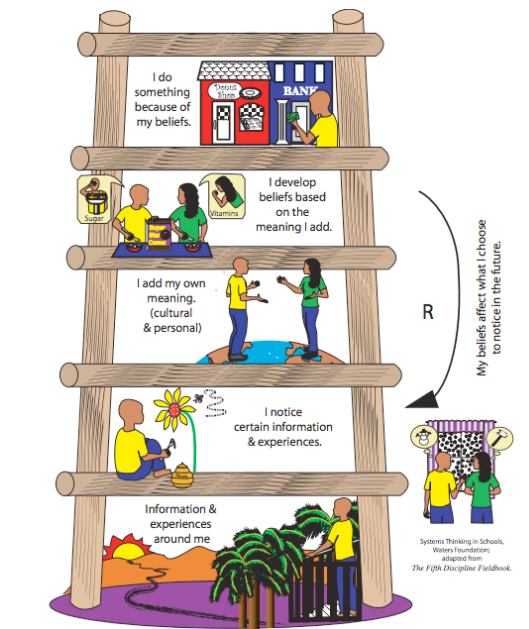
Figure 10: Ladder of Inference. Systems Thinking in Schools, Waters Foundation; adapted from *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*.

I often think about this through the "ladder of inference" (Senge, 1994). When working with the Waters Foundation, I often used the ladder of inference to support children in examining their beliefs and exploring how their beliefs shape what they see. In the years spent working in leadership roles, I have used the ladder of inference as a communication tool to help myself and others explore perspectives different from our own. This tool helped me think through conversations and issues that arose during the process of developing the downtown school. I even kept a small wooden ladder in my home office to remind myself to be aware of when I was "climbing the ladder" (Field Notes, 2011). This reminded me to be

mindful of my thinking process, and embark upon my journey as a school leader with increased awareness, a practice also supported by my meditation and yoga practices.

Starting from the bottom of the ladder, we capture information and experiences as we navigate the world. Twenty people could experience the same event and each report a different description of the event. The bottom rung of the ladder describes how we each notice, or select, information from our experiences. We then add meaning and develop beliefs based on the meaning added. Our beliefs animate our actions. I think this is of critical importance for school leaders in an era when schools are increasingly becoming more diverse. With each charter school enacting a unique design, the field of charter schools is becoming an arena of diverse educational innovations reflecting individuals' beliefs about education. This is a form of self-knowledge that develops as we "live with ourselves and have many opportunities to check on the accuracy of our knowledge" (Noddings, 2005, p. 118). As a school leader, I conducted many school visits and engaged in many conversations with visionary educators. These experiences provided me with opportunities to notice information, add my own meaning, and develop beliefs that informed my actions in designing the school. Coupled with the desires of founding families, my experiences and self-knowledge significantly contributed to the design of the educational program.

Educational Program

An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.

— Benjamin Franklin

While the excitement and energy created by imagining the possibilities fueled and inspired me, I often felt like I was "speaking a foreign language" (Field Journal 2013). While everyone seemed to be using a common vernacular throwing around words like "extended school day," "blended learning," and "data-driven instruction," I was visioning something entirely different. In reflection, nearly every great idea I had resulted in reflecting on Bennie's open-ended questions provoking me to imagine the possibilities. This challenged my thinking and inspired me to return to my home office, staring at my "ladder of inference" (1994), and wondering how my experiences, perceptions, and self-knowledge were informing my beliefs and actions.

This ongoing reflective stance brought me a great amount of joy in the process. I learned that I enjoy thinking and doing equally and developing a school provided me with the opportunity to do both. Think, wonder, observe children in schools, imagine the possibilities, play with ideas, dialogue with Bennie and other educational leaders, make decisions, and execute the plan.

The educational program section of the Charter School Application Guide contained eight sections and forty-six corresponding questions. These sections include the essential components of school design: curriculum, school schedule and calendar, progress monitoring and assessment, English language learner students, special education

students, academic intervention and acceleration, gifted and talented students, and supplemental programming.

For a moment, I'd like to return to the importance of words. In various meetings with educators and school board members passionate about serving special populations of students, I learned never to use a description prior to the word "students." For example, the term "special education students" implies that the disability defines the student (Field Notes, 2012). Instead, I was taught to say, "students with special needs" communicating that they're students first. When referring to English Language Learners, one school board member introduced me to the term "emergent bilinguals" (Field Journal, 2012). This communicates the value of knowing more than one language, rather than being referred to as individuals placing a burden on our educational system. Given the culture of care I sought to create, I found this to be important information. When you listen closely and pay attention to details, we often use words that shed a negative light on special populations of students. If we truly wish to change the world, we need to inspire and empower each and every individual on the planet to live wide-awake, joy-filled lives. This begins with caring for ourselves, caring for our staff, and caring for children and families; in that order. As Noddings notes, "Combining work, exercise, and play may be a key element in achieving some stability and serenity" (Noddings, 2005, p. 76).

As a public school educator, my allegiances aligned with Nel Noddings. "The main aim of education should be to produce competent, caring, loving, and loveable people" (Noddings, 2005, p. 174). The traditional organization of schools are morally and intellectually inadequate for today's contemporary society (Noddings, 2005). "We live in

an age troubled by social problems that force us to reconsider what we do in schools" (Noddings, 2005, p. 173). Providing individuals, students and staff, with opportunities to care for themselves was an important aspect of the downtown school's development. My experiences taught me about the important of self-care and placing myself at the center of my work.

While I often found myself putting myself last during the development of the school, I had to constantly remind myself of the importance of taking time to make a nutritious Superfood smoothie in the morning to jump start my day by filling my body with nutrients that would sustain me throughout a busy day. I had to quit allowing fitness to be the first agenda item eliminated as priorities superseded my health and well-being. Caring for myself allowed me to bring my best self to each and every encounter, enabling me to make greater progress and maximize the use of my time. As educators, when we do this, we are better able to care for children and families (Field Notes, 2012).

In the process of responding the questions in the Charter Application Guide, it occurred to me that our entire educational system is incredibly reactive rather than proactive (Field Notes, 2012). As a result of recent litigation, increased attention was placed upon serving "English Language Learners" and "Special Education Students." Instead of adopting a reactive stance, I chose a positivity paradigm and focused my thinking on being proactive. While discussing this controversy with Bennie, he asked, "Why shouldn't every student have an ILP (Individualized Learning Plan)?" What a brilliant idea?!

Every child is an individual with unique interests, talents, and passions, so why would we prescribe a one-size-fits-all model of instruction and 'differentiate' to meet the needs of individual students when we could start by providing an individualized education that engages each and every child. We need to create schools that provide opportunities for students to be self-directed learners, while mastering the standards, and supported by caring educators. (Field Notes, 2012)

One aspect of the school design that brought this to life was what I termed "Passion Pursuits." Inspired by a school visit and designed in response to my desire to provide teachers with opportunities to collaborate during the school day, Passion Pursuits provide opportunities for students to pursue a personal passion, learning to make educational decisions, and grow in their knowledge of self. Passion Pursuits provide members of the community (retirees, parents, and local businesses) with an opportunity to volunteer their time and talents to share their personal passions and expertise with students in small class settings. The structure of Passion Pursuits allows for two additional hours of collaboration and professional learning each week. This also allowed the downtown school to keep children in school, engaged in exciting, personally selected learning experiences instead of using an early release structure to achieve time for collaboration.

DDES Celebrations
Community of Care Week: Friendship Day, Play Along Day, Good Deed Day, DDES Cares Day, Community Heroes Day, and Community Games Saturday. This week is scheduled early in the school year to foster relationships across grade levels, promote a service mindset, and

intentionally structure activities to promote successful economic integration.
Diversity Days: National Diversity Day is an annual event on the first Friday in October (Diversity Awareness Month). It is a day to celebrate and embrace who we are, despite our differences, no matter what race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, nationality, or disability. A day to reflect on and learn about different cultures and ideologies. A day to vow acceptance and tolerance. A day to consciously address these areas at educational and religious institutions, as well as in the workplace and at home. DDES will establish a week of activities to support this mission.
Family Literacy Night: DDES will bring in local authors and teacher experts to facilitate a joy-filled evening of learning and literacy. Teacher leaders will facilitate parent workshops identifying instructional strategies parents and families can utilize to support student achievement.
Do 1 Thing: DDES students will be organized into "families" composed of students from each grade level, led by one parent. Parents will facilitate family meetings to identify one thing that each and every student can do to make our school community, city, state, country, and world a better place. These monthly meetings will support our culture of care and empower students to make a difference in their community. These family posters will be posted in DDES Welcome Center.
Night of the Arts: Toward the end of the school year, student artwork will be showcased with students positioned throughout the school building to perform, play music, sing, and showcase their creative talents.
10 Before 10: Inspired by the Governor's 5 before 5, to promote cultural engagement.
Teacher Adventures: All DDES staff members will propose an annual "adventure" inviting students to participate in a small group out of school event with staff. Examples may include Night at the Rockies; Football, Frisbee and Fun in the Sun; Movie Night; Trip to the Bookstore; Overnight at School; etc. Staff will propose their "adventure" and the DDES Parent Teacher League will approve or revise proposed "adventures" to ensure they align with the interests of our student and parent community. This tradition will serve as our annual fundraiser. Half of the students for each "adventure" will be selected through a school-wide raffle to ensure access and equity in student participation. The other half of the students will be selected through a silent auction at our Community of Care annual celebration.

Figure 11: DDES Celebration

In addition to addressing the questions related to the charter school application, I

found it important to consider aspects of the school design that were not required in the

application. Similar to the creation of Passion Pursuits, I created school celebrations as a way to bring the "culture of care" to life. The table below contains the ideas that were inspired by my passion, the passions of parents and community members, and prospective educators. Intentionally focusing on celebrations and aligning the school mission and vision with the talents in the community was a critical aspect of downtown school's culture of care.

One of the recurring themes related to educational programming noted in my Field Journal was the number of conversations with district personnel and board members where I had to defend my belief that an engaging, Expeditionary Learning school model was best for *all* kids. "Why would engaging, joy-filled, personally meaningful learning experiences only apply to some children, specifically children of privilege?" (Field Journal, 2012). One of the most perplexing challenges I faced in designing the school's educational program was feeling "a tug of war between what I believed was best for children and the practices schools were enacting to serve and support children of poverty" (Field Notes, 2012).

When visiting schools with high percentages of students qualifying for free and reduced price lunch, structures of compliance were the norm. Morning meetings showcasing structured reward systems for exhibiting positive behaviors, call and response pedagogical practices providing opportunities for children to parrot memorized bits of information, and an emphasis on following directions and doing what you're told characterized the culture of the schools I visited. Many of these schools had demonstrated metrics of success in student achievement and college acceptance, which made me think

they were doing something extraordinary within the walls of their buildings. Yet, once inside, I witnessed children not being able to talk in the hallways during passing periods, being publicly questioned for not completing their homework, and being silenced when attempting to express their ideas. This seems to be in direct contrast with the highly sought after Expeditionary Learning schools I visited. Those schools were characterized by

> providing academically rigorous learning expeditions, case studies, projects, fieldwork, and service learning projects to children of all backgrounds and ability levels inspiring students to think and work as professionals do, contributing high-quality work to authentic audiences beyond the classroom. Teachers and school leaders in these buildings ensure that students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds are represented in the curriculum, supporting students' understanding and engagement while building positive identities. (Field Journal, 2012)

It appeared that some schools were "silencing the self" while others were "celebrating and empowering the self" (Field Notes, 2012, 2013).

When discussing this dichotomy, one of the questions Bennie inspired me to ponder was, "What is the purpose of schooling?" In the very beginning of the journey he had asked me to generate a list of attributes to describe the school's graduates. Who would they be? What would they know as a result of attending the downtown school? I returned to that list, as well as interview notes reflecting parents' responses to the following question: "What do you want your child to learn as a result of attending the downtown school?" Parents' responses fascinated me. At a community event for Latinos,

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one parent told me, "I want my child to know that if you break the rules, you go to jail" (Field Journal, 2012). In a subsequent meeting with a successful entrepreneur, another stated, "I want my child to graduate knowing that he doesn't have to go to college. He needs to learn how to learn, how to question and think critically, how to be self-directed" (Field Journal, 2012).

Creating a school is a tricky balance between doing what you know is best for children based on your education and experience, responding to parents' input, and meeting the demands of your authorizer. Bennie stated it best when discussing the tug of war I was feeling between what I wanted to create and what was required to gain authorization from the district: "If you don't do what they want, you won't have a job. If you only do what they want, you shouldn't have a job" (Field Journal, 2011). Designing the educational program of the school requires attention to this balance. I was also told that "success generates autonomy" and to "present a plan that would be approved, then ensure students' academic success to achieve autonomy" (Field Journal, 2012). Navigating this tug of war requires deep self-knowledge and awareness.

Teaching

It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.

– Albert Einstein

Fundamental to a school's success is to recruit a team of talent who possess a passion and commitment to nurturing the development of children and have a deep level of commitment to the school's mission and vision, a strong knowledge

of curriculum and instruction, and a depth of content knowledge. (Field Journal,

2011)

When considering teacher recruitment, hiring, and retention, as well as teacher coaching,

evaluation, and professional development, I reflected upon my experiences as a teacher,

gifted and talented facilitator, and instructional coach. I sought teachers who genuinely

wanted to make the world a better place through education. Once again I found myself

"speaking a foreign language" when describing those who I wanted to hire. In my work

as an adjunct professor at a downtown campus, I invited my students to tryout for roles in

the school. Those who were interested met with me on an individual basis, I shared the

vision and organizational chart capturing the positions available, and invited those who

were still interested to take a hip hop class with me at the local dance studio. This

provided me with an opportunity to see the individual in a non-educational setting. While

I used to teach children hip hop and swing dancing in my early years of teaching, I was

by no means an expert and would often use hip hop as an opportunity to let go of

perfectionism and laugh (often at myself). Cedric, the instructor, was a phenomenal

teacher. Like my yoga teachers, I often watched in awe as he led individuals with varying

degrees of ability to achieve a common goal: the sequence of moves he'd planned to

enact in each night's class. He would model, observe, provide individualized attention,

and bring the whole group together to learn the next part of the sequence. If hip-hop class

were school, I'd be in a targeted intervention group. I danced alongside prospective

teachers, laughed, and then debriefed the experience with them, inviting them to share

how they felt as well as to identify any connections to teaching in the classroom. This

exercise allowed me to see prospective candidates as individuals first and as teachers

second. For a long time, I've held the belief that children do not quit school -- they quit

teachers. As a result, being a caring individual who children can relate to is among the

top qualities I look for in a teacher.

Additionally, I crafted opportunities for prospective teachers to work alongside

me, an Expeditionary Learning School Designer, and individuals from nearby museums

to develop curriculum. I wanted to observe prospective candidates' thinking and selection

of materials as a part of the hiring process. Ultimately, I wanted teacher recruitment and

selection to be an active and engaging process, reflective of our school's culture, rather

than a series of back-to-back questions generating canned responses. I also wanted to

watch candidates with students and examine their writing abilities. When possible, I

visited prospective candidates' classrooms and also examined parent communication

documents, including report card comments and newsletters. Given that many of these

individuals were current or former students, this was a very exciting process as I was able

to see aspects of their learning in teacher preparation come to life in their classrooms.

> Where the mind is without fear
> And the head is held high,
>   Where knowledge is free;
>   Where the world has not been broken
> Up into fragments by narrow domestic
>   Walls;
> Where words come out from the
> depth of truth;
> Where tireless striving
> Stretches its arms towards
>   perfection;
> Where the clear stream of reason
> Has not lost its way into the
> dreary desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forward
By thee into ever-widening
    Thought and action –
Into that heaven of freedom,
My Father,
    Let my country awake.

    Rabindranath Tagore, "Gitanjali 35". (as cited in Wagner & Kegan, 2006, p. xiv)

My goal was to create a school where teachers could grow in their professional practices and thrive in the classroom and in their personal lives. I wanted the downtown school to be as much a place and space for teachers to learn, grow, and become "architects of lives that transcend the ordinary" (Charter School Application, 2012) as it was for children and families.

Increasingly, our schools are becoming fear-based places of accountability and evaluation. Executive functions performed by areas in the frontal lobes have become compromised by fear and individual teachers are losing the ability to fully evaluate the consequences of their actions. (Field Journal, 2012)

We must create a school culture of empowerment among our teachers. Two of the downtown school's operating principles were focused on achieving this:

6 . Leading, Inspiring, and Elevating our Profession
We will advance education by setting an example as an effective, diverse, and accountable school; by continuously investing in ways to become better at what we do; and by making available our discoveries, large and small, to colleagues in the cause of education. DDES faculty possesses an ethic of excellence and cares deeply for our educational system. We achieve great results through learning, reflection, and intentional practice. As a result, DDES provides our faculty and staff members a special place to pursue the science and art of teaching. We want to align the rewards of teaching more closely with the value it brings to society, provide teachers opportunities to deepen their skills, and be a place where careers, in and out of the classroom, can flourish. To accomplish this, DDES teachers will engage in participatory action research as a component of their ongoing

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professional development and commitment to our community. Participatory action research is a reflective process of progressive problem solving led by individuals working collaboratively as a part of a community of practice to improve the way they address students' needs and solve problems. The purpose of participatory action research is to improve our instructional strategies, practices, and knowledge of the learning environment through intentional planning, action, and fact-finding about the intended and unintended results of the action. At the conclusion of each school year, DDES faculty will invite parents, students, community members, and professionals from nearby schools and universities to showcase our professional learning.

7 . A Commitment to Research and Development
A school design, and masterpiece, is never finished. The Downtown Denver Expeditionary School will utilize ongoing research and development to ensure increasing quality in its program. Every five to seven years, we will do a complete review of our school design. In between these major design efforts, there will be upgrades in the adoption of new technologies, new courseware, etc. as well as new partnerships established within our community. (Mission, Vision, and Operating Principles, December 6, 2011)

In my experiences working as a teacher in three states, four districts, and five schools, I observed many of my principals making decisions about professional development without teachers' input. In one school, the principal was so afraid that teachers would file a grievance against her that we rarely came together other than for required meetings within our contracted school days. Ironically, the best teachers I know are thirsty for knowledge, they seek professional learning opportunities, they enjoy meaningful collaboration with their colleagues, and invest their own time and money in such pursuits. As a result of these experiences, I wanted the teaching culture of the downtown school to meet the needs and demands of the best and brightest teachers, not those who would begrudgingly arrive at meetings uninterested and disengaged.

In *An Ethic of Excellence*, Ron Berger writes:

I believe that the work of excellence is transformational. Once a student sees that he or she is capable of excellence, that student is never quite the same. There is a

new self-image, a new notion of possibility. There is an appetite for excellence. After students have had a taste of excellence, they're never quite satisfied with less; they're always hungry. (Berger, 2003, p. 8)

By replacing the word "student" with "teacher," I am able to capture my greatest aspirations as a school leader. I hope to empower teachers to see that they are capable of excellence and to develop a highly competent and capable sense of self.

> *I believe that the work of excellence is transformational.* Once a [teacher] sees that he or she is capable of excellence, that teacher is never quite the same. There is a new self-image, a new notion of possibility. There is an appetite for excellence. After teachers have had a taste of excellence, they're never quite satisfied with less; they're always hungry. (Berger, 2003, p. 8)

Further, if I replace the word "teacher" with "individual," I am able to capture my hopes and dreams for our school, community, nation, and the world.

> *I believe that the work of excellence is transformational.* Once an [individual] sees that he or she is capable of excellence, that individual is never quite the same. There is a new self-image, a new notion of possibility. There is an appetite for excellence. After individuals have had a taste of excellence, they're never quite satisfied with less; they're always hungry. (Berger, 2003, p. 8)

It takes each and every one of us, possessing an ethic of excellence, to move mountains and achieve the extraordinary.

Governance

Scars fade with time. And the ones that never go away, well, they build character,

maturity, caution.

— Erin McCarthy

The one area of the school development that left me shell-shocked was governance. The Governing Board is the entity legally responsible for holding the charter, entering into the contract with the district authorizer and overseeing the operation

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and academic performance of the charter school. Governance includes all financial planning, budgeting and oversight (Charter School Application Guide, 2012). While rallying parents and families took significant attention throughout the process, it was a relatively easy task for parent volunteers to assume. Finding individuals with the capacities needed to serve on the governing board was a greater challenge. The mission, vision, and contribution to a vibrant downtown economy attracted many individuals' interests and together, Mildred and I were able to rally an impressive team of talent and exceed the requirements of the school application.

Second to the educational program section of the Charter School Application, this was the most time consuming and difficult section to compose. As a result, I took the lead on working with a consultant to design the budget, while Mildred continued meeting with individuals who may be interested in serving on the governing board. After identifying individuals and making initial contact via phone or email, Mildred and I would meet with them. I would convey the school's mission and vision, overview of the school model, field questions, and articulate our areas of need. Three committed parents from the executive committee agreed to serve on the governing board. While this provided a great start, I felt we needed to recruit individuals possessing a strong background in business and finance to support our facilities search, potential architectural development, human resources, and the development of a $5M budget. The search began.

I recall the early stages of developing the school budget. I had downloaded the Charter School Budget Template (Call for New Quality Schools, 2012), which was basically an excel file containing instructions, a page to articulate the assumptions,

including enrollment projections, and tabs for year 0 through 5. I stared at the blank pages. After graduating high school a year early, I entered college as an accounting and finance major. I'm not the typical "afraid of math" type, yet this was a daunting task. I could easily read and follow instructions, and enter enrollment projections based on our intent-to-enroll data, but I was completely unaware of the rules and restrictions related to specific grants and how dollars could be allocated, the cost of employee benefits, and identifying competitive salaries for all school personnel. The latter was an easy half-day research project consisting of searching local districts webpages and locating their classified and certified salary schedules. All of my hopes and dreams in recruiting a team of talent seemed unrealistic and unattainable. No matter how hard I tried, I was only able to obtain an average teacher salary of $45,000, and members of the executive committee questioned that being too high. Additionally, I felt I had to champion for my administrative salary. In the end, I was unable to achieve favorable results in either arena. I felt defeated and undervalued. Even as a public school teacher I made more than $45,000 per year. How was I supposed to recruit a team of talent who possessed the work ethic, dedication, and competencies to bring this vision to life?

In preparing for a presentation to a prominent non-profit business organization's board of directors representing the downtown area, I hoped to find someone to volunteer to join our team of talent, someone who knew how to develop and manage a $5M plus budget. As serendipity would have it, an individual from a large health care company responsible for the region's strategy development and implementation, capital planning and investment, business intelligence strategy, health care reform implementation, as well

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as national facilities services, including facility design, construction, maintenance and security pulled me aside after my presentation to express an interest in being involved in the school's development. My prayers had been answered! These are the kind of wins that can make or break your success. They gave me huge hope and inspired my momentum. After recruiting this talented individual, we also secured another parent who was a psychologist and assistant professor at a nearby university in addition to a retired vice president of a global media and entertainment businesses. We had successfully composed a full governing board consisting of seven individuals who possessed the diverse talents and skills needed to operate a school.

While I felt our team of talent strengthening, I also felt the level of sophistication of the tasks increasing. In addition to managing all of the school-based components, I was now working with our attorneys and the founding governing board to adopt our articles of incorporation, while preparing for our first governing board meeting. Part of the requirements for demonstrating our capacity as a board included attending conferences and completing modules designed to support our success. This required an added layer of leadership, which could be referred to as managing up. At this point in time, I felt as though I was "managing up, down, side to side, and all over the place" (Field Journal, 2012). My 12-hour days were becoming 16-18 hour days, and I had very little time to spend with my two-year-old daughter.

In addition to the added demands upon my time, I was writing a host of small grants and a large grant to a well-known foundation to obtain an additional $100,000 to support start-up costs, including my administrative salary and benefits. While the charter

school application felt like "creating a giant mural of the school, the foundation's

application zoomed in on the granular details of the picture" (Field Journal, 2012), I

worked to refine the detailed budget for the grant, and I now had to negotiate details with

the governing board. This was a much more formal process than the executive committee

meeting we had at Mildred's loft. We were now meeting in the boardroom of our

attorney's downtown office, capturing formal minutes, and making motions to vote.

After one meeting examining the details of the $100,000 grant budget, one of the

leading board members caught me alone in the elevator and stated that I would not be

receiving my salary and benefits as articulated in the grant proposal. Additionally, she

stated that my administrative assistant would not be hired at the salary articulated in the

grant and would also not receive benefits. "You are lucky to have this job," she remarked

(Field Journal, 2012). I was speechless. Ding. The elevator delivered us to the lobby, we

quickly said goodbye, and went our separate ways. Given that we had recently presented

these salaries in the proposed budget to the foundation and had been approved, I was

unsure how to negotiate this conflict. While I had read Crucial Conversations (Patterson,

2011) and studied the importance of care (Noddings, 2005), I was unsure how to apply

what I had learned.

> It is imperative to keep the lines of communication open. At every level—
> between individuals, groups, and nations—when events take a bad turn, it may be
> better to go on talking to and associating with opponents, even wrongdoers, than
> to cut them off and withdraw from them entirely. (Noddings, 2005, p. 119)

Looking back, I realize that I did not have the courage to stand up to the inequities in

power differentiated among us. Additionally, my value as an educator was not

recognized. I often wonder how to support educators in knowing their value and communicating this to others in the government and industry sectors. I also wonder how to establish "relations of trust and care" (Noddings, 2005, p. 110) within the culture of education and business, or industry. Noddings recognizes these relations as central to an ethic of caring and the development of a "dynamic society—those that encourage reflective criticism, revision, creation, and renewal" (Noddings, 2005, p. 165).

The greatest lesson I learned related to governance was to carefully recruit a board of directors who fully support you, as the school leader, in achieving your vision in addition to possessing the skills and capacities that compliment your strengths. For Dewey, education is a constructive achievement and is "not a matter of absorbing something already laid out, tried and true" (Noddings, 2005, p. 165). Similarly, school leaders and their governing board of directors need to realize the constructivist nature of school development. "It is a matter of trying things out with the valued help of experts (teachers), of evaluating, revising, comparing, sharing, communicating, constructing, choosing" (Noddings, 2005, p. 165). Together, educators and governing boards need to develop these capacities. As an educator, I possessed a breadth and depth of educational experience. I needed support in the areas of financial management, facilities selection, and human resources. In the end, I was told, "Educators are a dime a dozen. You are lucky to have this job" (Field Journal, 2012). In the development of the school, I was unaware of the importance of this task. As a result, I advise future charter school leaders to start small, and carefully construct their governing boards. While financial management, facilities selection, student achievement, and school operations were my

primary areas of focus, I was so focused on building a team of talent who possessed the skills and capacities to successfully support the school, I overlooked one important fact. They also had to support me.

My board chair intimidated me. Looking back, I realized that she intimidated the entire board. She commanded a leadership role and expected individuals to follow suit. "Like a well maintained army, each and every individual followed her orders" (Field Journal, 2012). Individuals began operating in fear. Like a balloon losing air, the joy and energy began to diminish and I began questioning whether this was truly worth the sacrifices I was making in my personal life. After being presented with a consulting contract to continue the work developing the school, and invited to apply for my position as founding executive director, I realized this was not where I wanted to expend my time and energy. After careful thought and consideration, I chose to resign in October 2012 nine months prior to the school opening. In the weeks that followed, I felt as though I had lost my power and position in the city landscape. Suddenly the networks I had worked tirelessly to develop were a distant memory, and I was left with myself, my family, and a few true friends.

Choosing to resign was one of the most difficult decisions I had to make in my life. I even debated telling the whole truth in this autoethnography. Reviewing external data and self-reflective data (Chang, 2008), including my field journals and textual artifacts required me to relive many of the joy-filled and hurtful experiences of my past. The details contained in my field journal, email correspondences, and voice memos were personally hurtful and reflected a lack of respect for education as a profession.

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While the process of engaging in autoethnographic research was heartbreaking, it also provoked a high degree of reflection. In the end, I feel that the writing process has been empowering. For the first time in the years of silence and reflective thought following the events that occurred in the fall of 2012, I feel as though I have a voice. I am an educator. I am proud to be an educator. And I am proud to share my story in hopes of helping one individual reading this come to know his or her truths. Only you possess the power to define who you are.

CHAPTER FIVE

Overview of the Study

Imagine being asked to rebuild an airplane--*while you are flying it*. Doing so would be
difficult under any circumstances, but even more so if you--as all other hard-working,
conscientious pilots--had received your training in flying the plane *as it is*, rather than
also learning how to transform the plane itself. Rebuilding it may require an entirely
different set of skills.
– Tony Wagner & Robert Kegan

This autoethnographic study sought to investigate important events and processes

that were significant in my development as the founding leader of an autonomous

Expeditionary Learning charter school. This study advances the current body of research,

which focuses on the theory of action (Miech, 1996), curriculum development (Weiss,

1995; Carnaghan, 2014), literacy development (Kirkpatrick, 2004), student achievement

(Van Winkle, 2008), transformative learning (Logan, 2013), environmental education and

sustainability (Riordan & Klein, 2010), professional development (Klein & Riordan,

2009, 2011), and day to day life in EL schools (Sharpswain, 2005; Heath, 2013) by

providing an autoethnographic account of the experiences of a founding charter school

leader. Built upon my dreams as an educator and later abandoned, I wonder if the

development of autonomous charter schools possesses the answer to address the failures

of our current public educational system. As a result, this study expands upon the

literature in Expeditionary Learning and the charter school movement, articulating my

experience as an educational leader embracing an entrepreneurial spirit to develop an economically integrated, urban Expeditionary Learning charter school.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the research questions, situating them within the growth of Expeditionary Learning schools (Expeditionary Learning, 2014b) and the charter school movement (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000). I begin by addressing the aspects of my experiences related to school design that best support future education entrepreneurs in designing autonomous schools, including school culture, leadership, educational program, teaching, and governance, highlighting the importance of principal as instructional leader. My experiences also reveal the importance of community involvement and outreach, establishing committee structures, composing the founding governing board, and acting with purpose and intention (Field Journal, 2012). Then, I address the preparation of effective educational leaders revealing my experiences in principal preparation, the importance of the principal acting as the instructional leader of the school, and the hidden competencies I discovered along the journey developing the downtown school. Based on my experiences, these hidden competencies are beneficial for future educational leaders to possess and can be developed at multiple points along the continuum of their development. It is my hope that readers make connections to their work as edupreneurs and that my experiences inform the development and revision of preparation and professional learning experiences that nurture the development of these competencies. Lastly, I propose a model of leadership that addresses the importance of leading self, others, and leaders. This model was discovered conducting autoethnographic research and resulted after months of analysis.

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Research Questions

The growth of autonomous schools, specifically Expeditionary Learning charter and innovation schools (United States Department of Education, 2012, Colorado Department of Education, 2015) are creating opportunities for educational leaders to imagine the possibilities for education. Expeditionary Learning arose from a grant composed by Outward Bound and the Harvard Graduate School of Education awarded by New American Schools Development Corporation in 1991. Expeditionary Learning (EL) schools now possess more than 20 years of experience helping new and veteran teachers in all settings, building their "capacity to ignite each students' motivation, persistence, and compassion so they become active contributors to building a better world and succeed in school, college, career, and life" (Expeditionary Learning, 2014). The Expeditionary Learning network currently consists of more than 160 schools and 4,000 teachers serving 53,000 students in 33 states and continues to grow and expand its influence on America's educational system (Expeditionary Learning, 2014). The purpose of this autoethnographic study was to explore the following research questions:

Question One: What aspects of my experience developing an Expeditionary Learning charter school would best support future education entrepreneurs in designing autonomous schools?

Question Two: How can my experience designing an autonomous Expeditionary Learning charter school illuminate the problems and possibilities for preparing effective school leaders and providing early career support to nurture their professional development?

In analyzing the aspects of my experience developing an Expeditionary

Learning charter school that would best support future education entrepreneurs in

designing autonomous schools, I found that future school leaders must focus on school

culture, leadership, educational program, teaching, and governance (Denver Public

Schools, 2012), instructional leadership (Aguilar, 2013; Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012;

Knight, 2011; Barth, 2006; Evans, 2010; Fullan, 2007; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002), and

establishing committee structures to organize the work and support community

involvement and outreach, developing a founding governing board, and acting with

purpose and intention to cultivate a culture of care (Field Notes, 2012). To expand upon

the body of knowledge that exists in the field, I will address the aspects absent in the

literature, including establishing committee structures, developing a founding board, and

acting with purpose and intention.

While it was easy to access exemplary charter school applications and state and

district resources to inform the development of the school model (Denver Public Schools,

2012; Colorado Department of Education, 2015), I was unable to locate literature

capturing how to bring these practices to life. In my experiences, I was able to

accomplish this by focusing on establishing committee structures to organize the work

and support community involvement and outreach, developing a founding governing

board, and acting with purpose and intention to cultivate a culture of care (Field Notes,

2012). While these aspects of school design provided the foundation of my success, they

are not prevalent in current literature. As a result, this autoethnography contributes to the

body of knowledge on school design by shining a spotlight on my experiences

developing an autonomous Expeditionary Learning charter school serving students in an economically integrated, urban setting.

In developing the downtown school, I utilized the following committee structures to support the development of the school: best practices in elementary education/school structure, facilities identification (tenant improvements, building codes), budget and finance, strategic marketing and community outreach, and networking (donations, grants, fundraising). These structures supported me in establishing a culture of care as I began leading my team of talent. This promoted synergy among the team and led to our success in obtaining unanimous approval from the district authorizer. Our shared success was based on executing Daniel Pink's six senses, including design, story, symphony, empathy, play, and meaning. Specifically, story and empathy worked in symphony to support our community involvement and outreach efforts, which were commended by the district authorizer and supported the attainment of achieving "distinction status" and subsequent distribution to school leaders to use as an exemplar.

As community involvement and outreach efforts gained momentum, we began recruiting a diverse team of talent to compose our founding board. One of the most critical lessons learned in developing the downtown school was the importance of developing a diverse team of talent to compose the founding board and the importance of the founding board supporting the school leader. Upon approval of the charter, the founding board becomes the entity legally responsible for holding the charter, entering into the contract with the district authorizer and overseeing the operation and academic performance of the charter school. This transition of leadership must be carefully thought,

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planned, and executed during the development of the school. Based on my experiences, I advise charter school leaders to exercise caution and intention when developing their founding governing board. It is important that educational leaders focus equally on the elements of school design, community engagement and outreach, and establishing the founding governing board to ensure they have high degrees of support from all founding board members.

Adopting an empowered stance to act with purpose and intention to cultivate a culture of care among the school community and founding board requires the use of daily practices that increase self-knowledge and self-care. Acting with purpose and intention provides educational leaders with opportunities to intentionally focus on the development of self-knowledge and self care. This increases well-being, heightens focus and creativity, promotes optimism and resiliency, and allows individuals to experience peace, compassion, and happiness while doing so (Tan, 2012). Adopting practices that promote an increased knowledge of self were incredibly supportive during the development of the school. As edupreneurs across the United States adopt an empowered stance and create the future of learning, expanding upon their capacities as school leaders, it important to bring these practices to center stage.

While these practices may offer support to current and aspiring edupreneurs, the importance of focusing on establishing committee structures to organize the work and support community involvement and outreach, developing a founding governing board, and acting with purpose and intention to cultivate a culture of care also provides insight into the preparation and development of the next generation of school leaders. As a result,

I will utilize my experiences designing an autonomous Expeditionary Learning charter school to illuminate the problems and possibilities for preparing effective school leaders and providing early career support to nurture their professional development.

In the following sections, I will outline the components of my principal preparation program, referencing my experiences acting as the instructional leader developing an autonomous school, and subsequent lessons learned in an attempt to provide insight inform the development and evolution of educator preparation programs. Additionally, I explore the emerging hidden competencies that I developed in my journey designing the downtown school. These include living with purpose and intention, the art and joy of acquiring self-knowledge, embracing vulnerability, becoming a hunter of human excellence, and possessing a hope-filled heart. Lastly, I propose a model of leadership to empower individuals in increasing their self-knowledge to succeed in today's "idea-based, design-obsessed economy" (as cited in LaRusso, Spurrier, & Farrugia, 2015, p. 95).

In my experience developing the downtown school, I found that the principal must possess a high degree of knowledge and expertise in the areas of curriculum and instruction to success fully design an autonomous school. This is supported by the literature on the importance of the principal acting as the instructional leader of the school (Aguilar, 2013; Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012; Knight, 2011; Barth, 2006; Evans, 2010; Fullan, 2007; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). I was fortunate to have been enrolled in a doctoral program focused on these areas during the development of the downtown school, which strengthened the charter school application and provided a strong

knowledge base to address the critical aspects of the school design, including school culture, leadership, educational program, teaching, and governance (Denver Public Schools, 2012). To highlight the importance of educator preparation, I will feature my preparation experiences, which reveal the importance of the principal serving as the instructional leader of the school and juxtapose my experiences with the standards and competencies required of school leaders. In an attempt to bridge the gap that was revealed in my autoethnographic research, I later explore the hidden competencies that I developed while designing the downtown school.

In my current role as the state of Colorado's Educator Preparation Project Manager, working across state agencies under the leadership of the Lieutenant Governor, I have a unique role supporting innovation in educator preparation aligned with the legislative changes impacting the state's E-12 educational system. It is through this lens that I think about the implications of this autoethnography on the preparation of the next generation of educational leaders. I also look through the lens of personal and professional development for school leaders. I have spent a significant amount of time over subsequent years reflecting on the areas I could grow to increase my capacity as a leader and "edupreneur." In this role, I have engaged in numerous conversations with deans, directors, faculty, and current and future school leaders. I believe that collecting the stories of educators enduring and thriving in this changing system provides us with opportunities to attend to the gaps in preparing and nurturing the development of future edupreneurs. This is the main reason I chose to utilize autoethnography as my research

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methodology, to capture the most memorable and influential aspects of my story to support others. In reflecting on the journey, I have often asked myself a host of questions:

What aspects of school development did my education and experiences prepare me for? What were the greatest challenges and surprises that arose along the way? What have I learned in subsequent years that helped me regain my own courage and confidence? (Field Journal, 2013).

These questions provoked me to explore my own preparation experiences and the standards that are used to evaluate educational leaders and inform the design of educator preparation programs. As a result, I will provide an overview of my principal preparation experiences, showcasing the importance of the principal serving as the instructional leader of the school, and reveal the hidden competencies that were not a part of my preparation in hopes that individuals who prepare educational leaders may make connections to their programs and courses to nurture the development of these competencies for future leaders.

Preparing for the Principalship

I enrolled in an executive preparation program at a prestigious university while working as a gifted and talented facilitator and instructional coach in a nearby school district. I was recruited for the position by a former principal that needed someone to redesign the gifted and talented program. Given that I desired to complete my administrative internship with this individual, I jumped at the opportunity. I vividly recall our Saturday sessions and leaving campus excited and ready to lead a school. I spent Sundays doing homework and preparing for the week ahead. Monday morning would

arrive and I'd enter the building excited to apply what I had learned. I'd walk through the building thinking, "I got this!" excited at the thought of this being my school. I would ponder what I would do differently and what I could reasonably accomplish given the current conditions of the staff and district. Sometime during the week, I'd lose that excitement as I encountered experiences that made me realize I had no idea what I was doing. Then, Saturday would arrive and I became reenergized by colleagues in my cohort and the words of inspiration and information provided by my professors.

The scope and sequence of my one-year educator preparation program began in the fall of 2007. Courses included: Introduction to School Administration, Principles of Leadership, and Instructional Supervision and Evaluation. Winter quarter focused on School Improvement Process, Planning for Special Populations, and Finance and Budget, and marked the beginning of my formal internship. In the Spring I studied: Personnel Management, Legal Aspects of School Administration, and Curriculum Issues. The program concluded with two summer courses: Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution. I felt it covered the critical aspects of school leadership: curriculum, instruction, diversity, school improvement, and administration.

I enjoyed the program and decided to enroll in a doctoral program to continue and extend my studies. In my informal assessment of school leaders, I noticed many lacked a depth of knowledge in curriculum and instruction. As a result, I chose to focus my doctoral studies on curriculum and instruction, with an emphasis on administration and policy. While I didn't know it then, this is a topic that continues to surface as educator effectiveness laws are enacted across the United States. The "principal as instructional

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leader" has become a common term used in educational literature (Aguilar, 2013; Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012; Knight, 2011; Barth, 2006; Evans, 2010; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002) and in conversations among practitioners and policy makers (Field Journal, 2012). It is an area of my preparation experience that I felt was particularly strong as a result of coupling my preparation experience with doctoral studies.

The Principal as Instructional Leader

The role of the principal has become a "core part of the change strategy" employed by many districts (Fullan, 2007, p. 167). In his book *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, Fullan examines three cases where the role of principal was a central aspect of the change strategy; one conducted by the Cross City Campaign for Urban Reform (2005) featuring case studies of Chicago, Milwaukee, and Seattle, another focused on San Diego City Schools District (Hubbard, Mehan, & Stein, 2006), and Supovitz's (2006) case study of Duval County in Florida.

The case studies of Chicago, Milwaukee, and Seattle reflected high degrees of financial support and "a lot of the seemingly 'right' components;" including "a focus on literacy and math, a concentration on assessment for learning data, plenty of professional development, and an emphasis on principals as instructional leaders," yet yielded limited impact on the classroom (Fullan, 2006). The theory of action placing the principalship as "central to the delivery of the high-profile, highly supported literacy and math reform" in San Diego City Schools District envisioned principals as "the most critical resource in the professional guidance and instructional direction of the school" (as cited in Fullan, 2007, p. 167). Lastly, Fullan cites Supovitz's 2006 case study of Duval County in Florida

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placing a "relentless focus on instruction," recognizing principals as "integral to the spread of instructional reform" (as cited in Fullan, 2007, p. 168).

Fullan provides three explanations placing the principalship "in an impossible position" (Fullan, 2007, p. 168). First, districts are requiring principals to carry out roles that are centrally determined requiring them to "figure out somebody else's strategy" (Fullan, 2007, p. 168). Second, Fullan describes the capacity required to act as instructional leader. To do this well expands beyond the preparation and inservice development experiences of most principals, and is often perceived as a daunting task. Third, new expectations have been added to traditional expectations without consideration of whether or not the role is feasible under the current working conditions faced by principals.

In my limited experience, I do believe the principalship has achieved the status of "impossible." In my final months as the founding executive director my day entailed waking at 5:00 am, brewing an immediate cup of coffee in the Keurig, instantly sitting down to check in on the emails that had come in over the past 3-4 hours, waking my daughter, getting her fed and ready for school, dropping her off between 7:30 and 7:45 am, running from one meeting to the next as if I was on fire from 8:00 am until around 4:00 pm when it was time to pick her up, rushing home to feed her, play, and complete bedtime routines. Then it was time to dive back into work, usually around 8:30 pm, completing unfinished tasks and responding to unanswered emails. I often wouldn't finish work until 1:00 or 2:00 am. I often wondered, *How can anyone sustain this schedule?*

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At the time, I believed I possessed the skills and capacities to do this work. I was a high achiever in former educational roles, possess a genuine love for children and families, am passionate and energetic, and felt I exceeded many of the requirements articulated in standards and administrative job descriptions. The Interstate Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) established a comprehensive set of standards for principals, including approximately 200 indicators defining the standards in greater detail. These standards include (2000):

1. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community;
2. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth;
3. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient and effective learning environment;
4. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources;
5. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness and in an ethical manner;
6. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal and cultural context. (as cited in Fullan, 2007, p. 294)

The state in which this research was conducted passed legislation in 2010 changing the way all educators are evaluated (Colorado Department of Education, 2014). The state department of education created a State Model Evaluation System aligned with the State Board of Education rules for teachers, principals, and specialized service

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professionals to support districts in adhering to the new policy (Colorado Department of

Education, 2014). The educator evaluation and support system contains seven principal

quality standards. These include:

1. Principals demonstrate strategic leadership.
2. Principals demonstrate instructional leadership.
3. Principals demonstrate school cultural and equity leadership.
4. Principals demonstrate human resource leadership.
5. Principals demonstrate managerial leadership.
6. Principals demonstrate external development leadership.
7. Principals demonstrate leadership around measures of student learning.
   (Colorado Department of Education, 2015)

Similar to the comprehensive set of standards established by the Interstate Leaders

Licensure Consortium (2000), the principal quality standards are accompanied by twenty-

eight elements further articulating each standard. These standards and elements are the

core of the principal evaluation process and provide a tool for principal self-reflection,

goal setting, and ongoing professional growth. According to the State Department of

Education,

> The Principal Quality Standards are foundational to providing every student with
> what they deserve—excellent school leaders who are consistently supported in
> their efforts to improve in their profession, support their teachers' professional
> growth and influence student learning in new and powerful ways. (Colorado
> Department of Education, 2015)

Principals use a parallel evaluation system to evaluate teachers. The details of the

professional practices and associated elements are placing an increasing demand on

principals as instructional leaders as they are primarily responsible for facilitating goal

setting conferences at the beginning of the year, observing and providing feedback

multiple times throughout the school year, and providing a written evaluation on all

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certified staff at the conclusion of the year. Given the impact of these quality standards and professional practices on the state's E-12 educational system, institutions of higher education and alternative principal preparation programs are in the process of refining and developing aligned principal preparation programs and professional development throughout the state. In many principal preparation programs across the state, these standards are serving as graduate outcomes. In others, they are merely a crosswalk activity mapping the old and making connections to the new. Regardless of the depth of impact they're having on developing and refining principal preparation programs, they ignore the hidden competencies I needed as a school leader.

Hidden Competencies

I have engaged in reflection, analysis, and over analysis of the events that transpired during my tenure as the founding executive director of the downtown school. I often questioned whether I was alone in my journey or if others felt the same. After composing this autoethnography, I shared my writing with four founding school leaders. I was surprised that not only did they express connections to my experiences, many also had significant issues managing their governing board. I was astounded to realize that I was not alone in my journey. I wondered, "*How can all of these incredible school leaders who I have leaned on for support throughout the development of the downtown school and in subsequent years be struggling internally? And hiding it!*" I continue to be astounded. I have often been the one who initiates impromptu dinner meetings, who checks in on others, who sends a quick thinking of you message, who shares new insights and resources. I consider us to have strong personal and professional relationships, yet

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the sharing of this autoethnography has revealed that we were all hiding aspects of ourselves unwilling to embrace and express our vulnerability.

Vulnerability: Essential to Innovation

I believe Peter Sheahan, author, speaker, and CEO of ChangeLabs™, a global consultancy firm that designs and delivers large-scale behavioral change projects for clients such as Apple, Microsoft, and IBM, shares a perspective that aligns with our shared experiences as founding school leaders:

> The secret killer of innovation is shame. You can't measure it, but it is there. Every time someone holds back a new idea, fails to give their manage much needed feedback, and is afraid to speak up in front of a client you can be sure shame played a part. That deep fear we all have of being wrong, of being belittled and of feeling less than, is what stops us taking the very risks required to move our companies forward.
>
> If you want a culture of creativity and innovation, where sensible risks are embraced on both a market and individual level, start by developing the ability of managers to cultivate an openness to vulnerability in their teams. And this, paradoxically perhaps, requires first that they are vulnerable themselves. This notion that the leader needs to be "in charge" and "know all the answers" is both dated and destructive. Its impact on others is the sense that they know less, and that they are less than. A recipe for risk aversion if ever I have heard it. Shame becomes fear. Fear leads to risk aversion. Risk aversion kills innovation. (as cited in Brown, 2012, p. 64-65)

More important, this causal loop describing how shame becomes fear, fear leads to risk aversion, and risk aversion kills innovation, profoundly impacts your perception of self and has significant implications for how you show up in the world. As educational leaders, we must embrace our vulnerability in order to thrive in today's increasingly innovative educational system.

Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz captures the need for innovation to occur in the following statement, "Any business that embraces the status quo as an operating principal

is going to be on a death march" (as cited in LaRusso, Spurrier, & Farrugia, 2015, p. 30).

Transformative leader Jack Welch, accredited with increasing the value of General

Electric by 4,000% during his tenure as chairman and CEO between 1981 and 2001

conveys a similar message, "If the range of change on the outside exceeds the rate of

change on the inside, the end is near" (as cited in LaRusso, Spurrier, & Farrugia, 2015, p.

30). Clayton Christensen, Professor of Business Administration at the Harvard Business

School and regarded as one of the world's top experts on innovation and growth, and

coauthors Michael Horn and Curtis Johnson, argue that innovations such as

homeschooling, online courses, and online tutoring services are threatening the 150-year

supremacy of public schools in their book titled *Disrupting Class: How Disruptive*

Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns. As public schools become more

standardized, more and more students will exit from the schools, seeking opportunities

for individual attention and tailored learning online or through other options that public

schools do not traditionally offer. Similar to its sector leaders in business, public

education must adapt and embrace some of these innovations, or be prepared for our

"death march" as CEO Howard Schultz would say.

Reframing Thinking: Seeing Possibilities, Not Problems

While the thought of disruptive innovation elicits varying responses ranging from

excitement to fear and everything in between, my experiences in developing and

departing the downtown school have taught me to reframe how I see things, to reprogram

my thoughts replacing negative thoughts with positive ones seeing problems as

possibilities. It took nearly an entire year to hone that skill. Perhaps it is the threat of

disruptive innovations and not perceiving ourselves to be perfect, or even "good enough," that evokes our inner desire to hide. Reframing my thinking is one of the greatest hidden competencies I developed in my final days as the founding executive director, and this competency continues to grow, allowing me to conquer the giants inside my head, the voices of self-doubt and insecurity that chatter so loudly in my mind.

What if, as educators, we reframed our thinking and adopted a lens similar to Mayo Clinic's Center for Innovation? Known as true pioneers in human-centered innovation, I think we have a lot to learn from "disruption," and learning across sectors.

> Innovation is fostered … by journeys into other disciplines … from active, collegial networks and fluid, open boundaries. Innovation arises from ongoing circles of exchange, where information is not just accumulated or stored, but created. (as cited in LaRusso, Spurrier, & Farrugia, 2015, p. 173)

In *Think Big, Start Small, Move Fast*, LaRusso, Spurrier, & Farrugia offer transformative ideas and strategies to pave the way to the future of sustainable innovation based on their experiences attempting "to transform the delivery and experience of health and health care" (Mayo Clinic Mission, as cited by LaRusso, Spurrier, & Farrugia, 2015, p. xiv). From Mayo, we learn that similar to our educational system where the needs of the student come first, the needs of the patient come first. While most outsiders perceive today's health care industry as complex and hard to change, Mayo lives their core value of placing the needs of the patient first, and sees major threats as major opportunities in the health care space. Mayo places their work in the context of the macro problem, which they refer to as the "giant hairball," citing author Gordon MacKenzie, (LaRusso, Spurrier, & Farrugia, 2015, p. 28). While the macro health care problem is daunting, as is changing our educational system, Mayo focuses on significant micro, or enterprise-level issues

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lying at their doorstep. Departing the downtown school landed me on my own doorstep, free to explore what Mayo would refer to as an "opportunity." Seeing problems as possibilities or challenges as opportunities requires educators to reframe the way they see and develop schools in response to the social problems facing our schools and society. Reframing the way we see the world also provides opportunities for individuals to form self-knowledge that develops as we "live with ourselves and have many opportunities to check on the accuracy of our knowledge" (Noddings, 2005, p. 118).

The Art and Joy of Acquiring Self-Knowledge

While it didn't feel like an "opportunity" at the time, and I definitely would not have considered a learning journey into the depths of my inner self as a significant "micro issue" in need of my attention, I have realized in my interactions with hundreds of educators across the state that we need to discover the art and joy of acquiring self-knowledge. I learned things that school doesn't teach you in the chapter of my career reflected in this autoethnography. First and foremost, I have learned that I am the author of my life and that I possess the power to write my own story. When I love the story I'm writing, I possess the power to continue writing. When I am not fond of the story I am writing, I can conclude that chapter and free myself to move onto the next. Prior to this experience, I was so attached to a long-term, future-focused, well-planned journey, I forgot to live, to "fail fast and fail forward" as many innovators would say. I think I put too much of my destiny into the hands of others, as if my life was out of my locus of control. I have learned to reclaim my power, to detach from outcomes and to find joy in doing what I love: creating the extraordinary in my personal and professional life…as

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defined by myself not an external set of benchmarks, standards, or rubric scores. The discovery of self-knowledge is "more powerful than the inert knowledge of others that we gain from books and lectures" (Noddings, 2005, p. 118) and in my personal experiences proved to be transformative.

One afternoon in yoga class, the instructor asked each of us to think of one thing that brings us great joy, one thing that we are grateful we are able to do. Given the timing of the provocative question, I really had to think deeply about it as I had just abandoned what I perceived to be my lifelong dream. After a few moments of silent breathing, I realized, the talent I am most grateful for is the ability to create. Whether creating a lesson plan or creating a school, the ability to create brings me great joy. Even creating new Superfood smoothie recipes lights my soul on fire. This realization, coupled with my insane fascination with IDEO, a global design company whose name seemed to keep popping up in various places along with the words "design thinking," led me to discover a book titled *Creative Confidence*. It's one of those shout from the rooftops type of books -- the kind you have to encourage everyone to read… and they look at you like you've lost your mind. Brothers Tom Kelley and David Kelley, founder of IDEO and Stanford d.school, wrote it. In a nutshell, the book allows you to get over the fears that stand in the way of your best ideas. I became fascinated by IDEO. Exploring their website, I came across a link: "Curious to know what life at IDEO is like?" Yes, I was insanely curious! It seemed a whole lot more fun than what my life as a school leader was like and I wanted to know all about it.

> In the heart of Silicon Valley, a young designer named David Kelley once
> wrote a letter to a friend that included these words: "I want to start a company

with all my best friends as employees." Built on this foundation of friendship and entrepreneurial verve, IDEO today is made up of over 550 individuals in offices around the world. Together, we navigate each day with curiosity, optimism, and a sense of humor. We are makers, designers, hackers, builders, thinkers, explorers, writers, listeners, risk-takers, and doers—and we love what we do. (IDEO, 2015)

While school leaders parroting educational jargon surrounded me, here were entrepreneurs "navigating each day with curiosity, optimism, and a sense of humor." In the midst of David Kelley's battle with cancer in 2007, brothers Tom and David asked the question, "What was I put on earth to do?" Their answer: "To reach out to as many people as possible. To give future innovators the opportunity to follow their passions. To help individuals and organizations unleash their full potential—and build their own creative confidence" (Kelley & Kelley, 2013, p. xv). Possessing answers to the question, "What was I put on this earth to do?" requires self-knowledge that empowers educators to design the future of learning. "Perhaps the most fundamental change required is to empower teachers as we want them to empower students" (Noddings, 2005, p. 178). Additionally, I believe we need to empower educational leaders as we want them to empower teachers who in turn empower students.

Adopting an empowered stance provided me with the opportunity to rethink creativity and to see creativity as simply "using your imagination to create something new in the world" (Kelley & Kelley, 2013, p. 3). Armed with self-knowledge, I was able to adopt the identity of someone who finds joy in creating things. I began to see myself as creative, as an innovator, as an individual able to generate new ideas, solutions, or approaches to social problems in an attempt to improve people's lives and communities (I later learned this is referred to as "social enterprise" after studying business course

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offerings pondering what I needed to know to have been more successful in developing the downtown school). Owning the identity of "innovator" was not something that felt comfortable at first. Yet through exploring my own self-knowledge, I was able to see my competencies through new lenses. This expanded my paradigm and loosened my focus on education and being an educator.

I expanded my notion of self and adopted my new identity as an innovator and became captivated by the works of Sir Richard Branson, Clayton Christensen, Tom Kelley and David Kelley, Brené Brown, Brendon Burchard, Ed Catmull, LaRusso, Arianna Huffington, Jeff Weiner, Jeff Bezos, Tony Hsieh, Gretchen Rubin, and Chade-Meng Tan. I was hooked. Unlike the readings I had been assigned in my coursework (e.g. Michael Fullan; Andy Hargreaves; John Maxwell; James Kouzes and Barry Posner; Tony Wagner; Robert Kegan; Linda Darling-Hammond; Marc Tucker), these works became my informal college. I charted a new course plan and began identifying a different destiny (one that is still unnamed and largely unknown, yet involves a high degree of self-knowledge). I began connecting to these individuals through books. I studied their stories. I collected quotations and posted them in prominent places around my home. I tried to embrace and emulate their mindsets. Their stories helped me realize we were more alike than different. Their stories increased my personal self-knowledge and allowed me to see myself in new and exciting ways. If these greats could accomplish the extraordinary, maybe I could too! Maybe my feelings of worthlessness had been created in the illusion of my own mind. What if the same is true for others? This is the true reason I decided to share my story with authenticity.

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Leaving fear behind, staring shame in the face, I wrote. Pages piled upon pages and eventually it was finished (or Ph.inisheD. as I like to say). Honestly, I don't know if the story will ever be finished. It is a part of me. A part of me that I used to be ashamed of. A part of me that I now know is a dot that connects my past to current opportunities and to my future. "You cannot connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future" (Jobs, 2005). Thank you, Steve Jobs for helping me think differently, which allowed me to see differently and expand my paradigm. I now see that this experience is not a failure, yet a dot among the many experiences I will have as an entrepreneurial spirit. While many experiences came before this opportunity to create the downtown school, many will come in subsequent years.

Become a Hunter of Human Excellence: Finding Your Mentors and Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

I selected many mentors in the development of the downtown school and in the months following my departure. Embracing vulnerability, reframing my thinking, and discovering the art and joy of acquiring self-knowledge are strategies that continue to support my personal and professional growth. Additionally, I found it important to become a hunter of human excellence, constantly in search of extraordinary individuals to serve as mentors. In my experience, there were the individuals I was fortunate to know personally: my family, friends, professors, and mentors. And there were those that I knew through my relationship with books. On the day I decided to formally resign from my

position, my executive coach asked, "If not you, then who?" She pushed, prodded, and probed; yet, I was adamant.

> People matter. They are our most valuable assets and life is too short to be miserable every day. I will not stand to be treated this way and more important, I will not have my future staff be treated this way. This is the opposite of the culture of care I worked so hard to create. (Field Journal, 2013)

Once she was confident that I had made up my mind, and would not look back in regret, she shared Steve Jobs' story, which I later found in the introduction of *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, & Leadership* (2013).

> Steve Jobs had to fail before he could succeed. Fail he did. He was fired from Apple computer, the company he founded, and spent eleven years "in the wilderness" (Schlender, 2004). During this time of reflection he discovered capacities as a leader—and human being—that set the stage for his triumphant second act at Apple. He failed initially for the same reason that countless managers stumble: he was operating on a limited understanding of leadership and organizations. He was always a brilliant and charismatic product visionary. That enabled him to take Apple from startup to major computer vendor, but didn't equip him to lead Apple to its next phase. Being fired was painful, but Jobs later concluded that it was the best thing that ever happened to him. "It freed me to enter one of the most creative periods of my life. I'm pretty sure none of this would have happened if I hadn't been fired from Apple. It was awful tasting medicine, but I guess the patient needed it. (as cited in Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 3)

Knowing I was not alone and that even a giant as extraordinary as Steve Jobs had endured and survived similar circumstances helped me find hope. I believe with hope, all things are possible. "Thriving people thrive for one reason—they commit to things that produce inner strength and hope" (Johnston, 2014, p. xviii).

Throughout my leadership journey I have met numerous mentors who possess a hope-filled heart. I realized that throughout the development of the school, and in the

subsequent years that followed, I have always had a hope-filled heart. In the dreariest

circumstances, I always see a silver lining and consider alternative perspectives. I think I

learned this from my mother: a British immigrant who has always worked tirelessly with

huge amounts of positivity. I also search for this in others and watch how my mentors

respond in difficult situations. Observing with a keen eye has helped me build a lot of

hidden competencies that now serve me as a leader.

In Ray Johnston's book, *The Hope Quotient*, he reveals a "10 percent solution"

making hope the "highest octane fuel in the universe" (Johnston, 2014, p. 13). Johnston

shares the following story, which I applied to my own life and now utilize when working

with current and aspiring educators:

> A few years ago, I had the privilege of meeting with a leading psychologist who told me something amazing. He built his career around working with deeply troubled marriage couples who had been damaging their relationships for decades. He enjoyed remarkable success in getting these warring spouses to turn the corner toward health. Counseling is not my greatest gift, so his obvious skill sparked my curiosity. How did he do it?
>
> "I just try to get 10 percent improvement," he said. "When couples get that 10 percent improvement, they get hope. *And when someone gets hope, anything is possible.*" (Johnston, 2014, p. 13)

It's amazing to think about. In an era of accountability and assessment, I think our

educators could use a strong dose of hope. Imagine providing struggling educators with

just a 10 percent boost in hope, making almost anything possible. "Tough circumstances

are no match for the kind of inner strength fueled by hope" (Johnston, 2014, p. xv).

Getting and staying motivated and engaged is everyone's number one need in today's

self-directed society. All it takes is one person of genuine hope coming into your life to

change the entire atmosphere. The impossible began to look possible thanks to Steve

Jobs' story. Hearing the stories of others provided courage where there once was fear, and strength where powerlessness once lived.

Hope has liberated me from my past, motivating me to bounce back even stronger than before. It was hope that set me free to dream about the ways in which I could walk courageously into the world using my time and talents to make the world a better place after surrendering my position as the founding executive director of the downtown school. Suddenly, I wasn't so alone in the world. I returned to my usual self, bouncing out of bed excited about the day ahead. I showered more often and dressed up (even though I didn't have to go to work). I practiced yoga and meditation daily. I allowed myself to get eight solid hours of sleep. When I was tired, I gave myself permission to take a nap. I took the time to prepare healthy meals and researched the power of food and nutrition. I began feeling incredibly happy, yet I had no idea where my career was going. I began focusing my attention on personal self-care and happiness. I was enjoying life and focusing less on external sources of affirmation and worth. My stress-filled days became a distant memory. I became less concerned with my agenda and more concerned with impromptu adventures that had passed me by in the hustle and bustle of what was now my former life.

This stark contrast in my work-days showcased what I was seeing more and more often now that my RAS (reticular activating system) was aware of this novelty, I was seeing examples of it everywhere. Job postings with odd job titles like "unreasonable systems guru" and "disruptive collaborator." Confused, I dove deeper into these job descriptions and began studying company websites as I imagined the possibilities for my

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future. This fueled my studies and has allowed me to engage in what I now know as "disruptive collaboration." It served as an experience that allowed me to shake up my thoughts and beliefs, which changed how I see the world. It has impacted what I think is possible in education. I believe it is important for future educators to have the opportunity to be disrupted to enable positive change. Perhaps it is in the moments of disruption that allow us to transform ourselves, developing deeper self-knowledge, enabling us to live wide-awake, joy-filled lives. My experiences led me to the realization that leading the self is equally, if not more important than learning to lead others. As a result, I created a model of leadership that addresses the importance of leading self, others, and leaders.

Emerging Thoughts: A Potential Model for Leadership

I know for sure: Your journey begins with a choice to get up, step out, and live fully.

– Oprah Winfrey

In my principal preparation program and in the vast majority of scholarly resources consumed by school leaders, much attention is given to leading others (Maxwell, 2008, Kouzes & Posner, 2006; 2007; 2010). Lessons from these leading scholars are inspirational and supported me in my experiences developing the downtown school. They reminded me that, "You can't do it alone" (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 61) and "If it's lonely at the top, you're not doing something right" (Maxwell, 2008, p. 1). They taught me the importance of following my passion and in measuring my effectiveness based on the improvement of people, the individuals, teams, and organizations I work with. I learned the importance of investing in myself and continually learning (Maxwell, 2008), in creating a learning organization (Senge, 2006), and

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possessing an ethic of excellence (Berger, 2003). I learned to inspire a shared vision and encourage the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). I learned firsthand in my decision to leave the downtown school that "people quit people, not companies" (Maxwell, 2008, p. 143). These lessons are central in school leadership and were among my favorite readings in my principal preparation program. These were the books I leaned on during times of struggle and when I needed inspiration and hope. Yet in reflecting upon my experiences and in writing my autoethnography, I feel that something significant is missing. It is what I learned in the years after my departure that serve me best in the present. In those subsequent years, I learned about the power of leading my "self," my own experiences including perceptions, emotions, and thoughts.

The body of leadership knowledge hints at the importance of "becoming the author of your own story and the maker of your own history" (Kouzes & Posner, 2006, p. 92) and the challenge of leading yourself (Maxwell, 2008), yet they often focus on the role of leadership within the context of a career or job. In my experiences developing the downtown school, in subsequent years seeking healing, and in the process of writing my autoethnography, I have come to realize that the something that is missing involves falling in love with yourself, knowing who you are, where you're at, and where you want to go. What I know for sure is that this is the heart of living and it is what matters most. Coupled with adopting an empowered stance that you (and only you) possess the power to define these things, I propose a potential model of leadership that may be used to support the evolution of the current body of knowledge on the topic of leadership.

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This emerging model of leadership, which I have titled "The emPOWERed Leadership Model," expands upon the body of knowledge that exists on leading others and showcases the importance of focusing on the self. Additionally, it includes the value of adopting an empowered stance and leading leaders.
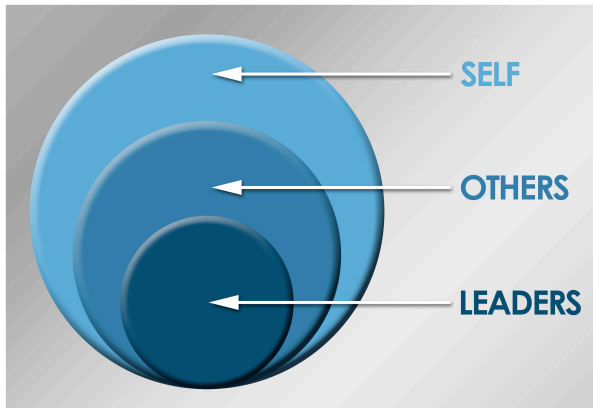

Figure 12: The emPOWERed Leadership Model, Building Your Inner Brilliance

The visual representation of the model places leading others in the center, yet juxtaposes it within the self to communicate the importance of first loving and leading yourself and adopting an empowered stance before embarking on the work of leading others. The importance of leading leaders is reflected in a smaller circle due to the time constraints placed upon educational leaders.

The "emPOWERed Leadership Model" emerged as a result of reviewing my field journals, reliving my experiences developing the downtown school, wondering what was missing in my personal set of skills and knowledge, and searching for emerging themes that exist at the intersection of my former role as the founding executive director and in my current role supporting educator preparation serving the state department of higher education.

The POWER of Leading the Self

In my life experiences, I learned that I was a "leader" in fourth grade when I was selected to represent my school on a trip to Washington D.C. Yet it wasn't until enduring what I perceived to be "the greatest failure of my lifetime" (Field Journal, 2013), that I realized what Maxwell had referred to as "defining moments define your leadership" (Maxwell, 2008, p. 20). In the years that passed after deciding to relinquish my role as founding executive director, I beat myself up. Even the lessons I'd learned turned against me.

> Defining moments define your leadership… One of the leaders I admire most is Winston Churchill, England's prime minister who stood up against the Nazis during World War II. He was a leader's leader! He once remarked, "In every age there comes a time when a leader must come forward to meet the needs of the hour. Therefore, there is no potential leader who does not have an opportunity to make a difference in society. Tragically, there are times when a leader does not rise to the hour." (Maxwell, 2008, p. 20)

The "gauntlet of gremlins" (Brown, 2010, p. 113) were igniting my self-doubt and informing perceptions of myself. Looking back, I realize that at the center of the work I did to understand and develop my sense of self was the desire to live wholeheartedly. Brené Brown defines "wholehearted living" as "engaging in our lives from a place of worthiness" (Brown, 2010, p. 1).

Inspired by this notion of "wholehearted living," I was determined to learn a new set of skills and knowledge that would free me from the captivity and silence I had imposed on myself. While I didn't realize it then I now know the power of thoughts. Through my yoga practice, I learned the importance of monitoring your thoughts and selecting thoughts that serve you and to letting go of those that do not serve you, or bring

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you a sense of worthiness. Simultaneously, I was learning about neuroscience research that demonstrates that human beings are uniquely designed to transform, to fulfill our potential. "Our brains respond with a flurry of neuronal activity when we open our minds to new possibilities, free ourselves from limiting beliefs, and perceive ourselves and our world in new and empowering ways" (Wright & Wright, 2013, p. 5). Stretching to the edges of our abilities allows us to create new circuitry, transforming how we think, what we believe, what we do, and who we are. This prompted me to revisit a quote by Frank Outlaw that I always taught my children as a teacher: "Watch your thoughts, they become words; watch your words, they become actions; watch your actions, they become habits; watch your habits, they become character; watch your character, for it becomes your destiny." I revisited lesson plans aimed at supporting my students' social and emotional development and found a lesson where I invited students to write a negative thought they'd had sometime during the past week on a strip of paper. We then shredded their pieces of paper in the shredder and threw the shredded scraps into the trashcan reminding us that we should discard of them permanently. Next, I asked students to write positive self talk onto a yellow strip of paper and we placed these in mini recycle bins located at the center of their tables. We added to them throughout the week, and students were encouraged to reach in and grab one when they needed it. Perhaps school leaders need to have recycle bins atop their desks loaded with positivity and encouragement to reframe their thoughts during times of challenge.

While searching for resources to help me redefine my thoughts and adopt a new vision of my "self," I stood on the shoulders of authors such as Thich Nhat Hanh (2007),

Brené Brown (2010; 2012), Gretchen Rubin (2009), Arianna Huffington (2014), Tom

Kelley & David Kelley (2013), Brendon Burchard (2014), and Chade-Meng Tan (2012)

(presented in the order I encountered these brilliant minds). These works taught me

important lessons that transformed my thinking and allowed me to rewrite the story of my

experiences developing the downtown school.

I realized "the greatest failure of my lifetime" (Field Journal, 2013) was also the

greatest experience of my professional career. And that while I did not "rise to the hour"

(Churchill, as cited in Maxwell, 2008, p. 20), I rose to living life deeply and with

happiness, having time to care for myself and my loved ones—adopting another kind of

success, another kind of power that is much more important (Hanh, 2007). I learned that

perception is everything and that you can perceive every experience in a multitude of

ways. This is especially important considering Senge's "ladder of inference" (Senge,
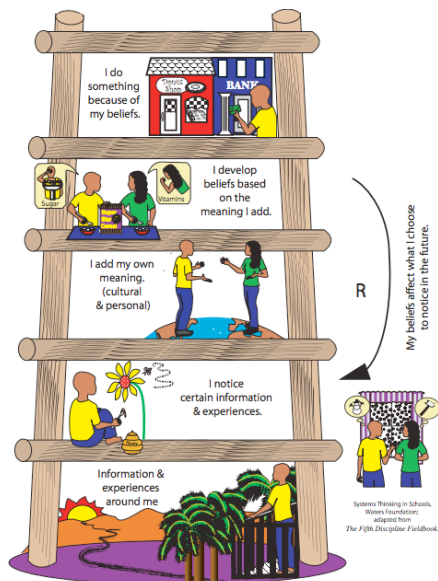
1994).

Figure 13: Ladder of Inference. Systems Thinking in Schools, Waters Foundation; adapted from *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*.

Moving from the bottom of the ladder up the first rung is a critical first step in learning to lead ourselves. Noticing certain information and experiences is an act of mindfulness, a topic emerging in the field of education (David

& Sheth, 2009; Rotne & Rotne, 2013; Rechtschaffen & Kabat-Zinn, 2014; Olson &

Cozolino, 2014; Srinivasan, 2014; Jennings & Siegel, 2015). Interestingly, this topic is

not just entering the scene of education, Google's Chade-Meng Tan, a personal growth pioneer, teaches a popular course titled *Search Inside Yourself* at Google University (Tan, 2012). The course, which has been taught at Google since 2007, is intended to transform the work and lives of the best and brightest behind one of the most innovative, successful, and profitable businesses in the world. The *Search Inside Yourself* program works in three steps: attention training, self-knowledge and self-mastery, and creating useful mental habits (Tan, 2012, p. 7). Similar to the "emPOWERed Leadership Model," Google's *Search Inside Yourself* program focuses on training attention to create a quality of mind that forms the foundation of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2005), perception of your own cognitive and emotive processes, and creating habits of "sincere goodwill" (Tan, 2012, p. 7) that create the kind of trust that supports highly productive collaborations. Training your attention (Tan, 2012), becoming knowledgeable about your internal state (Goleman, 2005), and monitoring your thoughts enable you to create a high-resolution perception of your "self," which shapes the cultural and personal meaning you attach to your experiences, the beliefs you develop, and actions enacted based on those beliefs (Senge, 2005).

In addition to standing on the shoulders of authors, I also relied upon the power of story to uplift my spirit, inspire hope for inner transformation, and promote a greater sense of self worth. The stories of others also inspired me to locate courage within and share my own story. In a lot of ways, I look back on the years after my departure and realize it was the arts that saved me. The artistic representation of individuals' lives contained within the pages of books lifted me from the depths of my sorrows and brought

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me to a place of happiness and joy. The stories of Steve Jobs, Ed Catmull, Mick Ebeling, and Louis Zamperini helped me realize that while I chose to silence my insecurities and vulnerabilities, I was not alone in my internal struggle.

Steve Jobs, "famously stubborn and focused" (Isaacson, 2014, p. 94), was able to dazzle and baffle colleagues by suddenly changing his mind when he realized he needed to think different. In addition to his widely known work at Apple, Steve Jobs also served as the CEO and majority shareholder of Pixar until Disney's purchase of Pixar in 2006 (Catmull, 2014). In this role, he merged his love of humanities and technology, bringing the idea that "innovation resides where art and science connect" (Isaacson, 2014, p. 5) to life. One of the most powerful stories that supported my thinking and has inspired me to use an empowered voice is captured in Catmull's *Creativity, Inc.* describing the creation of *A Bug's Life*. Bill Cone, one of the production designers, willingly stood up to Jobs ad communicated his thoughts so "forcefully and articulately" (Catmull, 2014, p. 300) that he demonstrated that his ideas were worthy of respect. It takes a deep sense of self to act with an empowered voice, engaging in wholehearted living and adopting a sense of worthiness.

Mick Ebeling, executive producer and founder of The Ebeling Group, an international production company and creative think tank, recipient of nearly every advertising award including the Titanium Cannes Lions, recipient of the Muhammad Ali Humanitarian of the Year Award, and founder of Not Impossible, an organization that develops accessible, creative solutions to real-world problems inspires readers to dream big, deal with the voice inside your head, and find courage and determination to change

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the world and make miracles happen. I came across his book *Not Impossible: The Art and*

Joy of Doing What Couldn't Be Done when meandering through Barnes and Noble one

sunny afternoon and the title struck me. I perceived Ebeling to be bold and courageous

and wanted to be like him. He sees the world through an optimistic lens and possesses an

empowered sense of self that allows him to live wholeheartedly. Ebeling strives to help a

graffiti artist, Tempt who was stricken with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also

known as Lou Gehrig's disease, create art again. Using nuts and bolts, web cameras, and

a coat hanger, Ebeling rallied a team of talent to help Tempt draw again! His experiences

teach important leadership principles such as "You can't do it alone" (Kouzes & Posner,

2010, p. 61) and "If it's lonely at the top, you're not doing something right" (Maxwell,

2008, p. 1). Without a doubt, Ebeling teaches us about the importance of following your

passion and in measuring effectiveness based on the improvement of people. In every

endeavor, Ebeling creates a "learning organization" (Senge, 2006), and possesses an ethic

of excellence (Berger, 2003) to achieve miracles. Ebeling achieves the extraordinary by

inspiring a shared vision and encouraging the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). He also

conveys the importance of facing the inner dialogue that has the potential to interfere

with our sense of self.

> It was a surreal moment. Caskey and I had talked about this for almost two years, ever since we'd gone to the graffiti art exhibit. And when you talk about something for that long, there's a part of you that is skeptical. Disbelieving. A part of you that just thinks, well, talk all you want, mister, but this ain't really gonna happen.

> The art of getting things done begins with overcoming that voice.

> Let's be clear. When I talk about overcoming that voice, I'm not talking about ignoring it or pretending it doesn't exist. I am not fearless. I fear failure. And I

fear failure a lot. But I teach this to my boys: When you're feeling afraid of something, or afraid you can't do something, don't deny that fear. Don't pretend it doesn't exist. Allow it in. Say hello to it. Get to know it.

And then kick it in the ass and move on. …

And then, when the impossible thing gets done—when you actually see it happen with your own eyes—you can finally face that disbelieving, critical part of you.

You can look it right in the eye.

And say, shut the hell up. (Ebeling, 2014, p. 52-53)

Ebeling communicates a bold sense of self, a definite empowered voice, and an ability to live wholeheartedly (Brown, 2010) engaging in life from a place of worthiness.

It is through my scholarly studies in principal preparation and subsequent doctoral work and engaging with the arts, specifically stories, that I continue to learn to live wholeheartedly, and engage in life from a place of worthiness. In my current role working within a highly bureaucratic organization, I often find myself relying on the lessons learned in the aftermath of my experiences developing the downtown school. It is through "rooting to rise" and knowledge of self that I choose to matter, that I choose to use an empowered voice, and accept that I am worthy.

The POWER of Leading Leaders

One of the most influential lessons learned in my experiences developing the downtown school occurred after the school board of the authorizing district unanimously approved the school on June 19, 2012. The hidden truth that I've carried is that my board chair bullied me. And the sad truth is that I recruited this woman and put her in the position of authority allowing her to bully me. Bullied may seem like a strong word, which is why I omitted this section from the autoethnography. Yet after analyzing field

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journals and textual artifacts, I realize that this is the honest truth I've been ignoring and holding onto for so many years. It is the reason that the word "leaders" appears in the darkest shade of blue. The dark side of the story is that in my desire to please the school board and have a fully formed and trained board upon submission of the charter application, I overlooked the importance of selecting my board of directors.

As a result, I think learning to lead leaders is a critical component of leadership development. Whether leading a charter school or creating a non-profit, learning how to recruit and lead a board of directors posed to be my greatest challenge. It was that experience that had the greatest impact on my sense of self. In a few short months, I went from courageous to cowardly and was unable to stand up for myself. Looking back, I realize that it was navigating two cultures, the culture of education and the culture of business, that proved challenging.

During my experiences designing the downtown school and in subsequent years supporting innovation in educator preparation, I continue to notice a shift in the educational landscape. The charter school movement and introduction of innovation schools (Colorado Department of Education, 2015) has inspired redesign efforts in neighboring public schools also seeking greater autonomy from district mandates. This is spawning innovation efforts throughout the educational system. These innovations may require the demonstration of competencies that are not currently taught in principal preparation programs. In this research, I refer to these as "hidden competencies" as I reflect upon my experiences founding an autonomous school and unveil competencies that were learned in the process and in subsequent years after relinquishing my position

as the founding executive director and supporting principals in school redesign efforts. As autonomous schools provide opportunities for educators to imagine the possibilities for our educational system, educators are being called upon to deliver entrepreneurial skills that are not often taught in principal preparation programs. "Being an edupreneur means creating a new capacity" (Vander Ark, 2013, para. 3).

Education entrepreneurs, or edupreneurs, are engaging in school design and redesign efforts in response to the growth of autonomous schools and are creating new capacities in our educational system. Examples of autonomous schools include High Tech High in San Diego, CA where business leaders and educators created a single charter school in 2000 and have evolved into an integrated network of thirteen schools serving approximately 5,000 students (High Tech High, 2015). Additionally, SEEQS, The School for Examining Essential Questions of Sustainability is a new charter school located in Honolulu, HI offering an interdisciplinary, project-based, community-based school experience to serve approximately 120 students on the island of Oahu (The School for Examining Essential Questions of Sustainability, n.d.). As diverse schools develop to address the social problems facing our world, it is important to identify the experiences of autonomous school leaders to support future school leaders in embarking on this journey. "We need to give up the notion of an ideal of the educated person and replace it with a multiplicity of models designed to accommodate the multiple capacities and interests of students" (Noddings, 2005, p. 173). As multiple models emerge on the educational landscape, it is important to capture the hidden competencies school leaders are drawing upon to better understand the implications for preparing future edupreneurs.

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Opportunities for Further Research

In my current role serving the State Department of Higher Education and State Department of Education, I have had the privilege of visiting nearly one hundred schools across the state in the past year. The experiences captured in this autoethnography have allowed me to speak with authenticity and vulnerability (two traits that are not valued in business encounters) to educational leaders, including principals, instructional coaches, and teacher leaders. Many share in the experience of feeling "voiceless," "powerless," and "devalued" in our current educational system (Field Journal, 2014; 2015). I believe it would be beneficial for each and every one of us to tell our stories from an authentic and empowered stance; from national and state legislators, state departments, district leaders, school leaders, teachers, and the faculty who work tirelessly to prepare these individuals, we can learn a lot from each other. Most important, we can come together, united toward a common vision for our educational system, and understand each perspective. When we "seek first to understand, then to be understood" (Covey, 2004), and speak with an empowered sense of self, being heard and feeling like others are genuinely listening to you provides a sense of empowerment. It teaches you that you (your thoughts, your voice, your knowledge and experience) matter. Through this learning, we can all walk stronger, living wholeheartedly from a place of worthiness. Imagine a world where every individual shows up fully present like Steve Jobs and Mick Ebeling. Consider the following offer. While it may look like a blank box, it is an opportunity to reinvent yourself. We wake up each and every day with the opportunity to reinvent ourselves. In each and every moment, the same is true. It simply requires a shift in our thoughts,

words, actions. And when shift happens, we can accomplish what we once perceived as impossible. "Think of it as a clean slate. A new start. Because once you start anew, you never know what comes next. Because the next thing you know, you just might be doing the impossible" (Ebeling, 2014, p. 235).

> Change does not begin with someone else. Change begins in your own backyard, no matter your age or size. I had no idea that one simple action could change my life so much. Most journeys start this way, with simple motivation and a choice to do something or not. You never know where one step will take you, and you never know where the next one will lead. The difference with being a leader is that you take the step; you take the journey. The greatest obstacle you will ever encounter is yourself. (Melissa Poe Hood, as cited in Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 5-6)

Together, government, industry, and education possess the power to accomplish the impossible, to utilize education to change the world.

EPILOGUE

The prevailing system of management has destroyed our people. The destruction starts
with toddlers…The fundamental task of leadership is transformation of this system
…[which is] the same system in education and business.
-- W. Edwards Deming, pioneer, Total Quality Management

This autoethnographic study captures the self-transformation that occurs as a

result of surrendering to the journey. As I expanded my worldview, I captured evidence

of change occurring in the world. I offer these insights to support future edupreneurs in

designing the future of learning so that together we can accomplish the impossible and

utilize education to change the world.

Peter Senge, an American systems scientist who is a senior lecturer at the MIT

Sloan School of Management, co-faculty at the New England Complex Systems Institute,

and founder chair of the Society for Organizational Learning, invites educators to

recontextualize the whole vision of education. His invitation evoked a sense of urgency

within and expanded my worldview of education.

> The global industrial expansion that has reshaped the world the past 50 years has
> generated unprecedented levels of material progress, but it has also created
> ecological, economic, and social imbalances that cannot be sustained. Considering
> the total footprint of human activity, we use about one and a third earths today. If
> China reached the same level of material affluence and waste as the United States,
> it would be two earths; India would make three. Already, more than a billion
> people do not have access to clean drinking water; according to the WHO, by
> 2020 it will be 2 to 3 billion. One-third of the world's 15 to 24-year-olds are
> either unemployed or considered "working poor"; 90 million are unemployed and
> another 150 million live on less than $1.25 per day. The top 1 percent of the
> world's people control twice the wealth of the bottom 50 percent. You do not
> need a crystal ball to know that the patterns of the past 50 years will not continue

another 50 years. The only questions are when and how the changes will happen. And, how the dominant institutions of the industrial age—global business and the modern school system—will change in the process. (Senge, 2012, p. 44)

As leaders, we must see the connections between building a sustainable society and disruptive innovation in education. Businesses across the globe are recognizing this need, as conveyed by CEO of Unilever, Paul Polman, "Business cannot succeed in societies that fail" (as cited in Senge, 2012, p. 45). Nike, Starbucks, and Walmart have responded as well. Nike has committed to achieving "zero waste, zero toxicity" across its entire product line by 2020, Starbucks committed to eliminating disposable cups by 2015. The world's largest food retailer, Walmart, wants to sell only seafood products harvested sustainably (as cited in Senge, 2012, p. 45). McDonalds has committed to buying only sustainable beef by 2016 (Little, 2014). Ford Motor Company has established requirements for first-tier suppliers to drive its environmental and social expectations further down the supply chain and works with suppliers to establish GHG emission reduction and energy efficiency targets (Confino, 214). These changes in strategy are arising from changes in thinking. "Systems thinking is enabling businesses to see that it is more than stupid, it is reckless to think of commercial sustainability in isolation from social or environmental sustainability," says former Unilever Management Board Member Andre van Heemstra (as cited in Senge, 2012, p. 45).

In *A Whole New Mind*, Daniel Pink (2006) explains how abundance, Asia, and automation are changing the world. Pink provides compelling evidence claiming the future belongs to a very different kind of mind (2006). We currently live in an era of abundance. During the twentieth century, most Americans aspired to own a home and a

car. Today, more than two out of three Americans own the home in which they live. Approximately 13% of homes purchased today are *second* homes. Currently, the United States has more cars than licensed drivers. Self-storage has become a $17 billion annual industry in the United States, larger than the motion picture business. When we are unable to store our many things, we simply throw them away. Business writer Polly LaBarre notes, "The United States spends more on trash bags than ninety other countries spend on *everything*. In other words, the receptacles of our *waste* cost more than all of the goods consumed by nearly half of the world's nations" (as cited in Pink, 2006, p. 33). The prosperity of abundance has placed a premium on less rational, more right-brained sensibilities. For businesses, it's no longer enough to create a product that's reasonably priced and adequately functional. In today's society, products must also be beautiful, unique, and meaningful. When redesigning your bathroom, which designer toilet brush and wastebasket will you select while shopping at your local Target store? Only in an era of abundance could so many people seek beautiful trash cans and toilet brushes. Abundance elevates right-brained thinking. Not only must engineers figure out how to make things work, they must also make them pleasing to the eye or compelling to the soul if they are going to compete in today's marketplace.

As our global population continues to climb, more and more American businesses are outsourcing labor to foreign countries. According to Pink (2006), more than half of the Fortune 500 companies now outsource software work to India. Left-brain directed white collar work of all sorts is migrating to other parts of the world. The main reason for this outsourcing is money. In the United States, a typical chip designer earns about

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$7,000 per month; in India, she earns about $1,000. A typical aerospace engineer in the U.S. earns about $6,000 per month, while in Russia, his monthly salary is closer to $650. An accountant in the United States can earn $5,000 per month, in the Philippines an accountant brings in $300 a month. For these troops of international workers, this new world order is a dream. But for white-collar, left-brain workers in North America and Europe, the implications are nightmarish. As standardized, routine left-brain dominated work can be done for a lot less overseas and delivered to clients via fiber optic links, the demand for right-brained abilities such as forging relationships instead of executing transactions, tackling novel challenges rather than solving routine problems, and synthesizing the big picture instead of analyzing a single component increases.

Further, Pink (2006) explains how automation is changing the work of many professions. Last century, machines proved they could replace human labor. This century, new technologies are proving to replace human left-brains. Previously, computer programmers, physicians, and lawyers relied heavily on left-brained competencies. These left-brained routine functions are being turned over to machines or off loaded overseas, creating a demand for individuals who possess different aptitudes, relying more on creativity than competence, more on tacit knowledge than technical manuals, and more on fashioning the big picture than sweating the details. Pink explains that automation is affecting this generation's white-collar workers in much the same way it did last generation's blue-collar workers, requiring professionals with left-brained competencies to develop aptitudes that computers can't do better, faster, or cheaper.

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Our nation is facing a vast extinction of low-skill, routine work jobs in high-wage countries. Yet our schools are led by leaders that continue to promote conformity based on narrow activity of data collection defined by others. Marc Tucker reminds us of the importance of focusing on quality, access, and equity simultaneously (Tucker, 2015) The majority of students graduating from our nation's high schools will be sitting in the face of this vast extinction of jobs. In this world, "our success depends on our creativity and courage" (Robinson, 2015).

According to the Centre for Research, Innovation and Future Development, in 2028, when current elementary school students will be preparing to leave school, the global population will be pushing 8.3 billion, Islam will be the world's largest religion with 2.2 billion followers, and the 'average' person will be a 34 year-old Indian man. Wearable technology will be controlled by thought, 50% of today's jobs will be replaced by artificial intelligence, and 3D printing will allow many products to be produced on location reducing the need for transportation. Car insurance will be a thing of the past as most cars will be driverless. Driverless cars are operating on the streets of Berlin and Nevada, Florida, and California have passed bills to legalize computer-commanded "driverless cars" on their roads (Cowen, 2013). Google's team has test-driven hundreds of thousands of miles with these cars, so far without an accident or major incident. One five car pileup was reported after a human took over from the computer. Some Google employees are transported to work in their self-driving vehicles navigated by driverless features including sensors, wires, and software.

> There is no period of change that remotely resembles what humanity is about to experience. We have gone through revolutionary periods before, but not as

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powerful or as pregnant as the fraternal twins – peril and opportunity – as the ones beginning to unfold. (Al Gore, 2013)

By 2028 (Centre for Research, Innovation and Future Development, 2014) the entire contents of the Internet will be able to be stored on DNA. The most valuable and fought-over resource will be water. 62% of the global population will live in cities, 1 in 3 people will live beyond 100 years of age, depression will be the second highest cause of disease burden in middle income countries, after obesity. In 2028, Chinese will be the most widely spoken language, closely followed by Spanish. At this time, the Chinese economy will have been the largest for 14 years, closely followed by India. There will be 2 billion middle class with an insatiable appetite for luxury western goods that are produced in the east.

Amidst all of this change, educational leaders are at best standing on the sidelines and wondering how to respond. In my experience as a teacher, gifted and talented facilitator, instructional coach, and school leader, I was sheltered from world developments. Immersed in graduate programs and focused on child development, neuroscience, educational psychology, curriculum development, culturally linguistically diverse education, etc. I was completely unaware of what is happening in the world outside of the realm of education. The educators I work with today are largely unaware as well. Additionally, they are paralyzed by fear and left "feeling worthless, emotionally exhausted, and unable to motivate myself to wake up and make a difference each and every day" (Field Journal, 2015). As a result, I want to invite future edupreneurs to embrace vulnerability, reframe their thinking, discover the art and joy of acquiring self-

knowledge, and become hunters of human excellence. To see the world through the eyes

of a child, seeing the world in hundreds of new ways.

The Hundred Languages of Childhood

The child
is made of one hundred.
The child has
A hundred languages
A hundred hands
A hundred thoughts
A hundred ways of thinking
Of playing, of speaking.
A hundred always a hundred
Ways of listening of marveling of loving
A hundred joys
For singing and understanding
A hundred worlds
To discover
A hundred worlds
To invent
A hundred worlds
To dream
The child has
A hundred languages
(and a hundred hundred hundred more)
But they steal ninety-nine.
The school and the culture
Separate the head from the body.
They tell the child;
To think without hands
To do without head
To listen and not to speak
To understand without joy
To love and to marvel
Only at Easter and Christmas
They tell the child:
To discover the world already there
And of the hundred
They steal ninety-nine.
They tell the child:
That work and play
Reality and fantasy

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Science and imagination
Sky and earth
Reason and dream
Are things
That do not belong together
And thus they tell the child
That the hundred is not there
The child says: NO WAY the hundred is there--

Loris Malaguzzi
Founder of the Reggio Approach. (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998)

In my breadth and depth of experiences as an edupreneur, I have learned to replace

discomfort and fear with excitement and imagination. Disruptions do not have to be

intimidating, threatening, or invoke fear. The challenge is in how we see and interpret

disruption. As a result of my experiences, I often wonder how to empower educators and

anyone who may feel under attack or threatened as disruptions threaten our livelihood.

Whether you're a USPS employee threatened, or "disrupted," by email or a UPS delivery

driver threatened by the introduction of drones; an educator threatened by online delivery

systems and educational automations such as robots being introduced to facilitate

learning in increasingly engaging ways or the introduction of MOOCs (massive open

online courses), we can all benefit by developing the competencies hidden inside

ourselves.

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Jennifer Arzberger

Jennifer offers thirteen years of success in developing productive student-centered learning environments to maximize student achievement. Jennifer is currently completing her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis on Educational Administration at the University of Denver. Jennifer currently serves Littleton Public School as an Instructional Coach and Gifted and Talented Facilitator. She is passionate about supporting schools, leaders, children, and families in achieving the extraordinary. Jennifer also works as an adjunct professor at CU Denver teaching the following courses: Psychology of Gifted, Talented, and Creative Children; Research in Schools; Human Learning; Children's Thinking; Social Psychology of Learning; and Advanced Psychological Foundations. Additionally, Jennifer serves as the Executive Board Treasurer for the Colorado Association of Gifted and also serves on the Board of Quantum Leadership. Jennifer earned her M.A. in Mathematics from the University of Northern Colorado, M.A. in Teaching and Teacher Education from the University of Arizona, and B.A. in Elementary Education from the University of Arizona.

Expeditionary Learning Schools
Mission: Alma del Mar is an inclusive, K-8 Expeditionary Learning school that puts New Bedford students on a college trajectory and challenges them to be service-oriented leaders. By engaging in a rigorous academic program with an emphasis on meaningful work, our students will master essential skills and content, take ownership of their learning and think boldly while addressing complex academic and community issues.
Mission: The Expeditionary Path to Innovative Change (EPIC) Academy will establish the educational community, resources, and supports necessary for urban high school students' personal growth into inspired and empowered individuals. Vision: Our students will unite leadership and academic skills to emerge as innovators that revolutionize society. The students' success in higher education and professional careers will enhance their positive community impact.
Tollgate Elementary   Vision: Graduate every student with the choice to attend college without remediation   Mission: Teach every student the knowledge, skills and values necessary to enter college or a career and become a contributing member of society who flourishes in a diverse, dynamic world
Mission: The Odyssey School is a dynamic Expeditionary Learning Community dedicated to fostering each child's unique potential and spirit of adventure through exemplary standards of character, intellectual achievement, and social responsibility.
Progressive Schools
Jefferson County Open School   Goals of the Open School 1. Rediscover the Joy of Learning 2. Seek Meaning in Your Life 3. Adapt to the World As It Is 4. Prepare for the World That May Be 5. Create the World That Ought to Be   Mission: The Open School provides a dynamic environment that fosters the development of the unique potential in each individual by nurturing and challenging the whole person. There is an emphasis on self-direction, learning through experience, shared responsibility, and the development of life long-skills.
Stanley British Primary School   Vision: We envision a community of joyful, lifelong learners prepared to make a positive difference in the world.   Mission: Our mission is to engage, challenge, and inspire children to reach their potential and develop their own voices within an inclusive, diverse, and collaborative community that values distinct contributions and abilities. We prepare teachers to implement our vision, mission, and values, and we share our educational approach with the larger community.
Quest to Learn is a school for digital kids. It is a community where students learn to see the world as composed of many different kinds of systems. It is a place to play, invent, grow, and explore.

The mission of ChicagoQuest Schools™ is to engage, challenge, and prepare all of our students to impact their communities and the world as problem-solvers, inventors, designers, and innovators.

We will accomplish this mission by designing learning spaces, curriculum, and experiences that nurture and develop in our students' intellectual curiosity and persistence, a sense of agency, and a systems approach to understanding how the world works.

As a result, our students will be prepared to succeed in college, as well as, able to think critically and independently, collaborate effectively and productively, use technology purposefully and wisely, and design creative solutions to complex problems, express their ideas and talents using multiple literacies and media.

Mission: City and Country School, for children ages 2-13, was founded in 1914 by the pioneering educator, Caroline Pratt, during the dynamic period of Progressive Education. Believing that education is fundamentally a social process, we strive to create a vital school community that supports each child's innate passion for learning while also expanding his or her understanding of communities and cultures that exist beyond school and home. The teacher's place is alongside the child, posing questions that elicit imaginative thinking, problem-solving and decision-making in pursuit of a deeper perspective. In the partnership of learning among children and teachers, community is lived through purposeful experiences that foster responsibility, cooperation, active participation, care, and respect—qualities necessary to the life of a democratic society. With social studies as the core of the curriculum, enriched through science, mathematics, literature and the arts, students are offered varied opportunities to explore and question the human story, both past and present. Academic and practical skills are embedded in contexts meaningful to children, within larger, in-depth investigations. C&C graduates are rigorous, original thinkers who embrace inquiry and experimentation as a means toward discovery. Compassionate in spirit, supportive of the needs and ideas of fellow citizens, and sure of their ability to solve problems, they move confidently into the world and contribute positively throughout their lives.

The Phoenix Rising School

Vision: Impacting the world by unlocking the intrinsic motivation of every student to create, innovate and be a respectful, confident individual.

Mission: Provide an autonomous learning environment that cultivates artistic expression, scientific exploration and mindful engagement, inspiring students to become self-empowered individuals.

At Graland Country Day School it is our mission to:
Achieve intellectual excellence,
build strong character,
enrich learning through the arts and athletics,
and prepare our students to be
engaged citizens and thoughtful leaders.
Ascende omnem montem

Top of the World Elementary, Laguna Beach, CA
Our Vision: Nestled upon a hilltop overlooking the Saddleback Valley to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the South sits an educational community known for the past 40 years as Top of the World Elementary School, affectionately known as TOW. In today's fast paced society it is refreshing to find a close knit neighborhood school where families walk to school with their children, stop to have a chat with staff, other parents and maybe have a cup of coffee. Staff, parent volunteers, and the principal meet the buses as they drive in each morning and open car doors to greet each student with a warm smile and a "Good Morning". TOW is proud to maintain its hometown feel and instill this sense of community to each and every student.

The mission of The Logan School for Creative Learning is to provide an experience-based educational opportunity for gifted children of all backgrounds that allows each child to develop individually to his or her full potential. There are five basic values that serve as the cornerstone from which we establish this environment:
Empowering Children
Opening Doors
Fostering Responsibility
Fostering Independence
Fostering Care and Concern for Others

Early Childhood Education

Montessori Children's House of Denver
Our vision is to consistently challenge, nurture, inspire and support each child's individual growth and development within an effective, safe, enriched, beautiful and welcoming learning community that embodies the Montessori principles of respect for self, respect for others and respect for the environment.

Clayton Early Learning
MISSION: *Clayton Early Learning provides national leadership to advance the field of early childhood education by researching, implementing and disseminating innovative teaching models. We promote educational equity for young children through family engagement, teacher preparation, and effective early education policy.*

VISION: *We envision a world where all children are prepared for success in school through highly effective early childhood education.*

VALUES: *Excellence, Stewardship, Growth, Innovation, Collaboration, Diversity, Family-Centered, Integrity, and Accountability.*

College Preparatory Schools

Mission: DSST Public Schools transforms urban public education by eliminating educational inequity and preparing all students for success in college and the 21st century.

Vision Statement

To become a premiere network of schools in Colorado where 100% of our students meet state standards in math, science and English in our Prep Academy.

To create an innovative school where students acquire a rigorous academic foundation that they can apply to the community and world around them in meaningful ways.

To create a rigorous and supportive academic program which will prepare 100% of our students to earn acceptance into the college of their choice and where they gain the necessary skills to successfully earn a college degree.

To graduate students with character and a sense of civic responsibility of whom a significant percentage will assume leadership positions in an increasingly scientific and technology based society.

To be an innovative and model school that helps to redefine the American high school experience.

The Harlem Village Academies Vision: We want students to become intellectually sophisticated, wholesome in character, avid readers, independent thinkers and compassionate individuals who make a meaningful contribution to society.

Other

Mission: Highline Academy Charter School exists to foster a diverse and equitable community of youth and adults striving together for academic, personal, and civic excellence.
Vision: Creating inclusive excellence in public education.

Sims-Fayola International Academy
Mission: The mission of Sims-Fayola International Academy Denver is to graduate globally competent college ready urban males who posses the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind to succeed and contribute in a 21st Century global environment.
Vision: The vision of Sims-Fayola International Academy is to prepare urban males to become creative and innovative thinkers and responsible world citizens through international awareness, competence, and a global perspective of excellence.

Charter Schools Beating the Odds

UNO Charter School
(Soccer themed school. United Neighborhood Organization. Latino community. Lobbied the state for money and received $30M brand new building created with public money. Their mission is to help build stronger communities. The school has never had below 98% attendance, which they believe is an indicator of the level of commitment from their families, teachers, and expectations of success. They want to send the message: "You're a part of the United States. You have a voice of what happens.")

Harriet S. Tubman Elementary, New Orleans (Turnaround school. K-8, 1st year under new management. New leadership and teachers. High performing. Post Hurricane Katrina, it was last to open and attracted whatever kids they could. 3 principals in 4 years. High teacher turnover. 99% FRL, 90% African American. Charter was non-renewed and taken over by another charter.) Mission: Students at Harriet Tubman Charter School build the academic skills, personal values, and intellectual habits of mind to succeed in high school, college, and beyond. With unity and courage, students and teachers focus on results and develop personal and social responsibility to build a better New Orleans for themselves and us all.
Noble Street Schools, CMO in Chicago (96% enrolled in college in 2010. City environment.) **Our Mission** ***The Noble Network of Charter Schools prepares low-income students with the scholarship, discipline, and honor necessary to succeed in college and lead exemplary lives, and serves as a catalyst for education reform in Chicago.***
Other
Mission: Highline Academy Charter School exists to foster a diverse and equitable community of youth and adults striving together for academic, personal, and civic excellence. Vision: Creating inclusive excellence in public education.
Sims-Fayola International Academy Mission: The mission of Sims-Fayola International Academy Denver is to graduate globally competent college ready urban males who posses the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind to succeed and contribute in a 21st Century global environment. Vision: The vision of Sims-Fayola International Academy is to prepare urban males to become creative and innovative thinkers and responsible world citizens through international awareness, competence, and a global perspective of excellence.

Vision Statements and Mission Statements are the inspiring words chosen by successful leaders to clearly and concisely convey the direction of the organization. By crafting a clear mission statement and vision statement, you can powerfully communicate your intentions and motivate your team or organization to realize an attractive and inspiring common vision of the future.

"Mission Statements" and "Vision Statements" do two distinctly different jobs.
A **Mission Statement** defines the organization's purpose and primary objectives. Its prime function is internal – to define the key measure or measures of the organization's success – and its prime audience is the leadership team and stockholders.
Vision Statements also define the organizations purpose, but this time they do so in terms of the organization's values rather than bottom line measures (values are guiding beliefs about how things should be done.) The vision statement communicates both the

purpose and values of the organization. For employees, it gives direction about how they are expected to behave and inspires them to give their best. Shared with customers, it shapes customers' understanding of why they should work with the organization.

Downtown Denver Expeditionary School
Arts-Partnership Summit
November 18, 2011
12:00-2:00 pm
The Denver Center for the Performing Arts: 1101 13th St. Denver, CO 80204

AGENDA
Introductions
Integrating the Arts into the Curriculum
Sharing the Goals of Our Individual Organizations
Action Plan: Crafting Letters of Support

PLEASE BRING
Your creative spirit and enthusiasm for the arts!
Paper/Writing Utensils
Laptop (if you prefer to craft your letter of support and have it ready to print by the conclusion of the meeting)

PROVIDED
Tamayo has graciously offered to prepare tapas for us to enjoy while we are meeting! I will provide drinks and a sweet treat for us as well! I appreciate you being willing to support the Downtown Denver Expeditionary School and am looking forward to our time together!

Until We Live It
It is so tempting to want the answers before we begin the journey. We like to know our way. We like to have maps. We like to have guides. But we are more like a breathing puzzle, a living bag of pieces, and each day shows us what a piece or two is for, where it might go, how it might fit. Over time, a picture starts to emerge by which we begin to understand our place in the world. –Mark Nepo