

I am indebted to my father for living, but to my teacher for living well.

~Alexander the Great ~

PROGRAM SYNTHESIS

The decision to pursue a doctoral degree in Educational Administration and Supervision through St. John's University resulted from several key experiences in my life. Growing up in a very traditional family the belief in academic excellence was something instilled in me from a young age. My personal and professional growth over the years has yielded an unquenchable desire to improve and inspire others. Following the completion of my administrative certifications, I became a self taught administrator at a young age in my educational career. I felt that completing my doctorate was the next reasonable step to maximize my influence over the educational community and also to acquire the knowledge I needed to be the best administrator I could be.

For me completing my doctoral degree began as my personal *Odyssey*. It was a voyage I intended to complete regardless of the distance I traveled for my courses from New Jersey to Oakdale, Long Island. Throughout my course work I always stayed true to my *Odyssey* remembering my initial introduction to the Cohort by Professor Faucetta and what she had said to me, "One day your children will be so proud when you get hooded." These words helped me to finally complete the required courses.

The Cohort program at the School of Education at St. John's University offered me the opportunity to grow as educational leader. As an administrator in a religious institution, it is my duty to be not only to my students but to my colleagues as well the best leader that I can. The knowledge I have gained in this program has helped to frame curricular models and offer new ideas to my colleagues. Utilizing a cohort model, the doctoral program at St. John's University aligned its courses across five main foundations: Leadership, Policy and Politics, Organizational Theory, Management Science, and Research Methodology. It is these foundations that create future leaders.

Dr. Hughes displays his enthusiasm for anything dealing with technology and data. "School Based Data Analysis" was overwhelming for me as someone who has never examined data. Nevertheless, as our Cohort had various levels of knowledge with data, Dr. Hughes gladly went over the material with the cohort giving each of us the undivided attention we needed. I was now able to understand the importance of data in framing a problem- a skill that I would be required in my career. With the School District Almanac provided by Dr. Hughes and what I learned in the course I was able to illustrate a presentation on comparing various long Island school districts something I could have never have done previously. Dr. Hughes also did his best to alleviate my fear of statistics, SPSS and quantitative research methods. I had never participated in employee contract negotiations but after "Hughes and Hughes" I had a clearer understanding of the financial implications involved. Moreover, much of what I learned I have already incorporated when my district created new contracts.

Dr. Dunlop introduced qualitative research methodology. Her courses provided organization for the research process. The courses she taught helped our cohort tremendously. Her topics were very informative, while her former student “speakers” presented their portfolio and dissertation journey. Her overview of the many theorists studied throughout the program helped me with a frame of reference when trying to find a belief or practice when exploring my future dissertation topic. At the conclusion of her courses I was able to gain confidence in understanding how qualitative research is conducted and how such research can not only serve as an addition to qualitative research but be as valuable in “telling a story.”

Dr. Smith. Courses proved to be the most informative and the most challenging. His courses engaged everyone in the cohort. Viewing videos of school district practices opened our eyes as to how organizational theory can be used when looking at school philosophy, instruction, and assessment alignment. Deborah Stone was very challenging to me. Dr. Smith allowed us to experience and find Stone’s notion of the paradoxical nature of the political process. The Cohort focused on basic value conflicts incorporated in the rhetoric of competing strategic representations of problems/solutions in policy discourse. We worked through learning activities and assignments utilizing what we had learned about “strategic representation” and “bins”. Dr Smith definitely took our way of examining and thinking to a new and higher.

Professor Francesco Ianni introduced the course “Creation of Digital Portfolio” Thus began the creation of our digital portfolios. Many of the cohort members had little

or no experience in such a venture but with the guidance of Dr. Ianni we all had our websites up and running at the conclusion of the course. Dr. Iannis explained the impact in presentation and the importance of each page.

Looking back at all of the courses taken through my Odyssey at Saint John's I can only hope that future Cohorts understand the relevance each has with educational leadership. Furthermore, it is not the material that is written in the textbook that has taught me much but the professors who instilled all that I have learned over the two and a half years here at Saint John's. My transition through this program would not have been possible without the guidance, and support of the professors at Saint John's University. I am thankful to Dr. Hughes, Dr. Smith, Dr. Dunlop, Dr. Ianni, Dr. Cynthia Douglas, Dr. Carla D'Ambrosio, and Professor Linda Faucetta for their time and dedication school