#### The Spirituality of Special Education Administrators

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Merritt F. Waters, Ph.D.
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#### Overview



- ← Connections & Predictions
- © Discussion of the Research
- (32 Implications of the Research
- ⇔ Future Inquiry
- ⇔ Theme of the Research: Special Education
   Administrators choose how they experience work.

### Presentation Objectives



- ন্থে You will:
  - $\ensuremath{\mbox{\scriptsize os}}$  Think about how you find meaning in your work.
  - 33 Compare your experiences to the research findings.
  - Sevaluate whether you may approach work differently in the future.

## Advance Organizer



- ca Research question & supporting questions
  - os Making meaning
  - তঃ Leadership
  - ර Coping
- on Why this study?
- ca How do these topics manifest in your work?

## Using the Organizer



- Real At the end of the presentation, I will ask for these organizers.
- Section 1: Answer one or more questions.
- ⇔ Section 2: Check the box to make a prediction.
- ca Turn and talk to a neighbor, with each person sharing at least one response.

# Foundations of the Research

- pprox Descriptive Qualitative No statistics or causality
- ন্তে Weave ideas together without changing them
- ञ Data Collection & Analysis

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# Discussion of the Research

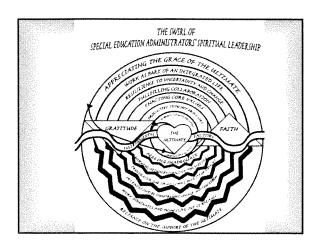
- □ Definition of Spirituality
- № The Swirl of Special Education Administrators'

  Spiritual Leadership

#### The Ultimate



68 Definition of Spirituality: "Spirituality, which comes from the Latin, spiritus, meaning 'breath of life,' is a way of being and experiencing that comes about through awareness of a transcendent dimension and that is characterized by certain identifiable values in regard to self, others, nature, life, and whatever one considers to be the Ultimate." (Elkins, Hedstrom, Hughes, Leaf, & Saunders, 1988).



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#### Students with Disabilities

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- ⇔ Students are the crux of special education administrators' motivation for work
- নে Provides a clear, easily understood **purpose** of their work
- ex Strong feelings about helping these students have are present, sometimes even since childhoodinherited factor

#### **Productive Thought Processes**

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- - os Paradox: Feeling inadequate
- Reflective metacognition
  - os Filtering thoughts, things seem worse beforehand, sticking with values
- ca Shows they are at the level of Postconventional development (Cook-Greuter, 2000)

### **Enacting Core Values**



- on Trust-taking risks to go first and give power to others
- ca Repair mistakes-inevitable, but make amends
- ন্দে Honesty-even when difficult
- ⇔ Direct assistance to families-significant motivator
- $\ensuremath{\mbox{\sc ord}}$  Productive partnerships-come from giving power and provides foundation for collaboration for SWDs
- ca Paradox: Working within parameters

## **Fulfilling Collaboration**

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- ${\it ca}$  Listen carefully-learned over time & accept feedback
- ← Mentor-encouragement + validation = be themselves
- @ Persistence-due to seeing the Ultimate in all
- A The Golden Rule-helps in all situations
- ca Paradox 1: Skill and will deficits of others
- Reparadox 2: Perceptions of others-negative
- @ Paradox 3: Secreted spirituality

#### Resilience to Change



- ${\it ca. Self-regulation strategies-wide variety, some spiritual}\\$
- cal Letting go-can detach even when easier not to
- Continued learning-cognitive and identity development
- ca Dealing with the unpredictable-major environmental factor
- (a Paradox 1: Doubt-resulting from environment & adult development
- ca: Paradox 2: Feeling lonely and misunderstood-sense of unworthiness

#### Work as Part of Life



- ca Paradox 1: Difficulty dropping work
- Thinking about it compulsively
   Bused on care for others, not on desire for power
- A Paradox 2: Work dominating life

  Overemphasis on Doing and Others at the expense of Being and Self (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2011)
- Work as part of a whole life
  - ы Spirituality is part of a credo
  - Integrity
  - 32 Meaning found in work is strongly linked to life in general


# Appreciating & Relying on the Ultimate

 Default mode that involves a perception of the Ultimate in everything whether 'good' or 'bad'

ca Can be difficult to feel appreciation based on the emphases in our culture-environmental factor

⇔ Connected to Perennial Philosophy

## Summary of Themes



- বে The Ultimate
- □ Inherited, Environmental & Choice Factors
- Students with Disabilities
- ⇔ Productive Thought Processes/Feeling Inndequate
- (3) Enacting Core Values/Working within Parameters
- ca Fulfilling Collaboration/Skill, Will Deficits of Others
- ca Resilience to Change/Doubt, Misunderstood
- CR Work as Part of Life/Work Dominating Life
- on Appreciating & Relying on the Ultimate

## **Implications**



- → Prospective Special Education Administrators
- ← Institutions of Higher Education
- → Colleagues of Special Education Administrators
- → Superintendents
- ← Special Education Administrators

#### **Implications**



- ex Prospective special education administrators
  - Explicitly consider whether it is the right field for them
- - Of Admissions: Inquire about candidates' ways of making meaning and strategies for resilience.
  - Coursework: Develop the adult students' selfawareness as a leadership tool through a course called Adult Development for Educational Leadership.

## **Implications**



- ${\it CR}\ Colleagues\ of\ Special\ Education\ Administrators;$ 
  - 68 Better understanding of the motives of the administrators could promote a harmonious work environment.
- ⇔ Superintendents:
  - ea Hiring: Find a person who is self-aware and will be content with the nature of the work.
  - 3 Legal linison: Consider contracting with an outside expert to take over the intense legal situations, thus freeing up the special education administrator.

### **Implications**



- 🖎 Special Education Administrators
  - Sequently, deeply reconnect with the Ultimate by using self-regulation strategies
  - Greate a 'meaning at work' narrative and revisit it frequently
  - Get Cultivate 'critical friend' peer mentoring relationships to process the work and support adult development
  - $\ensuremath{\text{cs}}$  Prioritize spending time in contact with students with disabilities at work

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#### Future Research Ideas

- ca Non-Spiritual Special Education Administrators
- ्र Higher Education Special Education Administrators
- ा Effect of Increased Self-Regulation
- ত্রে Effect of a Course or Workshop

#### Overview



- ca Discussion of the Research (What was found? Why?)
- ca Implications of the Research
- ের Future Research Ideas
- ⇔ Links Between the Research and Your Experience
- ex Might Any of the Implications Influence Your
  Perspectives or Behavior?

## Scholarly Conversation

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f am interested in your questions/comments about my favorite topic,

Research Theme:

Special Education Administrators choose how they exposience work.

Contact information: merritt.waters@gmail.com