Leadership Philosophy

By being who you are in the world, you are a teacher every day. This is why my philosophy of leadership is not just that of my career but a foundation for how I choose to move through the world in its entirety. My reason for living is to serve others and facilitate positive transformation toward self-actualization. While I acknowledge the value of diverse leadership styles that complement these ideals, my commitment to authenticity and stewardship compels me to embrace these roles.

I encapsulated all my values as a person into just two words. Authenticity: to be fully and exactly what is claimed. And stewardship: to responsibly and holistically care for something (or someone) entrusted to me. I have been very intentional in choosing and defining these words for myself, for they are how I filter every decision I make, every word I say, and every behavior I act. By narrowing my values to just two core values, I am able to quickly identify what does and does not align with my being. After years of traditional schooling, my values had once become extremely blurred. Authoritarian and transactional leadership styles distorted my perception of myself and forced me to live in ways that were not honorable to my core values.

Like many educators, what inspired me to study leadership was my experiences with ineffective leadership. The education system is broken, and teachers are struggling to navigate a system that calls for dehumanizing leadership, despite teachers and students alike disagreeing with these methods. Growing up I often heard the words, “excellence” and “achievement” in my education. Never did I hear the words “authenticity” or “stewardship”. Throughout my college education, I have been looking for theories, methods, and philosophies that can change the notion of the public education system to be in alignment with my values. In a system built for

achievement and competition, how do I ensure my students are not pushed to be perfect or "better than", but instead to be self-actualized, caring individuals within a greater community?

Bell Hook's theory of Engaged Pedagogy is what re-ignited my passion for learning and assured me that I wasn't the only one looking to change the notion of the education system. Through her work, I began looking into situational leadership, to learn how to meet my students where they are at. Although my leadership style is rooted in servant and transformation, situational leadership challenged me to recognize the value of all leadership styles and learn how to utilize them in ways that honor my core values. Bell Hook's introduced me to multicultural education, growing up in an extremely segregated city, I had failed to recognize how leadership must change to serve different cultures. To live into my value of authenticity, I must hold the space for others to live authentically as well, this means communicating in ways that are familiar and accessible to my students. I must consider my students' culture, maturity, ability and goals when communicating and this shapes the way I will lead them. However, at whatever stage I meet my students, I am always pushing them toward self-actualization.

As the leader of a group, I may be perceived as holding all or most of the power in a group as it is forming. This often calls for me to step into the role of a director, to set the initial boundaries of emotional and physical safety so that each individual in the group feels safe contributing authentically to the community. This sometimes calls for more of an authoritative approach, one I have difficulty executing in a way that honors my values. This is one reason I value collaboration within leadership, I nor anyone can be the perfect leader for everyone. This is why I choose never to lead alone.

As the group moves into the storming stage I will move into the role of a coach, guiding my students to recognize their power and use it in a way that is in alignment with their unique

goals and values by sharing tools and asking questions to support students in cultivating their community. Although this stage is often the most challenging, I believe it is the most transformative period. This is why my engagement with the group is most active during this time, to ensure that the group does not lose trust in themselves, each other, or myself.

As students enter the norming stage and begin to feel grounded within the group and recognize their strengths and weaknesses, I can move into the role of a consultant, only offering guidance when asked and giving encouragement along the way. Once students enter the performing stage and feel confident in themselves and each other, I get to watch from the sidelines, ensuring safety but trusting that the team can work independently from me. Rather than offering encouragement from myself, I will push the team to seek encouragement from each other. I will always meet my students where they are, but I will not stay there. I will continue to push until I am no longer needed; until they can recognize their power without me.

My philosophy of leadership is not a map but a dynamic, evolving narrative that encapsulates a holistic and multicultural approach to education and beyond. It is a call to action to reform the shortcomings of authoritative and transactional education and move towards a system that fosters authenticity, stewardship, and positive transformation striving for self-actualization. My leadership journey is not personal, it is a collective narrative of students and teachers underscoring the transformative power of empathetic, authentic, and dedicated leaders in shaping lives and society.