

Statement of Professional Goals

Susan E. Ray

Philosopher Charlotte Perkins Gilman observed: “Until we see what we are, we cannot take steps to become what we should be”. Her words serve as a powerful reminder to me that my professional goals are borne out of my personal experiences ranging from at-risk student to an educational administrator committed to serving students challenged by many of the same problems with which I dealt.

Throughout the early part of my adult life I endeavored to divorce myself from the reminders of a childhood of poverty that included struggling in an educational system driven by middle class values and rules. However, as I progressed through my career as a teacher, I found myself drawn to districts and schools populated by children in poverty and the myriad educational challenges that come with teaching the more recalcitrant students. While working in such a district in Durham, North Carolina, I was offered the opportunity to lead a school-within-a-school program for groups of underachieving students. My involvement in and skills developed during that program affirmed that I had a passion for leadership – a passion that eventually set me on paths I had neither imagined nor planned.

While working seven years in the school-within-a-school, I was honored with several awards, including the Durham County Teacher of the Year and the Duke University Public Educator Award. Recognizing my need to grow personally and professionally, I left Durham to fulfill a teaching fellowship in Malawi, East Africa. During that year of college instruction, I mapped out my future plans, which included returning to graduate school for a second master’s degree. After returning to the United States in 2001, I relocated to Long Island, and completed a degree in Educational Administration in December of 2003. I now serve as a middle school assistant principal in a high-poverty district.

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My passion for research – sparked by my recent degree work - combined with the demands of leadership in a high-poverty district, prompted me to pursue a doctorate in educational leadership. The challenging, relevant and renowned program of St. John’s University Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership and Accountability at Oakdale perfectly match my own goals and beliefs.

The tenets by which Dr. Jonathan Hughes is directing the program – principally the cohort concept - will allow me to fulfill my immediate goals of translating collective research into addressing the needs of my school district. Particularly important is the in-depth research on data collection and analysis for the purpose of data-driven decision making for improving student achievement. Further, the knowledge from the program and the shared experiences of a cohort will aid me in achieving my goal to move upward through school leadership ranks.

Finally, pursuing the Doctorate of Education at St. John’s University will help me accomplish that which Perkins Gilman described: “to become what we should be”. I hope to become one of the most knowledgeable educational leaders dedicated to a conviction and vision for those students most in need of what education has to offer them.

