Oral Defense Announcement
University of Missouri – St. Louis Graduate School

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Education with an emphasis in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

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M.A. in Communication Arts, May, 2018, Webster University
M.A. in Reading, August, 2015, Webster University
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Documenting the Journey Towards Becoming an Anti-Racist White Educator

Date: July 16, 2021
Time: 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Place: Technology and Learning Center, Conference Room 1

Abstract
As a White teacher in public education, I have had the great pleasure of educating students from all over the
globe. My career began in a district that served predominantly White students from middle class families. The only
Black students I interacted with were those bused in from the city while participating in the desegregation program.
There were noticeable biases and beliefs teachers held toward those students. However, since I was early on in my
career with little experience, I was unaware of damage being done to these students. Once I began working for an
extremely diverse district, in a building with a population of approximately 80% African American students and 90%
free and reduced lunch, I began to notice discrepancies in the attitudes other teachers in our districts had about our
specific student population. After the building closed and the students were dispersed into majority White populated
schools, it became apparent that students of color did not academically perform as well as their White counterparts.
The students suffered from both academic and discipline disparities. Further research showed students of color and
those in special education are at the highest risk of being suspended and expelled because of the unequal discipline
strategies White teachers enacted (Gonzalez, 2015). I believe this disparity can be attributed to bias and racism,
which leads to low interest in school and higher dropout rates, directly correlating to jail time and keeps the school-
to-prison pipeline open (Schiff, 2013).

Through autoethnography I will use reflexive journaling of my personal experiences, noting points of
inflection or potential change in my awareness, by interrogating my racial biases. I will share my reflections on my
own narratives to attempt to see my Whiteness through the theoretical framework of Critical Whiteness Studies so
that I may gain an understanding on how my teaching pedagogy impacts students of color. Analytical reflection will
hopefully create fundamental understanding on how I, as a White teacher, can combat inequity in discipline strategies
used against Black students, advocate for equitable curriculum instruction that is culturally relevant, and diminish
racial biases in myself and other White teachers in the hopes of promoting anti-racist teaching in public education.

Defense of Dissertation Committee
Carl Hoagland, Ed.D.
Phyllis Balcerzak, Ph.D.
Thomasina Hassler, Ph.D.
Thomas Hoerr, Ph.D.