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College of Education, Health and Human Services

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION DEFENSE OF

Donald J Copenhaver

For the degree of

Doctor of Education

Interprofessional Leadership

Cognate: Curriculum and Instruction

USING Q METHODOLOGY TO UNDERSTAND SCHOOL

DISCIPLINE PHILOSOPHIES

October 27, 2023

3:00 p.m.

Meeting ID: 232 229 253 315

Passcode: 2yPgD9

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Donald J Copenhaver

Master of Science in Educational Leadership
Capella University, 2008

B.A. English
Muskingum College, 1997

Donald Copenhaver has served Ohio's students, parents, and educators as a school leader for over 22 years. He has served as a principal and an assistant principal for 15 years and as an English Language Arts teacher for seven years. Mr. Copenhaver has experience in urban and rural settings across northeast Ohio and has worked in public, community, and nonpublic schools.

Throughout his career, Mr. Copenhaver has served marginalized student populations. In his first leadership position, Mr. Copenhaver opened a dropout prevention and credit recovery program, leading that school to exceed state standards before he assumed the principalship at a nonpublic school in Cleveland that served students with moderate-to-intensive social and emotional disabilities. He is now an assistant principal for a career-technical education school, where he is leading the school to establish its first Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program. Mr. Copenhaver leads with empathy, promotes teacher collaboration, and models reflective practice. He strives for student-centeredness, inclusion, and the re-professionalization of teachers.

USING Q METHODOLOGY TO UNDERSTAND SCHOOL DISCIPLINE PHILOSOPHIES

This study aimed to identify what school staff at a career-technical education high school believe about school discipline. The study employed Q Methodology to answer the research question regarding what school staff thought about discipline in schools. Participants completed a Q-sort and post-sort questionnaire to provide data. Qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods were used to interpret the results.

The analysis revealed three factors: teachers expressed interest in using more proactive, positive approaches to discipline; teachers emphasized that context and background were important in making discipline-based decisions; and teachers believed that the school's culture suffered from an overemphasis on punitive measures along with other organizational concerns. The author identified several important areas the school could address to improve discipline policies and practices, and improve school culture, such as implementing PBIS, improving instructional leadership, and providing more shared leadership opportunities.