
The Self-Study Learning Community

When and How and Where and Who

*What does it mean to join the self-study community?
is it a sudden jolt to assumptions galore
that stealthily hold your better sensibilities
is it a shift in center of gravity
that now brings you to the edge and contrarily makes you the center
is it asking how to begin the process of questioning
the ugly, the utterly ugly, and the profound
is it the exposure of vulnerabilities
that were never conquered for they were never acknowledged
it is some of this, all of this, and more
because it involves taking a stance with others,
in a critical but supportive environment,
to ask questions others gloss over as they rush to study others*

(Johri & Ritter, 2009)

—Arvinder Kaur Johri (Doctoral Candidate),
George Mason University, and Jason K. Ritter, Duquesne University

CHAPTER DESCRIPTION

In this chapter, you will find a discussion about the beginnings of the self-study community, how the Self-Study School evolved, how it was influenced by other scholarship, and how it became formalized. Placed within the larger spectrum of practitioner inquiry research, you will learn that although self-study scholars were influenced by earlier paradigms, self-study became a unique paradigm of its own. You will read about how its members worked to shape and reshape self-study as a new school of thought and action. You will learn how self-study scholars supported each other's work through critical collaborative inquiry as they worked

to refine the methodology of self-study and respond to critique. As in earlier chapters, you will continue to learn about the research that has been conducted by self-study scholars while you begin to think about the research question you want to pose for your own self-study research.

◆ Reading this chapter will provide an opportunity for you to acquire an understanding of the foundations of self-study and what propelled it to grow and remain a vibrant research community today.

I value the self-study community, which is at the core of my being as a teacher educator. I have always been interested in how people learn with each other and what role I played in that process. What I didn't realize when I joined the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) special interest group (SIG) over a decade ago was how much I could learn from others when I immersed myself into the community of self-study. S-STEP members generously invited me to join them and embraced me while I stumbled and tried to figure it all out. I went to the edge. No one judged. Colleagues encouraged me to write and offered their constructive and honest review as critical friends. It was the dialogue, openness, and innovative nature of our work that kept me coming back for more. S-STEP is like no other SIG in terms of how we have encouraged each other's inquiries to advance and impact the scholarship of teacher education.