

# LEADERSHIP

*my story*

*John Hendron*

MARCH, 2013

VCU SCHOOL OF EDUCATION



JOHN G. HENDRON is currently a graduate student in Educational Leadership at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia.

This report details what evidence he has collected as of March, 2013, on his role as an educational leader.

This document was produced in partial fulfillment of course EDLP 717: *Communicating Research Findings* in the Spring of 2013.

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## WHO IS JOHN HENDRON?

### Biographical Sketch

I grew up in western Pennsylvania just outside Pittsburgh, with early interests in computers and music. Before elementary school had officially begun for me, I started piano lessons. And throughout elementary school I took courses at the local community college or through summer camps in computer programming. A family move to Ohio meant that I would finish the second-half of my school age career in Ohio, outside Cleveland. It was during my high school years that I became a member of the Cleveland Youth Wind Symphony as a trombonist. As an entrepreneur, I started a computer programming and desktop publishing business with a high school companion.

I attended the University of Rochester and graduated *cum laude* in music, where I honed my skills as a composer. My plan after graduating was to study music education and conducting, with an ultimate goal of going back to school for the Doctor of Musical Arts (D.M.A.) degree in conducting after working for four years in a high school setting as a band or orchestra teacher. I returned to Cleveland and studied with my earlier mentor from high school, Dr. Gary Ciepluch, and I became an assistant conductor of the Cleveland Youth Wind Symphony, with the same group I had earlier participated while in high school. The highlight of that experience was the opportunity to conduct inside Severance Hall, home to the Cleveland Orchestra.

After earning a masters degree in music education with an emphasis in conducting from Case Western Reserve University, I relocated to the Richmond metro area looking for work in the field of education. My first job as a high school teacher was not in the field of music, however, but in teaching high school kids what I had learned to do on my own, years before: desktop publishing and web design.

With over 15 years now in the field of education, I have carved-out for myself a career as an instructional technologist. I am currently supervisor of instructional technology for Goochland County Public Schools in central Virginia. My name is well-known throughout the state and beyond in the field of educational technology through my roles as a presenter, workshop facilitator, trainer, and panelist at regional, state, and national conferences.

I currently am working towards the Ed.D. in educational leadership from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. My future plans will be to continue exploration of adjunct teaching at the university level, and to maintain a leadership position in public education.

My own background has helped me form a philosophy about education, wherein every student deserves the opportunity to discover what is of special interest to them, and to have opportunities to explore those passions. I know my parents



played an important role in that process for me, but I am forever interested in looking for ways that public education can make these opportunities available to today’s learners.

What follows is a story about my leadership in the field of education.



**Teamwork**

I work towards building collegiality among the members of our technology team by hosting an annual winter solistice event at my home each December.

**Job Responsibilities**

My work within Goochland is divided between several different teams or departments. Each of us wears a number of different “hats,” a necessary result of working within a small school district. First, I serve on the **technology team** with a network specialist, a hardware support specialist, a data specialist, a school-based technician, and an instructional technology resource teacher (ITRT). Currently our single secondary ITRT is my direct report.

In my role with technology, I plan between 30-45 professional development sessions each year for our 215 teachers and administrators. I also deliver a majority of this training. I also maintain the district’s social media and web presence, including our teacher and administrator blogs. I also lead the effort of writing and maintaining our district 6-year technology plan. I work within our team to choose and implement hardware and software solutions to meet the needs of our students, our teachers, and our support staff.

I also serve along with directors of secondary and elementary education, our career and technical education director, director of student services and special education, and our assistant superintendent of instruction on the **instructional leadership team**. In this role, I develop a newsletter, perform instructional rounds, and collaborate on district instruction initiatives.

I also serve on the district’s **leadership team**,

which includes the previously mentioned directors, two assistant superintendents, and the superintendent. This team makes strategic decisions for all five schools, informs the school board of district activities through regular reports, and provides input to the superintendent on issues.

Because of my skills in graphic and web design, I also get assigned a lot of projects for district communication, including fliers, logo design, public relations, and signage.

The intersection of technology and instruction is the heart of my job. Since working in this role in Goochland, I have created several noteworthy initiatives, including the *Goochland Blogging Initiative* (2005), *G21™ Framework for Twenty-First Century Skills* (2008), *Citizenship21™* (2009), *GoogleApps for Education* (2009) and have begun collaboration with our two assistant superintendents on developing a framework for assessing student engagement in the classroom (2012-13).

Through these various roles, I look for opportunities to lead. Some opportunities are presented through starting innovative practices, where others are through relationship building and collaboration.

I find that communication and my ability to innovate are my strongest abilities as a leader.



My Perceived Strengths



Converge Magazine – 2012

I was named one of the 50 most innovative educators in the 2012 Yearbook by Converge Magazine. They recognized my roles in the Virginia Society for Technology in Education (VSTE) a non-profit professional development organization with over 5,000 members.

Meyers-Briggs

In the summer of 2011, I took the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) test to reveal my areas of strength (Figure 1). The instrument, once scored, reveals four numbers which indicate one’s areas of strength, or gifts. The first band indicates where I like to focus my attention (introversion versus extraversion), the second indicates the way I prefer to look at things (intuition vs. sensing), the third how I go about deciding things (thinking vs. feeling), and the fourth, how I deal with the outer world (judging vs. perceiving). My personality type is therefore INTJ. Among the description for my personality type, MBTI describes the INTJ as having an original mind, drive for implementing their ideas, and having high standards of competence and performance—for themselves and others<sup>1</sup>. These resonated with me

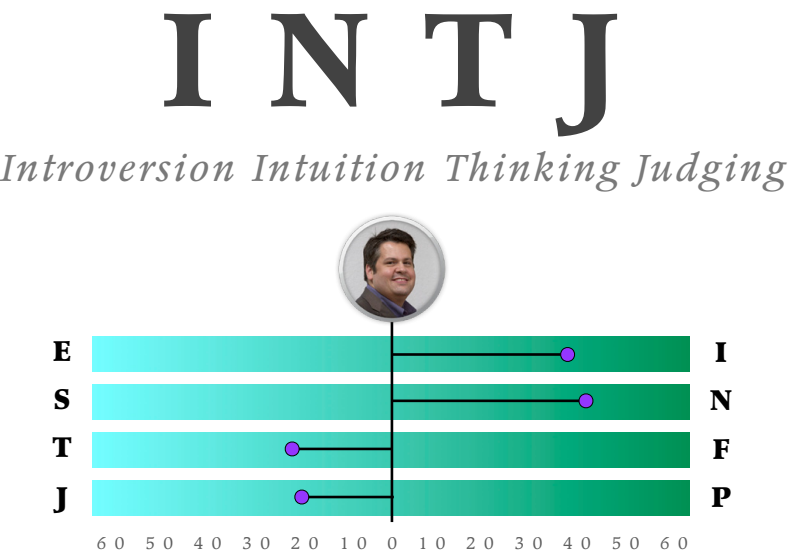


Figure 1 The results from the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) show my personality preferences and provided insight into the further development of my leadership.

as I began to assess the ways in which I prefer to work. My strengths also showed me areas where I can improve, through deeper empathy, a focus on the present, the subjective evaluation of person-centered concerns, and more flexibility and spontaneity.

In March, 2013, I took a Myers-Briggs type assessment as part of the Luck Companies’ Igniter app<sup>2</sup>, for assessing personality and values for values-based leadership. It revealed similar personality traits, albeit without numerical specificity (Figure 2).

Looking at my professional life, I also identified a couple areas I consider strengths. These include innovation and communication.

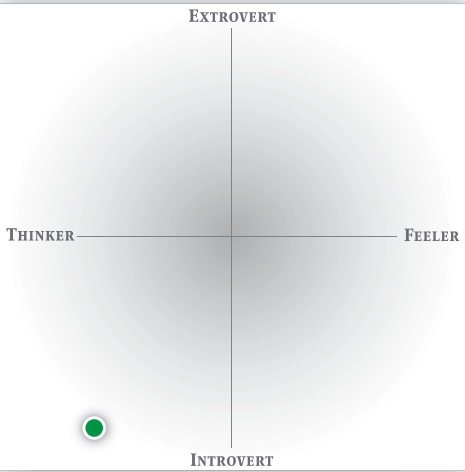


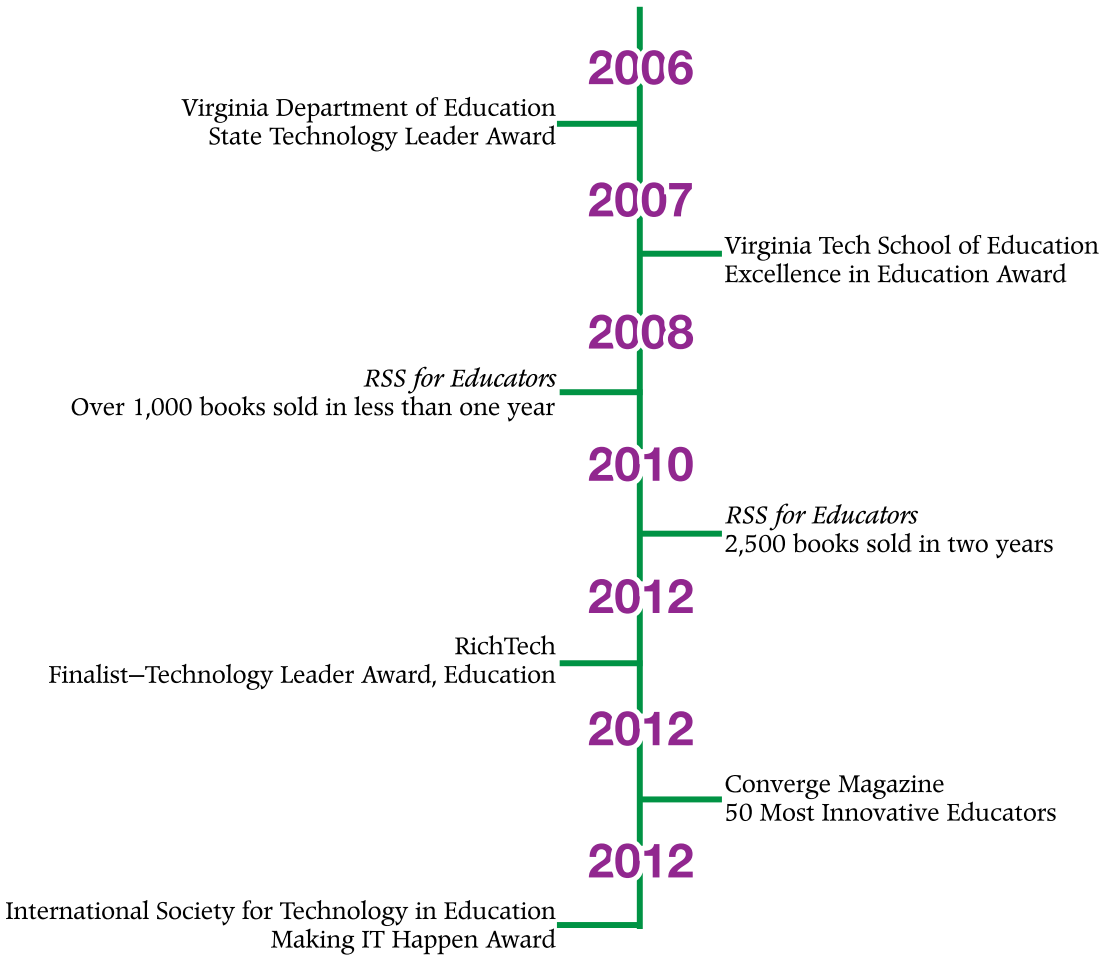
Figure 2 The personalized assessment offered by the Igniter app for iPhone confirmed my preferences for introversion and thinking as part of my personality profile.



Innovation

In the Virginia Society for Technology in Education (VSTE), I have chaired for two years the *Innovations Committee* which is focused on identifying and informing VSTE members about innovative approaches in education. While many want to know specifically about *innovative technologies*, I believe innovation takes place in our actions, and not in our gadgetry. *Innovative pedagogy*, or *innovative leadership* both leverage novel methodologies to inspire those around us. One of the primary ways I have aimed to achieve innovation and to inspire my colleagues is through new

means of **communication**. I have been recognized in my role as an educator and education leader several times, I believe, because of my role as an innovator. I have also been recognized for writing about innovative uses of technology through my 2008 book, *RSS for Educators: Blogs, Newsfeeds, Podcasts and Wikis in the Classroom*<sup>3</sup>. The following figure highlights some of these recognitions as goalposts of leadership.



**Figure 3**  
Goalposts of Leadership. Important recognition by others regarding the impact of my leadership and innovation.

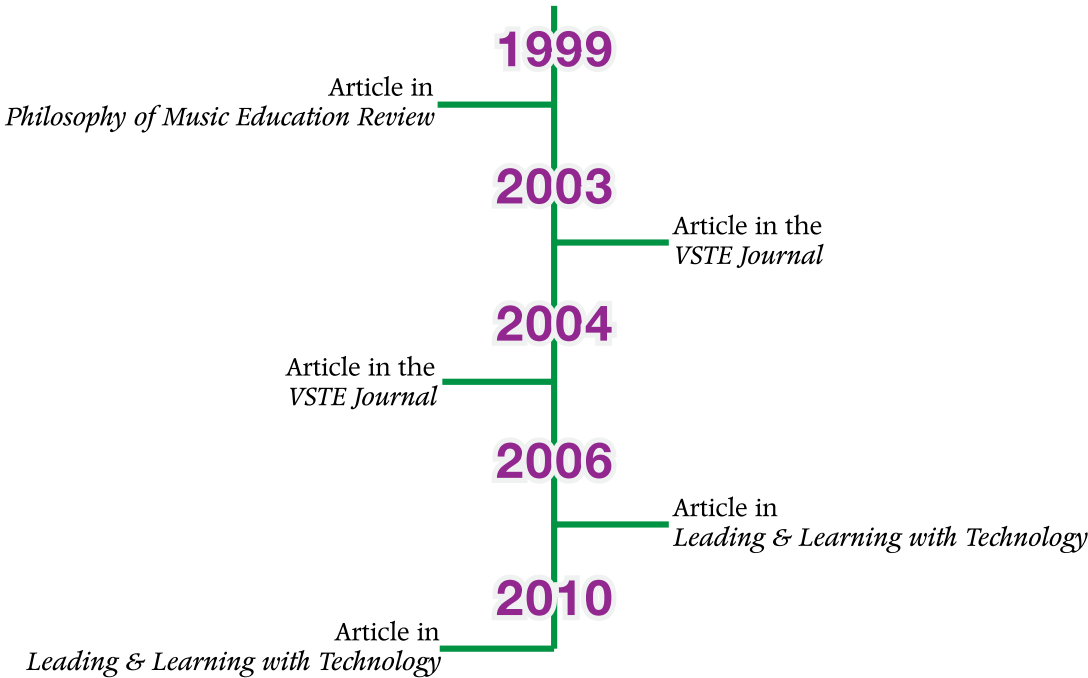
Communication

We can break down communication into two silos: *written communication* and *oral communication*. For me, the first involves blog posts, tweets, e-mails, articles, and technical instructions. For oral communication, this includes training sessions, screencast episodes, and presentations and other speaking events.

I have been trying some novel approaches in looking at communication through digital media. I started blogging in 1998, and continue today to utilize blogs as a communication medium for my colleagues in similar roles to my own, the teach-

ers I serve, and our parents and community. The rise of social media and microblogging refined my online communication, and I routinely find participation with Twitter to be a vital source of information exchange and professional development.

In the next pages, what follows are a number of figures that attempt to showcase what I have been communicating through the written word: journal articles, tweets, and blog posts.

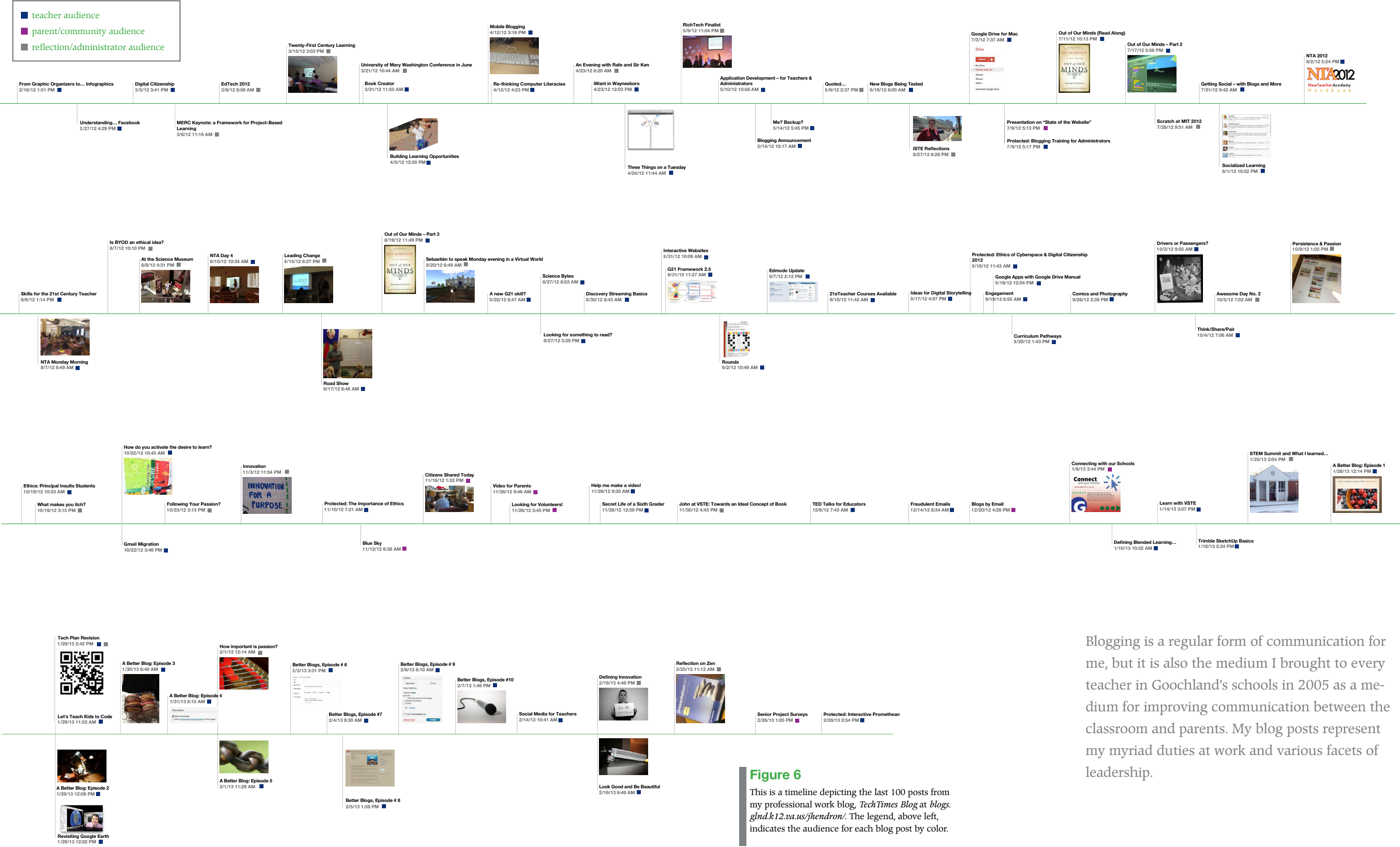


**Figure 4**  
Goalposts of Leadership. Publications in regional, international and peer-reviewed journals.









Blogging is a regular form of communication for me, but it is also the medium I brought to every teacher in Goochland’s schools in 2005 as a medium for improving communication between the classroom and parents. My blog posts represent my myriad duties at work and various facets of leadership.

**Figure 6**  
This is a timeline depicting the last 100 posts from my professional work blog, *TechTimes Blog* at *blogs.glnet.k12.va.us/jhendron/*. The legend, above left, indicates the audience for each blog post by color.



The breakdown of blog posts by audience in Figure 6 paints a picture of leadership, as well. While almost everyone of the Tweets I post are aimed at the audience of educators that follow me (both inside and outside our district), my blog posts are divided between three core audiences: our teachers (and be extension, teachers in other districts), parents and community members, and reflections of interest both to me and to our school district’s administrators (principals and central office leaders).

Figure 7 breaks down the distribution by audience type for the last year’s blog posts illustrated in the timeline in Figure 6.

Breakdown of Blog Posts by Audience

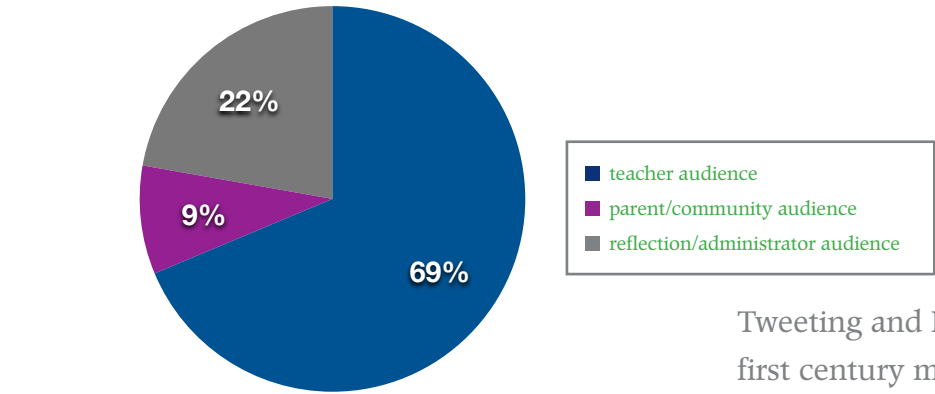


Figure 7  
Breakdown of blog post frequency by audience type.

This frequency shows that I take the initiative to lead our teachers through blogging, that I spend time reflecting on my practice for the benefit of myself and others, and that I also have a relationship with the public through my communication.

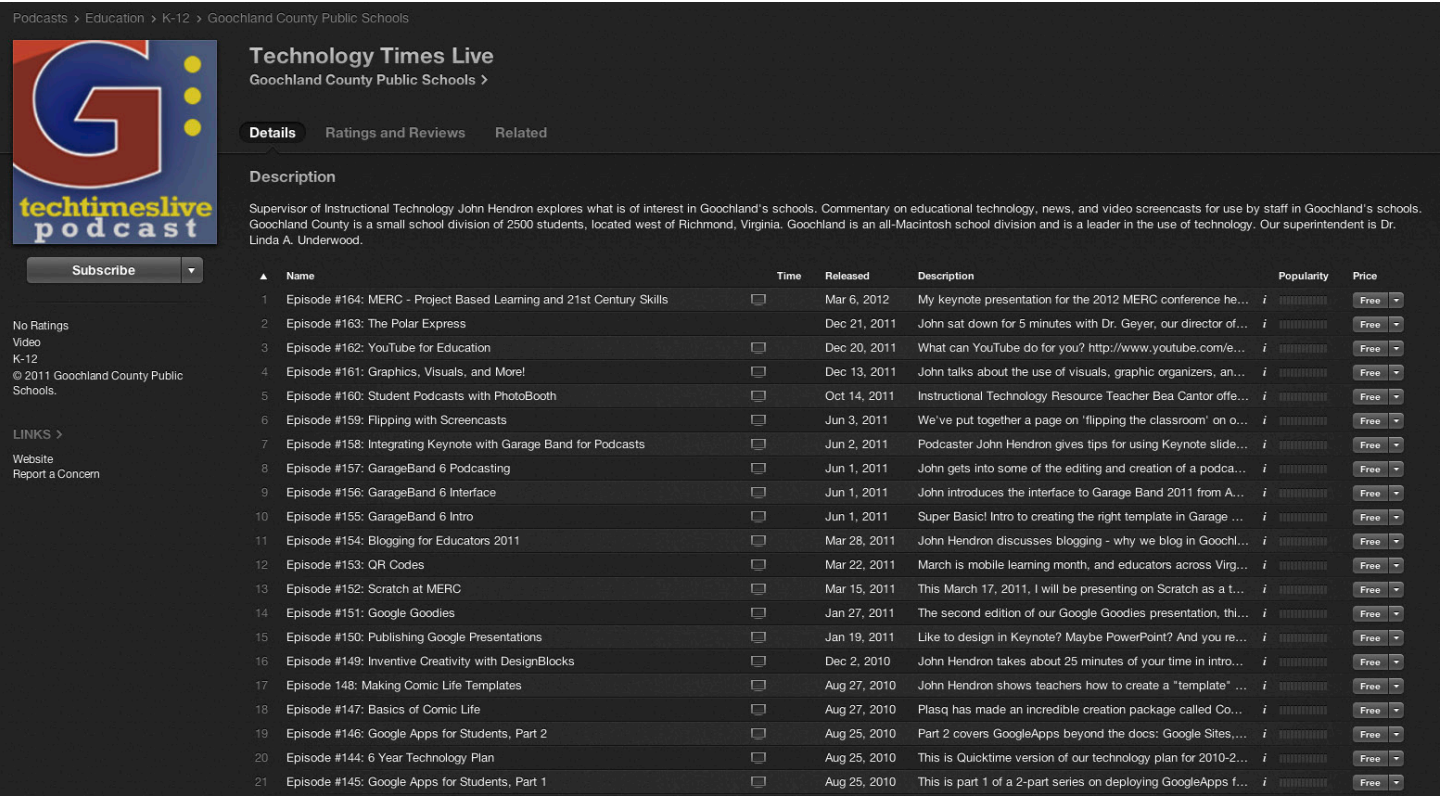
The data clearly demonstrate that I blog primarily for the benefit of our teachers through the topics I focus in writing.

Using blogging tags for summarizing posts, and the built-in cloud tag generator in the WordPress blogging platform, I can demonstrate a qualitative look at the content of my blog posts in Figure 8.



Figure 8  
My blog’s tag cloud shows a frequency of the topics I write about to all three audience groups.

Tweeting and Blogging are not the only twenty-first century media through which I communicate. Just a year after podcasting came onto the scene and became integrated into mainstream tools such as iTunes, I began publishing one of the first technology-in-education-focused podcasts called *TechTimes Live*. Since the fall of 2005, I have published over 175 episodes, between the original masthead and through other means. Figure 9 shows some of the more recent episodes available via iTunes.



In the area of **oral communication**, I have extensive experience as a trainer and presenter in Goochland and beyond. Some of these experiences are captured in the podcast episodes referenced above, but also through educational consulting, workshops, and conference presentations.

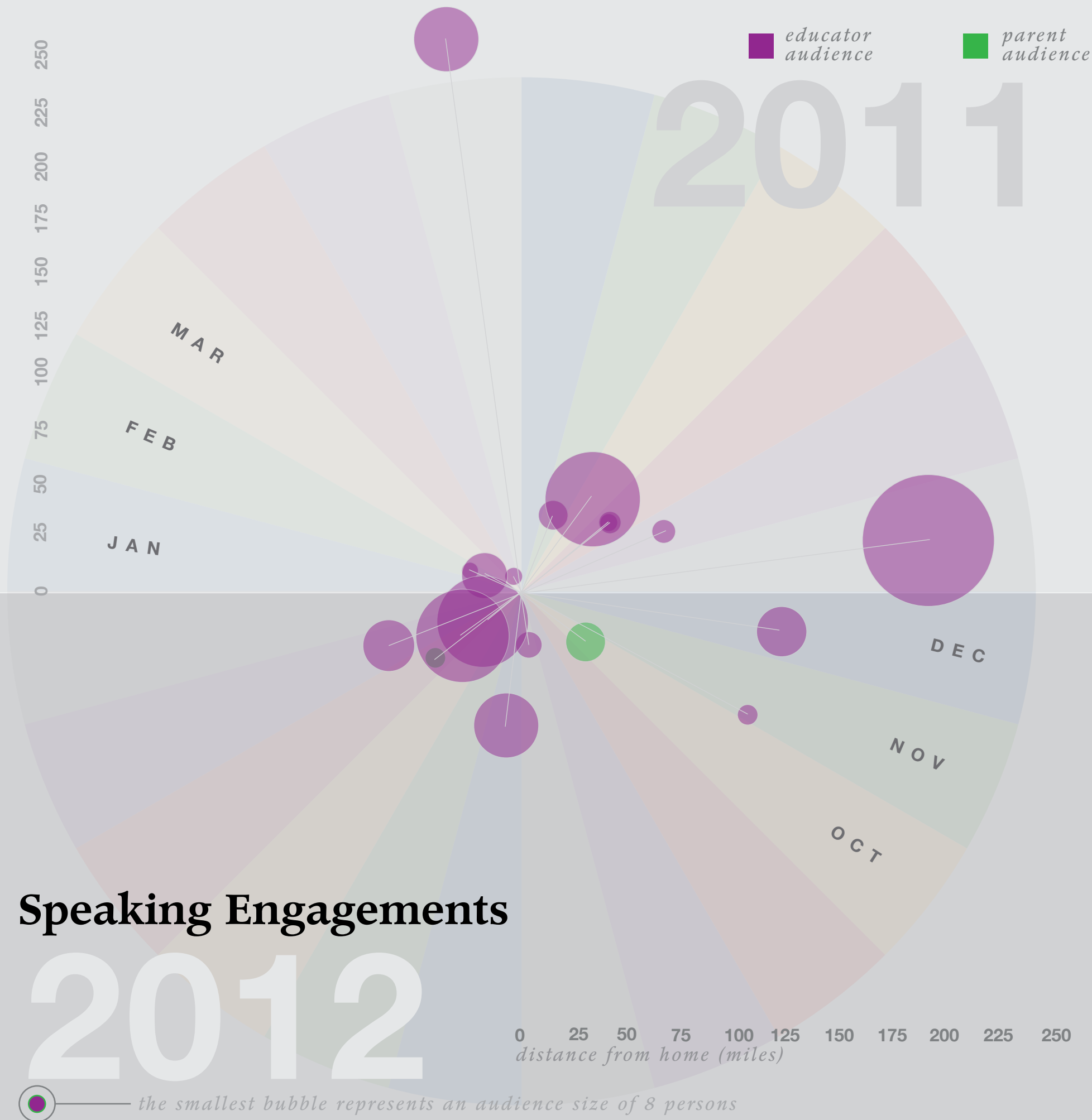
Between February, 2011 and February 2013, I have participated in 18 speaking engagements to audiences in excess of 100 (Figure 10). While I rarely collect data on my speaking engagements, I would like to think that the frequency at which I speak has something to do with my ability as a good oral communicator.

Technology-enhanced communication media could provide me with stronger analytics, such as

Figure 9  
Podcast episodes include both audio-only and video files. All episodes are available for free for download at <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/technology-times-live/id108493648?mt=2>

number of media downloads, comments left, etc. I would like to set up this capability in the future to better assess my communications performance using analytic tools.

In the next section on my 360° assessment, my peers rated me highly in the areas of written and oral communication. Via this assessment, I still see room for my own improvement in almost all the areas assessed.



Speaking Engagements Ranked by Audience Size

Event	Organization
VSTE Conference Closer	VSTE
Our Customers, Our Students	Goochland Convocation Keynote
Multiple Presentations	EdTech 2012
Project-Based Learning and G21	VCU MERC
Product-Centered Pedagogy	Mary Washington EdTech
Google Apps for Education	ISTE
iOS Apps that Support STEM Education	Longwood University ITTIP
The Future of Textbooks	VSTE
Scratch from MIT	VCU MERC
Teen Habits Online	Collegiate School
Project-based Pedagogy with Promethean	ActivHenrico
Scratch Workshop	Longwood-ITTIP
A Framework for Innovation	VASCD Conference
CTE Advisory G21	Goochland
VSTE Webinar on Innovations	VSTE
STEM Advisory G21	Goochland
Digital Citizenship for Parents	Goochland
Starting a VSTE SIG	VSTE
Promethean Training for Mathematics	Maggie Walker Governor's School

Source: Compiled by Hendron, Fall 2011-Spring 2013.

Figure 10

This chart takes a novel approach at visualizing speaking engagements from 2011-12. The months of each year are represented as equal portions of a 180° fan. The area of each bubble represents the audience size at the event.<sup>4</sup> The distance of the speaking location is depicted as the distance from the center of the chart, in miles. Color differentiates the audience type: educators and parents. The table summarizes the topics of these talks. A full list of these engagements is available on my online portfolio: [johnghendron.wordpress.com/posts/](http://johnghendron.wordpress.com/posts/).



# 360° EVALUATION

## Format

In the fall of 2011 and 2013, I completed an evaluation instrument (survey) about my leadership, organized in a series of leadership areas. These included:

- Setting Direction,
- Teamwork,
- Sensitivity,
- Judgement,
- Results Orientation,
- Organizational Ability,
- Oral Communication,
- Written Communication,
- Developing Others, and
- Understanding Strengths and Weaknesses.

Colleagues in Goochland used the same instrument to provide me information about my leadership. This group included persons who work at my level, one who reports to me, and those to whom I report. This assessment of my leadership was provided to all members of our educational leadership cohort<sup>5</sup>.

For each of the 58 questions in the survey instrument, both my colleagues and I had 5 choices from which to respond:

- (1) ineffective,
- (2) minimally effective,
- (3) satisfactory,
- (4) highly effective, and
- (5) outstandingly effective.

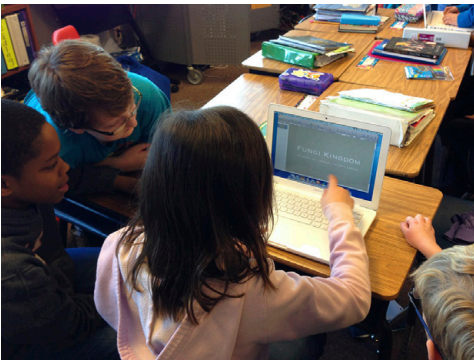
A few things are worth pointing out before interpreting the data in this leadership assessment.

First, the questions asked during each time period were the same, making comparisons between the assessment in 2011 and 2013 comparable.

Second, in the 2011 administration of the assessment, one of my colleagues was unable to complete the assessment and therefore all responses across the 58 questions are not represented in the following figures.

Third, the same set of colleagues did not complete the assessment in the 2011 and 2013 administration. In the 2011 administration of the instrument, 3 colleagues responded. In the 2013 administration, 4 colleagues responded, two of whom did not complete it the first time.

Fourth, in 2011 I was just beginning my studies in educational leadership at VCU. Since that time, my professional duties at work have also increased, with more participation in the district's instructional and leadership teams. Changes perceived in the areas of leadership covered in the assessment may have been influenced by either or both of the education and professional duty factors.



**Helping to Improve Instruction**  
Since the summer of 2011, my opportunities for leadership at work and my training in leadership have increased. I now participate in instructional rounds observations in Goochland.

Results

The two years between the each assessment administration shows improvements in several categories of leadership, including team work, results orientation, developing others, and recognizing strengths and weaknesses. Sensitivity remained the same, set at “highly effective.” The results of my 360° evaluation are summarized in Figure 11.

According to my peers and superiors, I have been outstandingly effective with setting direction, judgement, organizational ability, oral commu-

nication, and written communication. Between 2011-13, I have made improvements from their perspective in teamwork, results orientation, developing others, and understanding my own strengths and weaknesses.

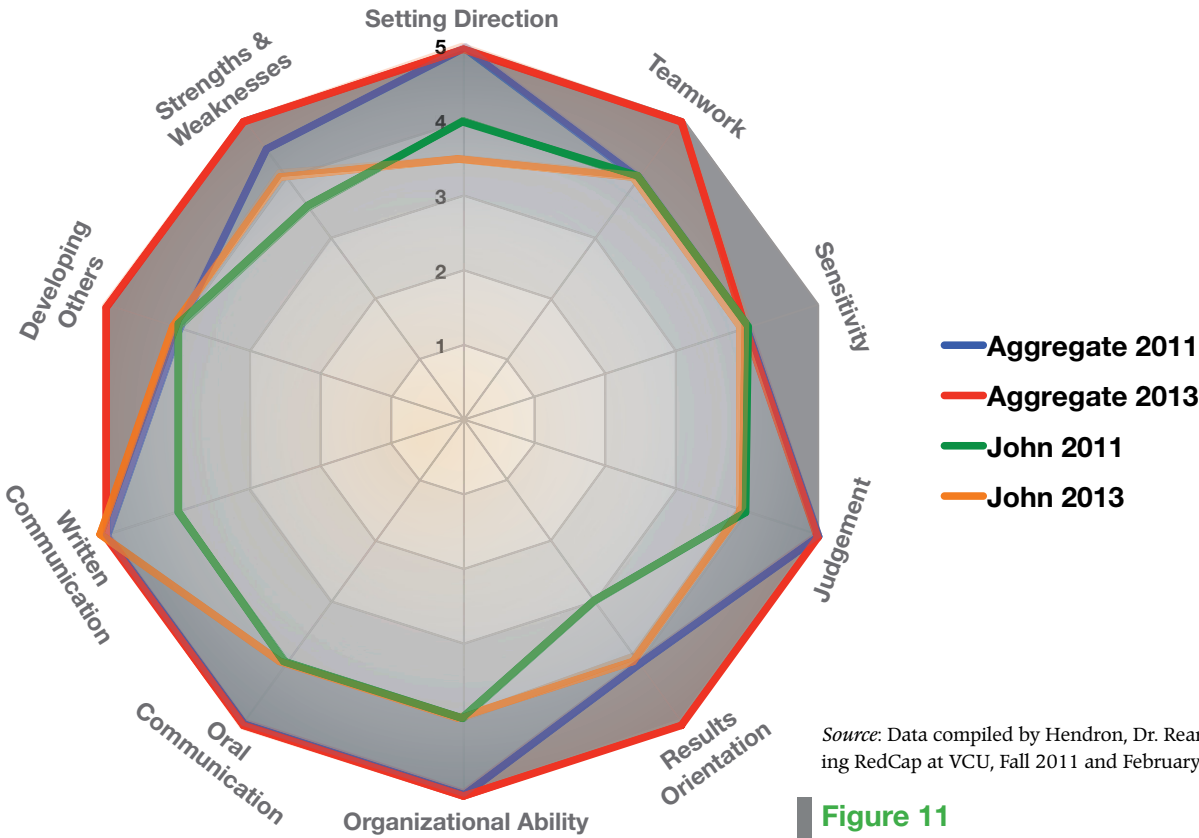
From my own self evaluation, setting direction decreased between the two periods. I can attribute this difference between leadership changes at work. Results orientation, written communication, and recognizing strengths and weaknesses increased.

Looking at the 2011 administration of the assessment, I agreed with my colleagues on my leadership skills of teamwork, sensitivity, and developing others. I also underrated myself, compared to my peers in many areas of leadership. These discrepancies indicate that I either do not see elements of my own leadership, or that I am a tougher critic on my abilities or potential.

In the 2013 administration of the assessment, I only agreed with my colleagues on sensitivity and written communication. This second administration allows me to view my own leadership with more potential for growth, at least more so than my colleagues do. This interpretation of the data is congruent with my Myers-Briggs personality type, *INTJ*.

What is clear across all administrations of the assessment is that I am highly effective in regards to sensitivity, but it is also an area both my colleagues and I see for potential growth.

360° Feedback Comparisons  
2011-2013



Source: Data compiled by Hendron, Dr. Reardon, and Dr. Becker using RedCap at VCU, Fall 2011 and February, 2013.

**Figure 11**  
Results of two administrations of the 360° feedback instrument by Reardon (2011), capturing both my own self-assessment and my leadership assessment by my peers in Goochland County using median calculations from each leadership category.





Areas for Improvement

I believe there is always a potential for personal growth in any area, including leadership. The keys toward improvement for me include education, reflection on practice, and goal-setting for the future. One area where I would like to focus my attention towards improvement is on the 360° area of *sensitivity*.

The questions for sensitivity within the 360° assessment were covered in questions 16-20.

*Q16. He interacts professionally and tactfully with others.*

*Q17. He elicits perceptions, feelings, or concerns of others.*

*Q18. He voices disagreement without creating un-*

*necessary conflict.*

*Q19. He communicates necessary information to appropriate persons in a timely matter.*

*Q20. He expresses written, verbal, and/or non-verbal recognition of feelings, needs, or concerns in responding to others.*

Not only am I interested in improving in the area of sensitivity, I wondered how I compared to my peers in the VCU Ed.D. program in Educational Leadership. What follows is a summary of the 2013 data for my VCU peers, in addition to the responses by question from my work colleagues, plus my own responses (Figure 12).

	Cohort Average	Cohort Median	Cohort Mode	Aggregate Average	Aggregate Median	Aggregate Mode	Self Rating	Cohort Sparkline
Q16	4.35 (.678)	4	5	4.20 (.500)	4	4	4	
Q17	4.24 (.701)	4	4	3.80 (.816)	4	3	3	
Q18	4.30 (.711)	4	4	3.80 (.500)	4	4	2	
Q19	4.38 (.674)	4	5	4.6 (.577)	5	5	5	
Q20	4.26 (.661)	4	4	4.2 (.500)	4	4	4	

Source: Data provided from RedCap data collection by Hendron and compilation by Dr. Jon Becker, February, 2013.

Figure 12

The table above summarizes the results, by question, for the leadership area of sensitivity from the 2013 assessment. The cohort data set represented 188 responses to the instrument, including those represented in the sparklines<sup>6</sup>. In order to compare myself against my peers at VCU, I removed my own data to compute the statistics. The aggregate statistics are the responses by my peers in Goochland about me. Standard deviation was computed for the average calculations to consider consistency among responses. These values are in parentheses in the figure above.

The chart in Figure 13 makes more clear what I think is worth comparing in my data, with my peers in the Ed.D. program. First, except for question 19—communicating to the right people in a timely manner—my colleagues fair better than me in areas of sensitivity. The same trend can be seen too, where I rate myself lower than the average of my colleagues in Goochland. The outlier is question 19, where I view my performance in this area as stronger than the cohort average and in what my peers see through my leadership.

What is also worth pointing out is the large sample size in the cohort group (n=185) versus the small sample size in the aggregate group (n=4). I would be interested to see the impact of my leadership ratings with larger sample sizes.

Seeing my performance in sensitivity compared to my colleagues at VCU is interesting, but I cannot be certain for the precise reasons why I am consistently below average for 4 of the 5 questions. I have neglected making more comparisons between my leadership qualities and those of my colleagues in my cohort for fear of making illegitimate comparisons between us.

For one, members of the cohorts are spread around three general locations (Fredericksburg, Richmond, and Farmville), and work for a variety of different organizations, some of which are not categorized as K-12 public schools. Second, each of us has different job responsibilities where we work, each that can dictate differ-

ent opportunities to exercise leadership. Third, we were each evaluated by different people in our respective jobs, and in many cases, the same “aggregate” groups were not consistent between evaluations.

The only fair comparison is to see if the cohort has improved with its participation in the Ed.D. program. As a whole, it has.

More important to me is knowing if and how I can improve. The survey did indicate areas for improvement, but a next step would be to return to questions of concern for me to collect qualitative data in order to know specifically what I can do in my own job and in my own job environment, in addition, to what I can learn from members in my cohort.

Comparison of John's Sensitivity Ratings

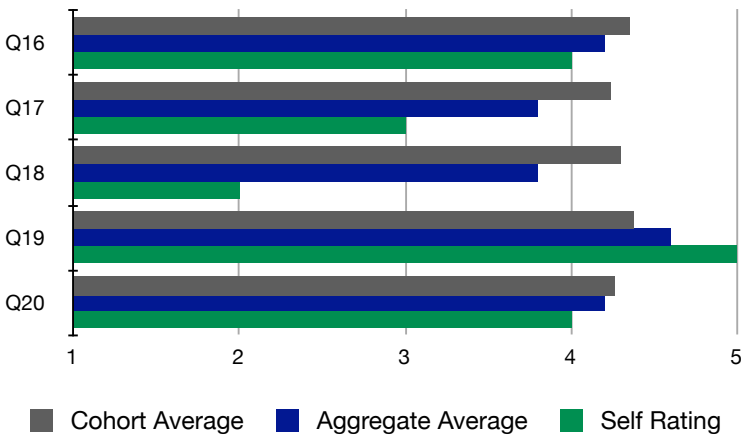


Figure 13

Comparisons of average data between the cohort and my peer (aggregate) data for questions 16-20 measuring Sensitivity from the 2013 administration of the 360° leadership assessment.

AN ONGOING STORY



Igniting My Potential

Using the free *Igniter* app from the Luck Companies, I identified my Core Values. These are “non-negotiable” qualities I believe in as a person. I believe I can grow as a leader with a focus on developing these qualities in myself and in those around me.

creativity  
excellence  
aesthetics  
achievement  
perfection

Looking for the data that tells a story about my leadership has been a challenge. The exercise, however, has demonstrated that there are multiple ways to further develop the story through data and reflection.

The Ed.D. in Educational Leadership program at VCU has required us multiple times to reflect on who we are as leaders. Early in the program, I took a self-assessment using the PRES Model: *Present, Reaching-out, Expressive, and Self-Knowing* (Figure 14). I was rated excellent in expression but had areas in which to grow. I should begin to collect feedback in these areas, especially in my role as a communicator.

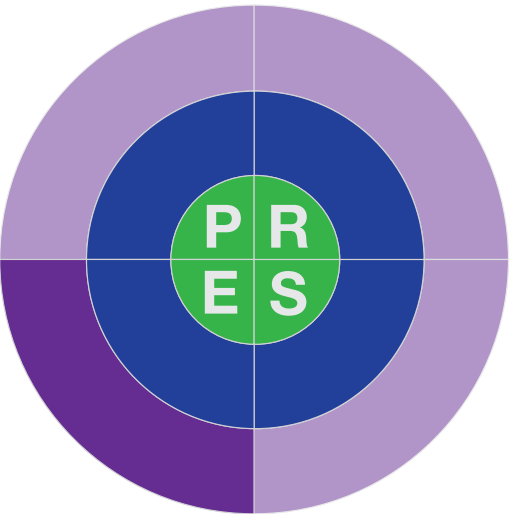
Further optimization of my leadership needs to focus upon collecting data that will be useful. This might include how I spend my days, what opportunities for leadership I seek both in my job and outside the environs of my job, and continued use of 360°-style assessment instruments with colleagues.

I also realize my story as a leader is not alone captured in my work in education. My other interests and pursuits can play a role in my development as a leader.

**John G. Hendron**  
*johnghendron.wordpress.com*

March, 2013  
Richmond, VA

Ariel Leadership Presence  
Self-Assessment



**Figure 14**  
I took the Ariel Group’s *Leadership Presence* assessment in the fall of 2011. It’s available online at [www.leadershippresence.net](http://www.leadershippresence.net). My assessment of *Very Good* in Presence suggests that I might be thrown-off by tense situations. My assessment of *Very Good* in Reaching Out suggests I can build my relationships with others through empathy. My assessment of *Excellent* for Expression shows that I am authentic with others. Finally, my assessment of *Very Good* for Self-Knowing suggests I may not always be able to connect with my fundamental values.



1. Information about the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® came from an assessment using Form G, copyright 1988, 1994 by Peter B. Meyers and Katherine D. Meyers. The assessment was conducted by Dr. Connie Ballard from Longwood University in the Summer of 2011.
2. The *Igniter* app is available for iOS at <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/id602369787?mt=8>
3. My book is available from the ISTE Press and Amazon. <http://www.iste.org/store/product?ID=574>
4. The technique of scaling values by area is recommended by Nathan Yau in *Visualize This* (2011), pp. 18-19.
5. The unpublished 360° assessment instrument was developed in 2011 by Dr. R. Martin Reardon from VCU based upon a variety of leadership assessment instruments.
6. *Sparklines* were developed by Edward Tufte as a mechanism for data visualization. See [http://www.edwardtufte.com/bboard/q-and-a-fetch-msg?msg\\_id=0001OR](http://www.edwardtufte.com/bboard/q-and-a-fetch-msg?msg_id=0001OR)

This document was generated with Adobe InDesign® CS5 on Macintosh® OS X Mountain Lion. Graphics were edited using Adobe Photoshop® CS5. Graphs were generated or edited with Adobe Illustrator® CS5. Additional data charts were generated with Apple Numbers 2 and Keynote 5.

The fonts used in this document are Poppl-Pontifex, designed by Friedrich Poppl in 1974, and Helvetica Neue Bold, designed by Max Miedinger in the late 1960s. I chose them because they are personal favorites of mine, since this document was all about me (and my leadership).

**Figure 5** was created by downloading a ZIP file of all of my tweets from *Twitter.com*. I removed non-contextual patterns from the file like *http://*. I then fed the remainder of the text from my tweets into Wordle (<http://wordle.net>). To create the vector-format file for this document, I printed the Wordle graphic as a PDF and then placed that file within InDesign.

**Figure 6** was created by creating a 100-post RSS feed using *WordPress* of my work blog. I fed that into a news aggregator called *NetNewsWire*. Next, I imported this feed from *NetNewsWire* into *BeeDocs' Timeline 3D 2*. I created a PDF of the resulting timeline, which spanned over 100 feet in length. This required significant editing of the PostScript® graphics using Adobe Illustrator to compress the timeline. I later added the color contextual dots directly in InDesign.

The chart in **Figure 10** was drawn in Adobe Illustrator with the audience size for each engagement represented by the area of “bubbles” in pixels so that the size of each bubble is proportional to the audience size.

The *sparklines* seen in **Figure 12** were generated with Microsoft® Excel 2011. It is a pity that Excel does not export them in a vectorized format.

The design of this document was created in concert with a deck of presentation slides that have been aesthetically paired. The presentation was created in Apple Keynote 5.

Photographs that appear in this document were taken by Ms. Bea Cantor, Dr. Xiaobing Shuai, and myself, John Hendron.

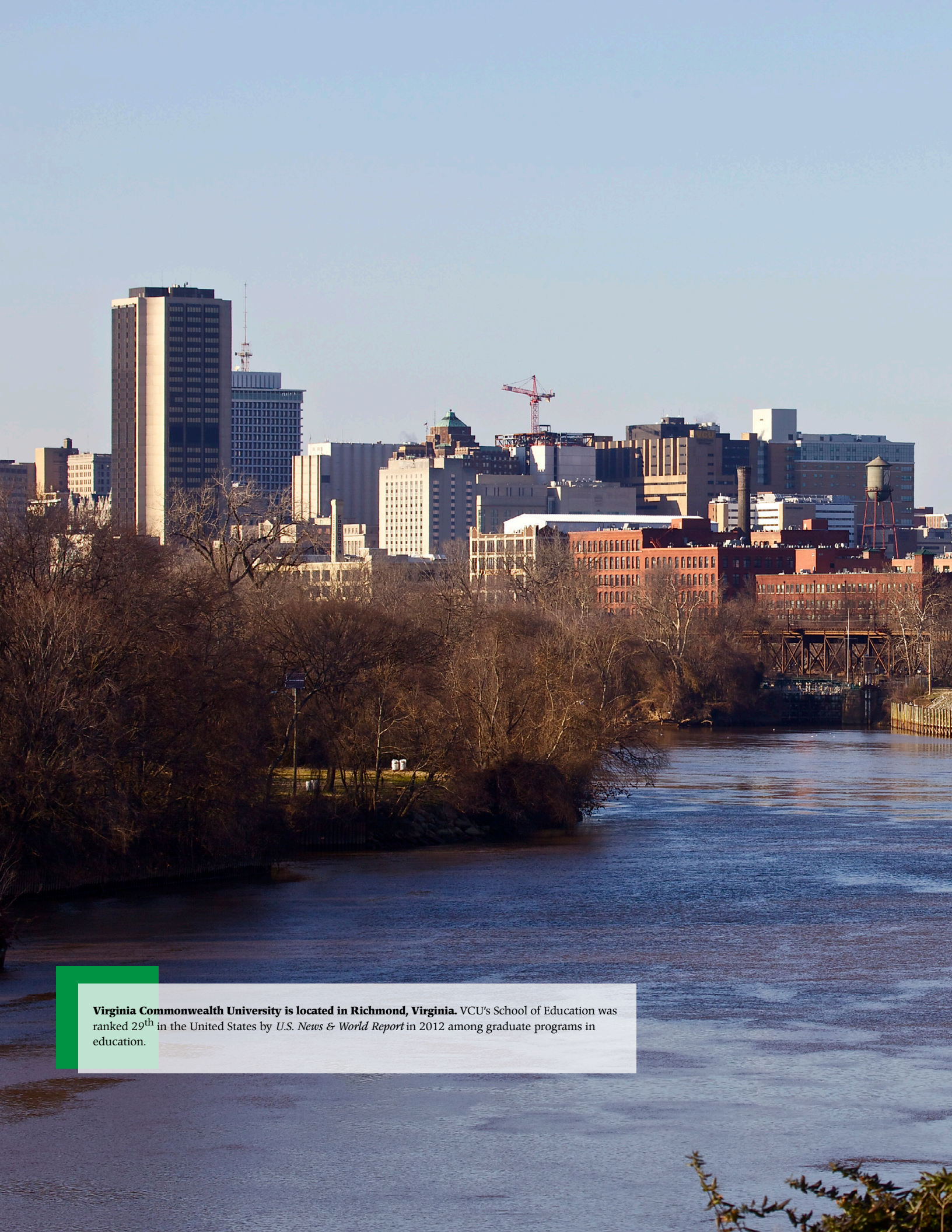
This document was finalized in the second week of March, 2013 in Richmond, Virginia.



Thank you for reading and learning more about me.

*Note: Trademarks referenced throughout this document belong to their respective organizations.*





**Virginia Commonwealth University is located in Richmond, Virginia.** VCU's School of Education was ranked 29<sup>th</sup> in the United States by *U.S. News & World Report* in 2012 among graduate programs in education.