

SOUL!

*Fulfilling the Promise of
Your Professional Life
as a Teacher and Leader*



Timothy D. Kanold

Foreword by Robert Eaker

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*This book is dedicated to my family, our “Fam Bam”;
to the memory of my colleague Becky DuFour;
and to all who choose our profession—
may your soul story search preserve your
good in order to create good in others,
each trip around the sun.*

EVALUATION SAMPLE PAGES

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access materials related to this book.

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About the Author



Timothy D. Kanold, PhD, is an award-winning educator and author. He is former director of mathematics and science and served as superintendent of Adlai E. Stevenson High School District 125, a model professional learning community (PLC) district in Lincolnshire, Illinois.

Dr. Kanold has authored or coauthored more than thirty books on K–12 mathematics, school culture, and school leadership, including his best-selling and 2018 IPPY award-winning book *HEART! Fully Forming Your Professional Life as a Teacher and Leader*.

He also has authored numerous articles and chapters on school leadership and culture-care development for educational publications.

Dr. Kanold received the 2017 Ross Taylor / Glenn Gilbert National Leadership Award from the National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics (NCSM), the international 2010 Damen Award for outstanding contributions to education from Loyola University Chicago, and the 1986 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

Dr. Kanold earned a bachelor's degree in education and a master's degree in mathematics from Illinois State University. He received his doctorate in educational leadership and counseling psychology from Loyola University Chicago.

Dr. Kanold is committed to equity, excellence, and social justice reform for the improved learning of students and school faculty, staff, and administrators. He conducts inspirational professional development seminars worldwide with a focus on improving student learning outcomes through a commitment to the PLC process and a focus on living a well-balanced professional life by practicing reflection and self-care routines.

To learn more about Dr. Kanold's work, follow him @tkanold or #heartandsoul4ED on Twitter.

To book Timothy D. Kanold for professional development, contact pd@SolutionTree.com.

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Foreword

By Robert Eaker

Joy, feeling one's own value, being appreciated and loved by others, feeling useful and capable of production are all factors of enormous value for the human soul.

—Maria Montessori

In an era of increased stress created by statewide testing of students, coupled with the relentless pressure placed on teachers for improving student learning, it's time to take a hard look at our cultural values reflected in such words as *caring* and *self-care*, *compassion for others*, and *compassion for self* as educators search for and find passion for their work.

It is time to examine the *heart and soul* of what it means to be an educator.

What better person to write about educators' hearts and souls than Tim Kanold? For more than four decades, I've had the pleasure of knowing Tim as he filled a variety of roles across rural, urban, and suburban schools—teacher, division chair, assistant principal, superintendent, consultant, author, and most important, trusted friend. In each of these roles, Tim has modeled and demonstrated the very best of our professional life, which he wrote about first in *HEART!*, and now in this companion book, *SOUL!*

Regardless of their organizational structure, schools are composed of human beings, with each person bringing his or her unique beliefs, attitudes, actions, dreams, and desires to the school—his or her unique heart and soul.

Yet schools are more than a collection of individuals. Successful schools agree to unify around ways of doing things, things that flow from a collective organizational *soul story*. It falls to educators (administrators, teachers, and staff) to lead the *collaborative* development,

articulation, and promotion of core values and behaviors that, taken together, represent those good and right things for which the school stands—the values it will passionately promote, protect, and defend, such as belonging, community, intimacy, vulnerability, and validation.

As Tim illustrates through this book, we can create such school cultures—cultures that reflect a collective soul story that embraces our diversity and gives a focus to the collaborative efforts *everyone* makes to ensure the learning of *each* student.

Developing such schools requires more than mere structural changes. A school's collective soul story matters—a lot! It's what helps educators overcome obstacles to fully engage in their daily work life, practice self-care, and provide meaning to their work—how they behave today to create a positive legacy for tomorrow.

As Tim reminds us in A Note to Readers, “A healthy soul story feeds into the good you do for other human beings and embraces your professional responsibility to live a life of contribution as you help others flourish.” Creating such school cultures is not only desirable but imperative, and Tim's *SOUL!* serves as a guidebook to help each of us on our individual, reflective, and collective journey.

Tim will help you search for and find your personal soul story, help you use it to overcome the professional obstacles sure to come your way, and help you become more confident, joyful, whole, and healthy as you live the soul story of your professional life.

In this book, he delivers a reflective self-care guide, providing wise advice for living an improved professional and personal life, and uses research, anecdotes, and stories to help create a powerful and positive culture in your school, for just such a time as this.

A Note to Readers

I wrote *HEART!* in 2017² to honor the work and character of my friend, mentor, and colleague for more than thirty years, Rick DuFour. As an original architect of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) at Work[®] process, Rick was the genius behind the clarity, beauty, and simplicity of its complex culture, expectations, actions, and beliefs. His passion focused on one primary purpose—creating and living an equity culture to significantly improve the learning of every child entrusted to us.

Rick, along with his colleague and close friend Bob Eaker, was the *heart* of the PLC movement.

From September 2014 to February 2017, Rick shared with the educational world his stage 4 cancer journey, and his battle to name the end of his professional seasons on his own terms. Walking hand in hand at every stage of that journey was his wife, Becky DuFour.

Becky was with Rick through all that comes with a cancer journey such as his, and she carried the PLC movement forward with remarkable grace and clarity. She was onstage at our major events, helped behind the scenes at meetings for all things PLC, and made sure everyone around her found a way to stay connected to their professional mission as educators, despite the pain and suffering that come with losing someone you love closely and deeply.

Fast-forward sixteen months, and Becky was leading the way as we started our summer 2018 PLC Institutes and series of teaching and leading events. If Rick DuFour represented the *heart* of the PLC life, then Becky DuFour was most assuredly its *soul*. Becky brought grace, compassion, humility, wisdom, kindness, goodness, and so much more to every person who crossed her path. When you spoke to her, she listened. Really listened. And she cared about *you*, and about nurturing the good that resides within you.

As late June 2018 approached, I was contemplating writing this book, and I needed to know her thoughts. Could and should I write this book about our responsibility to pursue our professional wellness and our moral good? I needed validation from a colleague and friend I could trust.

So I told Becky my idea.

“A healthy soul story,” I said, “is reflected in the *good* person who chooses to treat those immediately around him- or herself (regardless of race, ethnicity, language, faith, gender identity, sexual orientation, or income) with respect, validation, compassion, and care. A healthy soul story feeds into the good you do for other human beings and embraces your professional responsibility to live a life of contribution as you help others flourish.”

I finished with, “Look, sooner or later, your world will fall apart. What will matter then is the quality of the soul story you have lived and created over time!”

Then I asked Becky, “What do you think?” Becky’s response was positive and swift. She asked me if she could write the foreword, and I told her it would be an honor to have her wisdom in the book.

Little did I know the simple and innocent statement *sooner or later, your world will fall apart* would personally resonate so soon. Just one week after this quiet dinner meeting with our colleague Bob Eaker (who graciously agreed to write the foreword to this book in Becky’s place), I wouldn’t speak with Becky ever again.

This dinner would represent my final conversation with her before she unexpectedly passed away. And like many, my struggle and choice of responses to make sense of it all have been part of my personal soul story construction these past few years.

Then, during the writing of this book about our *soul story* no less, and on a much bigger scale, like you, I got caught in the snare of the pandemic and protests of 2020. It was as if a book like this was not just for my personal suffering and stress, or your personal suffering and stress, but for the suffering and stress of so many in our profession. There was the sudden loss of students, friends, or family members to the isolation and death caused by COVID-19. This loss was further compounded by the anger and grief of racial discrimination and violence that persisted.

I wrote this book for you and for me. For all educators striving to do their best every day under often difficult, stressful, and overwhelming conditions; to find their own way of creating good in their students and colleagues; and to feel the joy and benefits of a life story emanating from a healthy and fully formed professional soul, like Becky’s.

May we all fulfill the promise of our professional journey and become exemplars of *the good* demonstrated by the life of Becky DuFour.

—Timothy D. Kanold

Introduction

In a story I relate in chapter 2 of this book, I describe sitting down at the piano with my Uncle Al to play a 1938 Hoagy Carmichael song “Heart and Soul.”³ It was 1958, and I was seven years old. And I became part of their soul story in that little house on 41st Street in Rock Island, Illinois. The personal journey that took me to that exact moment of my life story was riddled with difficulty and sadness for a young child of divorced parents. And the K–12 public school systems in the United States would have to figure out what to do with me from time to time.

Yet, what exactly is our *soul story*?

The late University of Southern California professor Dallas Willard provided a hint when he indicated the moral good of our profession, and subsequently our station in life, is rooted in the good person who “treats those immediately around himself or herself with respect and care. The good person then is a person of comprehensive and well-ordered virtues.”⁴ Socrates believed the most important good for a human being was the health of the soul.⁵

With these ideas in mind, and for the purposes of this book, I define your professional soul story as *the pursuit of your moral good in order to create good in others*.

In this book, we take a reflective yet forward-looking journey into why our professional soul story is so important to our professional well-being and our emotional health. What is the role our soul story plays in overcoming obstacles sure to occur, while also unifying our work as educators?

A closer look at the cover of this book reveals an insightful subtitle. Did you notice it? *Fulfilling the Promise of Your Professional Life as a Teacher and Leader*.

As educators, we agreed to become part of a profession. But not just any kind of profession; we chose a lifetime of work designed to contribute to the growth and development

of others—our students and our colleagues. In that sense, we intuitively understand that we joined a helping profession of good persons for the creation of good persons.

And yet, that ideal—to thrive in our jobs in order to make positive contributions to others—is often very difficult to achieve, season in and season out. There are many obstacles, as described in part 2 of this book. The real obstacles to our professional fulfillment, as you will discover, are less outward and more inward. Our soul story is shaped from the inside out.

SOUL! is intentionally informal and written as if we were having a conversation together. Endnotes for resources are provided at the end of the book so as not to disrupt the flow of your thoughts and reflections as you read.

There is a flow to the book from one chapter to the next. In some chapters, you will be alerted to language and ideas from previous chapters, so you might need to go back and read those first should you choose to read ahead.

The book is filled with anecdotes and many of my favorite stories—some funny and some sad—which are always designed to make a point, connect you to your own soul story, and give you space to write about your progress as your career unfolds. Every story is true.

Please take your time working your way through the book. *SOUL!* takes you on a deep and purposeful walk through your professional life timeline, whether you are just starting our profession, nearing the end, or existing somewhere in between.

When I reference *you* in this book, I am including all adults responsible for educating students in your school or district. I am referencing each of us—the adults who have chosen the education profession, regardless of the role we play within the school organization.

If *HEART!* challenged you to live a more balanced and healthy professional life for the interfusion with others, then *SOUL!* takes you on a steeper mountain climb that encourages your interfusion with the good.

Hopefully, this book will help you choose a professional life of contribution, compassion, belonging, balance, and joy throughout your career. Our profession, our *vocation*, despite all its trials and tragedies, can lead to an incredible life fulfilled as we pay attention to and reflect on moments of stillness from the noise and seek to understand our soul story impact along the way.

SOUL! provides insights supported by research and various experts about ideas for pursuing a more meaningful teaching and leading career. I include thought leaders and researchers outside of the education profession such as: Daniel Coyle and Ryan Holiday, Chip Heath and Dan Heath, Brené Brown and Parker Palmer, David Brooks and Lisa Delpit, Emma Seppälä and James Clear, Tom Rath and Max De Pree, and Kristin Neff and Adam Grant, to name a few.

I also include reflections and wisdom from more than twenty-five teachers and leaders in our profession, including the voices of Anthony Muhammad, Julie Schmidt, Luis Cruz, Janel Keating, Brian Butler, Bill Ferriter, Regina Owens, Bob Eaker, Aaron Hansen, Bill Barnes, Jenn Deinhart, Jasmine Kullar, Linda Reusch, Mike Mattos, Tim Brown, and more. You will meet them too as you walk through your own soul story journey.

Each part of the book presents one of four unique actions derived from the word *SOUL*, as the title indicates: S is for *searching*, O is for *overcoming*, U is for *unifying*, and L is for *living*.

Part 1: S Is for Searching—Your soul story can be reclusive. You search for it. Your professional life thrives when you search for and use your soul story.

Part 2: O Is for Overcoming—You use it. Your professional life thrives when you use your soul story to overcome obstacles.

Part 3: U Is for Unifying—You develop it. Your professional life thrives when you develop your soul story in unity and community with others.

Part 4: L Is for Living—Your soul story reveals a life of contribution. You live it. Your professional life thrives when you live your soul story today to build your legacy for tomorrow.

To help your reflection throughout the book, I present My Soul Story spaces or margins, designed as a place to write down your thoughts and your responses, and examine your professional responsibility to help others flourish. Use the spaces as you deem fit for your personality and style. The chapters are reasonably brief and provide space for you to take notes and be more reflective as you read, if you so choose.

Despite all my efforts over the years to connect to my soul story and bring the best of who I am to each professional day, I have been overcome by tragedy. I have felt shallow, self-obsessed, insecure, isolated, and worse. I have been temporarily lost, hardened, and exhausted in my daily job and in the work life I have chosen. I have been overwhelmed

PART 1

DEVELOPING YOUR
SOUL STORY



Is for Searching

Essential Soul Story Question: Your soul story can be reclusive. Are you searching for it?

The soul is the piece of your consciousness that has moral worth and bears moral responsibility. . . . Mostly, what the soul does is yearn. If the heart yearns for fusion with others, the soul yearns for fusion with the good.

—David Brooks

Your professional life thrives when you *search for and connect to* your soul story.

In part 1 of this book, you begin the search for your professional soul story. As I prepared to write *SOUL!* and spent more than a year in research, I discovered a common theme among everything I read across all authors regarding how to live a more meaningful and fulfilled professional life. It was overwhelmingly consistent, despite authors' diverse professional fields: psychologists, religious scholars, medical doctors, philosophers, educators, and researchers. The theme for part 1 and the entire book is this:

For your professional life to fulfill its full potential and promise, your life story becomes one of contribution to others, and not merely achievement to self.

In chapter 1, you consider moments in which your soul story often finds you and forces you to respond to the question, "Now what?" How do you and I become more intentional about staying connected to and knowing our soul story, which can indeed be elusive?

In chapter 2, you dive into the definition of a soul story. How do you name it, and how do you differentiate between the *heartprint* and the *soul story* of your professional life?

In chapter 3, you come face to face with one of the most daunting aspects of our profession. We are to act *in loco parentis*. What a burden this is. It is a moral imperative, an unwritten code of trust between parent and teacher. By owning and knowing your soul story, you ensure this trust is rarely broken.

When we search for our soul story, we reflect on it and relentlessly pursue it. But to what end? Who and what will be the beneficiaries of our professional soul story pursuit? This question is partially answered in chapter 4.

You may or may not be familiar with the construct of a first and second mountain climb. Chapter 5 reveals the search for a second mountain professional life, as our soul story becomes *a story of contribution*.

Chapter 6 reveals a soul story secret for your professional life—compassion. The neuroscience about compassion is inescapable: no compassion, no soul. Without it, our professional life falls far short of its promise. Compassion is a challenging aspect of our work in our profession of emotional labor.

Finally, our part 1 soul story search ends in chapter 7 by looking at how to listen to the trusted voices that touch *your* soul story and then respond accordingly.

Searching to find, connect with, and live your soul story is just the beginning. Take your time, and know that each chapter propels you toward a more soul-filled professional life. Let it begin!