# REFLECTIVE PRACTICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDENT TEACHERS THROUGH CHILDREN'S WORK

By

SARA MCCORMICK DAVIS

Bachelor of Science
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater Oklahoma
1975

Master of Science
University of Central Oklahoma
Edmond Oklahoma
1982

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Thesis Approved:

Kathryn Castle
Thesis Adviser

Sally Carter

Margaret M Scott

Mona Lane

Wayne B. Powell
Dean of the Graduate College

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

"We've always done it this way."

"I do it this way because it's the way my cooperating teacher did it during my student teaching."

"Since this is February, we'll be doing our Lincoln penny- rubbing picture. (or September, we'll be doing our apple unit)

"They, (parents, administrators, other teachers) want us to do it this way."

"I taught place value for two weeks. If these children don't understand it, it's not my fault. They are not a very bright group."

"My class is on page 26 in their reading workbooks, we need to catch up to the other classes."

"I ran off these pages for my class to complete so I'll have something to show the parents at conferences."

"I tried whole language once and it didn't work."

"When I give my class free choice they can't handle it, maybe other classes can do that, but mine can't."

All of these comments have at least two things in common. They indicate the belief systems of teachers and they are non-reflective.

These statements indicate a belief that knowledge is acquired through simple transmission of facts and information. They are also nonreflective because the teachers making the statements have not questioned their beliefs, knowledge and practice about how children learn best (Dewey,1910/1997). These statements reflect a noncritical acceptance of prescribed curriculum. Teachers who make these statements do not perceive a need for further questioning of their own practices and autonomy.

During my career in education I have heard similar statements many times. When I heard teachers express these beliefs and ideas, I thought, "Why are they doing this? Don't they know that research doesn't support this as meaningful learning? Why aren't they doing what's best for children? Don't they realize that it takes a lot of time to develop those abilities?"

Asking questions about our beliefs, knowledge and practices is the beginning of reflective practice. Reflective thought, according to Dewey is what makes us "human".

"...the ground or basis for a belief is deliberately sought and its adequacy to support the belief examined. This process is called reflective thought; it alone is truly educative in value..." (Dewey, 1910/1997 ,p. 1).

It is not merely recognizing the linear step that seems to present itself. It is a conscious effort to understand all possibilities. This practice is important in professional life, but essential in teaching and education.

Through reflective practice teachers can address complex problems, develop a strong concept of teaching, and be "moral agents,...(able) to reflect critically on the injustice and inhumanity present in our society and our educational institutions" (LaBoskey, 1994, p. 17). Halliday says,

> reflective practice tends to suggest that teaching is a moral activity in which it is important to constantly reflect upon the type of people that teachers are, the kinds of theories and beliefs that they hold and the constraints that are placed upon them (1998, p. 598).

By combining reflective problem solving and the concept of teaching as "moral agency" with constructivism, teachers can also hope to become agents of change (Fosnot,1996). Constructivist theory offers a profoundly meaningful framework for teacher belief systems.

Jean Piaget developed his theories about how children construct knowledge through years of asking the question, "how is knowledge constructed?" (Piaget,1948/1974). Constructivist theory posits that,

> children acquire knowledge not by internalizing it directly from the outside but by constructing it from the inside, in interaction with the environment... children construct theories or hypotheses about objects and phenomena by putting things into relationships (and) they construct

> knowledge as an organized whole (Kamii, 1991, p. 18-19).

By understanding constructivism, teachers can make choices that are best for children and can back those choices with scientific knowledge (Ethridge, 1998).

Teachers, who are also learners, who reflect on their own learning and the choices available to them are constructivist teachers. Catherine Fosnot has written extensively on how teachers construct their knowledge about teaching. She states,

> teacher education needs to begin with (the student teacher's) traditional beliefs and subsequently challenge them through activity, reflection, and discourse in both coursework and field work throughout the duration of the program...field experiences need to allow for investigation and experimentation in child development, learning, and teaching...most importantly, participants need experiences as learners that confront traditional views of teaching and learning in order to enable them to construct a pedagogy that stands in contrast to older, more traditionally held views (1996, p.206).

By using reflective practice and theory driven beliefs to make autonomous decisions, teachers can bring to children's lived experiences in classrooms a richness of

content and experience that all children deserve. These abilities can be supported in the teacher education program. By having student teachers write up reflective case studies of themselves, students, and their peers, LaBoskey found that instances of reflective practice increased (1994). In Longhran's study, it was noted that making reflective practice explicit by modeling it's use, students were able to increase their own reflective practice and their teaching was evaluated as being more successful (1996).

Successful teaching hinges on the use of reflective practice. Do student teachers use reflective practice to develop their own knowledge? How do they make sense of theory and it's connection to their practice? What university practices facilitate knowledge construction about teaching young children? Student teaching experiences become critical for knowledge construction about what it means to be an autonomous, caring, successful teacher.

Reflective practice can help student teachers connect theory and practice. When students enter the practice teaching phase of their university program, they are finally in a position to reflect on their own teaching. If reflection is expected and supported, the students will be able to learn more from their student teaching experiences. When student teachers anticipate problems and alternative solutions, respond in a caring way to children's attempts to understand, and in general are "mindful" of the children in their care, they are using reflection to develop their own knowledge about teaching (van Manen, 1991).

How student teachers make sense of their education and how that understanding enables them to reflect on children's learning is the purpose of my study.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

Encouraging reflective practice has become the goal for many professional studies programs. It has not been reserved strictly for teacher education programs; it has come to be seen as a practice that is essential to forming artistry in professions (Schon,1987).

Reflective practice and it's connection to teacher education is a relatively new field of study (LaBoskey,1994). Preservice teachers being able to reflect on grounded beliefs and to make thoughtful decisions about what is best for children is a goal of some teacher education programs (Calderhead, 1993; Dieker, 1995; Draper, 1994; Ferry, 1998; Zeichner, 1987).

This study looks specifically at early childhood teacher education. Research on teacher education in the past has focused heavily on elementary education without recognizing the possible unique features and needs of early childhood teacher education.

Because of the developmental stages of the children in their charge, early childhood teachers may have more influence on the academic, social and emotional lives of children than teachers of any other age group. Since the base of knowledge in early childhood is extremely generalized, it is even more important for early childhood teachers to be able to articulate their beliefs and understand how young

children construct knowledge (Spodek, 1990).

How children construct knowledge has been an essential component in many early childhood teacher education programs to ground classroom instruction, combining reflective practice with lab and school observation and experiences. Interpretations of reflective practice in these programs have generally involved the use of journals, self-evaluation,and supervisory conversation. Reflective practice has been identified as a set of behaviors that can define the student teacher's actions (DeVries,1987; Goldhaber,1997; Kasten, 1966; Ott et. al., 1990).

In this study reflective practice is seen as the way student teachers construct knowledge. "Rather than behaviors or skills as the goal of instruction, concept development and deep understanding are the foci; rather than stages being the result of maturation, they are understood as constructions of active learner reorganization" (Fosnot, 1996, p.10). The student teacher becomes an "active learner" when asked to reflect on children's learning, not as "behaviors and skills" but as "concept development" and "deep understanding."

One way of reflecting on and understanding children's concept development is through documentation of their work and play. A few university programs have started emphasizing this approach.

One such program at the University of Vermont (Goldhaber, 1997) recognized the relationship between constructivist theory and documentation of children's work. The instructors assigned specific documentation techniques to be carried out by early childhood education student observers in the university child development lab. The documentation

process was used by the instructors to encourage students to more closely observe the children's activities in the lab and to make connections between these activities and the way children learn.

The early childhood teacher education program at Douglas College in British Columbia has applied documentation of children's work as defined by the Reggio Emilia approach to their program by concentrating on the concept of children teaching teachers. Classroom assignments require students to reflect on the interests of children and how those interests will be built upon (Fraser, 1998). Piaget's and Vygotsky's constructivist theories are seen at Douglas College as being complimentary theories that provide the theoretical basis for the program.

By combining constructivism with reflective practice we can begin to understand how student teachers learn from their own reflective thought. John Dewey's early definition of reflective practice is significant in this understanding. He saw reflective practice as being the

"Active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support, and the further conclusions to which it tends, ... Once begun, it is a conscious and voluntary effort to establish belief upon a firm basis of reasons" (1910/1997, p. 6).

For constructivist teachers, reflective practice means being cognizant of how the learner develops knowledge and how the teacher's practices encourage and support that development. The constructivist teacher recognizes that children's ideas are at the center of the curriculum and that

the teacher must become a learner in order to understand the child's development of knowledge (Fosnot,1996).

In defining reflective practice, it is also important to include critical inquiry. A constructivist teacher reflects on how culture influences and shapes relationships with children. Constructing knowledge about what it means to be a teacher requires "making sense" of developmentally and culturally appropriate practice. Eunsook Hyun's (1998) study found that by asking student teachers to reflect on the children's backgrounds, the student teachers could discover a "powerful instructional tool for all children in the classroom. Such reflection helps to ensure that the teachers consider multiple and diverse viewpoints as well as long-term social and moral consequences of their decisions" (p.13).

Teacher education considers these definitions of constructivism and reflective practice when designing experiences for preservice teachers that are meaningful and thought provoking. Dewey considered experiences most worthwhile that were "vital" and not seen as "arbitrary". Winitzky and Kauchak believe worthwhile experiences can be found in "feedback from K-12 students themselves, the crux of successful teaching is its impact on students, so students should represent the most powerful feedback source for candidates from which they can refine their productions for teaching" (Winitzky, 1997, p. 77).

What kind of "feedback" is most vital in early childhood education? A possible answer can be found in the research on the use of documentation in early childhood education.

Katz says,

> documentation is an important kind of

> teacher research, sharpening and focusing teachers' attention on the intentions and understandings of the children as well as their own role in children's experiences. It provides a basis for the modification and adjustment of teaching strategies, a source of ideas, and an impetus for the creation of new ones. Documentation also deepens teachers' awareness of each child's progress.
>
> On the basis of the rich data made available through documentation, teachers are able to make informed decisions about appropriate ways to support each child's development and learning (1996, p. 39).

The use of documentation of children's work to facilitate the growth of reflective practice in preservice teachers has not been explored thoroughly. Goldhaber says, "Reflecting this perspective of constructivist teaching, we were eager to explore the potential of documentation as a tool to teach our undergraduates to be keener observers, more reflective interpreters, and more individualized curriculum planners" (1997, p. 199).

The University of Vermont's program looked specifically at students starting out in early childhood teacher education. The emphasis was on the variety of ways teachers could document children's work and then use that documentation to communicate the children's learning to specific audiences. The students were encouraged to use reflective practice to make decisions about the

documentation. There is need for more research to be done on the use of reflective practice by students doing their student teaching in the public school system. The purpose of this study is to look at the use of reflective practice by student teachers in the use of documentation of children's work in the public school.

My key question is : How do student teachers use children's work to reflect on their own learning and practice?

Research questions guiding this study will include the following:

A. What theories do preservice early childhood teachers use to document children's learning?

B. What understanding do preservice teachers have of the importance of documentation of children's work?

C. What is the nature of preservice teachers' reflective practice in relation to the documentation of children's work?

D. How do preservice teachers perceive their abilities to reflect on their own practice during student teaching? What influences their ability to reflect on their practices?

## SIGNIFICANCE

There has been a call in the political and social arena for the improvement of teacher education. Policy making bodies are currently working on how to improve teacher programs (Commission on Teacher Improvement, 1997; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 1982; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1995). The National Board uses reflective practice as a major

component for the application process teacher certification candidates must complete. Teachers are directed to connect children's learning to their own practice through reflective questioning (1995). The focus of these policy making bodies will be affected by research on the development of effective teachers. Teacher education programs must be cognizant of the requirements of these and other political and professional groups.

Developing teachers who can be autonomous thinkers able to reflect on their practices and make education meaningful and purposeful for children is a worthwhile, yet elusive goal for teacher education programs. By concentrating our efforts in teacher education on the theory of knowledge construction by Piaget and the phenomenological knowledge of teacher candidates, we can base our programs on scientifically held beliefs (DeVries, 1994; Loughran, 1996).

Ethridge (1998) found that early childhood teachers were intrinsically motivated to be the "best teachers they could be" through self-reflection, which led them to use research, communication with other teachers and attending to their students to further their abilities as autonomous teachers. They referred to their teacher education programs as being significant influences to their continuing development. Learning about constructivism was also cited by these teachers as being highly influential in their development.

We can place reflective practice in the framework of constructivist theory. If teachers are simply concerned about transmitting information in the most efficient manner possible they overlook the importance of understanding how much their students have actually learned and how much is

memorized for the moment. When the teacher understands how knowledge is constructed, she tries to create an active learning environment by reflecting on her students' levels of understanding, retention and application (Marlowe, 1998).

By investigating student teachers' reflections on their own knowledge base and how it connects to their experiences in the classroom, we can begin to design programs that will facilitate the growth of caring, thoughtful teachers.

## BACKGROUND

Reflective practice is not a new concept, but has gained considerable attention in the past 20 years. The definition of reflection has been explored by several scholars.

If we go back to Dewey and his writings about reflection and it's connection to quality of thought we can see how reflection can be connected to pedagogical reflection and teacher practice.

> The consequences of a belief upon other beliefs and upon behavior may be so important, then, that men are forced to consider the grounds or reasons of their belief and its logical consequences. This means reflective thought-thought in its eulogistic and emphatic sense (Dewey,1910/1997, p.2).

Max van Manen has written, "...reflection is a form of human experience that distances itself from situations in order to consider the meanings and significance embedded in those experiences"(1991, p. 512). van Manen takes the

position that reflective practice during the act of teaching is the most difficult to articulate. In this he refers to Schon's definitions of reflective practice.

Donald Schon renewed interest in reflective practice by connecting how reflective practice taps into the tacit knowledge of the professional. He said, "inherent in the practice of the professionals we recognize as usually competent is a core of artistry." This artistry could be taught to others through "reflection-in-action" (1987, p.13).

A condition for reflection that must be in place according to Dewey and others, is the need for an explicit belief system. By using constructivist theory, teachers can support their ability to reflect on the consequences of their decisions and behavior. "Only when our thinking is logical and tightly linked to scientific evidence and theoretical constructs can we defend our practices with a scientific argument"(Kamii, 1991, p. 13).

Where best for early childhood student teachers to start reflecting on their practice than through documentation of children's work? The Reggio Emilia schools in northern Italy have provided early childhood education with evidence that through authentic assessment we can improve our teaching.

Through careful documentation of children's learning, teachers in the Reggio schools have developed a world renowned high quality program for children's education and care. Teachers in the Reggio schools believe that they have to reflect on what children are learning in order to grow professionally, generate hypotheses and interpret theories (Edwards, 1998).

By using the documentation of children's work to reflect

on their practice, student teachers can begin to construct their own knowledge of best teaching practices.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

Autonomy: the ability to govern oneself and to make knowledgeable decisions by taking relevant factors into account (Kamii, 1994).

Constructivism: construction of knowledge from within, through interaction with the environment and the creation of relationships (Kamii,1991).

Documentation: anything printed, written or recorded that provides information about the work done by children in a classroom. Professional art form involving use of various media to record the experiences of children (Edwards, 1998).

Early Childhood Education: refers to the education of children birth through age eight (Bredekamp, 1997).

Phenomenology: "Phenomenology is the systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures, of lived experience" (van Manen,1990).

Reflection: (a) active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge (Dewey, 1910/1997).

(b) the critical questioning of "expectations in the curriculum in order to understand and facilitate the development of particular children in particular situations" (Rodgers,1997).

Student Teacher: a college student in the phase of a teacher education program preparing for and carrying out the practice teaching requirement.

Tact: tact in teaching is "to be mindful of the person toward whom one is oriented;to be tactful is to incarnate one's reflective thoughtfulness in concrete situations. (It) is the embodiment, the bodywork, of thoughtfulness" (van Manen,p.532,1991).

## ASSUMPTIONS

This study is based on the following assumptions:

1. Reflective practice is the key to developing autonomous, caring, thoughtful teachers.

2. Reflective practice can be further developed in the student teaching phase of an education program.

3. Through documentation of children's work, reflective practice can be facilitated.

## LIMITATIONS

"Objective reality can never be captured" (Denzin,1998). Making meaning from qualitative research depends heavily on what paradigm the reader brings to the study. Webster's defines paradigm as "an overall concept accepted by most people in an intellectual community, as those in one of the natural sciences, because of its effectiveness in explaining a complex process, idea, or set of data"(1996, p. 979).

By researching the meaning made by these early childhood student teachers, the results from this study cannot be generalized to student teachers in every program. The participant pool is too small for direct application to other

programs and student teachers; however, the study is intended to add to an understanding of the use of reflective practice.

# CHAPTER II

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the literature about reflective practice, reflective practice in teacher education, reflective practice in early childhood teacher education, results of reflection in teacher education, constructivism, and documentation of children's work.

## REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

What is reflective practice and why should we be concerned with its development in teacher education? What does it mean in our lived experiences, let alone, teacher education?

Webster's New World College Dictionary defines reflection as,"... anything reflected;...;a) the fixing of the mind on some subject; serious thought; contemplation b) the result of such thought; idea or conclusion, esp. in expressed words; blame; discredit; a turning or bending back on itself"(p.1127, 1996). As Vicki LaBoskey says in her study of the development of reflective practice in student teachers,

> These definitions sometimes refer to process and sometimes to product, and they denote varying degrees of exactness in representation. Presumably, different definitions would be invoked for different purposes.

> The use of such a multifaceted term in education in general and teacher education in particular poses some problems (1994, p.1).

One purpose of this study is to define what is meant by "reflective practice", specifically in relation to early childhood student teachers.

Dewey said, "To expatiate upon the importance of thought would be absurd"(1910/1997, p. 192). In other words, it is generally expected that thought separates us from lower life forms. The more important issue is, how is thought important? What kind of thinking enables us to live our lives to the fullest? What does it mean to be a reflective practitioner?

Reflective practice has been a conceptual idea since the time of Socrates. By encouraging intellectual growth through questioning practices, Socrates set the stage for reflective practice.

Donald Schon used the writings of Plato to illustrate the questioning techniques and perplexity inherent in reflective thought.

> (the design student) is caught in the paradox Plato describes so vividly in his dialogue the *Meno*. There, just as Socrates induces Meno to admit that he hasn't the least idea what virtue is, Meno bursts out with this question:
>
> But how will you look for something when you don't in the least know what it is? How on earth are you going to set up something you don't know as the object of

> your search? To put it another way, even if you come right up against it, how will you know that what you have found is the thing you didn't know? (Plato,1956, p. 128)
> (Schon, 1987, p. 83).

In more modern times, Dewey is considered the father of reflective practice in education. He defined reflection as: "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge". It includes a "conscious and voluntary effort to establish belief upon a firm basis of evidence and rationality". It means there is a process which "involves a state of doubt, hesitation, perplexity, mental difficulty, in which thinking originates, and an act of searching, hunting, inquiring to find material that will resolve the doubt" (1910/1997, p. 6-13).

Dewey saw the use of reflective thought to be essential to the development of logic. He said in 1910,

> Reflection involves not simply a sequence of ideas, but a consequence-a consecutive ordering in such a way that what determines the next as its proper outcome, while each in turn leans back on its predecessors. The successive portions of the reflective thought grow out of one another and support one another; they do not come and go in a medley (1910/1997, p. 2).

To Dewey reflective practice began with the recognition of a problem and the effort to come to some solution. He

connected reflective practice to the role of the educator by pointing out that educators should "cherish" difficulties because problems were "the natural stimuli to reflective inquiry" (1910/1997, p. 64). In Dewey's terms, reflective practice was the road to knowledge in both the educator's life and his students' lives.

The significance of reflective thought garnered little more attention until the eighties when Donald Schon wrote about the role of reflective practice in the development of professionals, specifically, educators.

Rather than focusing on the general development of reflective thought as Dewey had done, Schon defined reflective practice in specific terms to show how it became part of professional life. According to Schon, in order for the professional to solve the "messy" problems of real life, reflection must take place. He described the professional as someone who had a repertoire of knowledge and who could use that knowledge to make decisions before, during and after the action of designing, teaching or performing.

The main thrust of Schon's theory is through "knowing-in-action" or being able to perform expertly without the ability, necessarily, to be able to tell exactly why certain decisions were made or to be able to verbalize all of the knowledge used in a particular situation. Schon posits that through reflection we can recreate tacit knowledge (Schon, 1987).

"Reflect(tion)-in-action" is the term used to describe "thinking (that) serves to reshape what we are doing while we are doing it" (Schon, 1987, p. 26).

Schon wrote extensively about how this artistry could

best be "taught" to students. In his view, learning professional artistry could be done in "conditions similar to those created in the studios and conservatories" where there is freedom to learn by doing with little personal risk and access to "coaches" who can articulate reflective thought. Schon refers to Dewey when he writes about the "initiation into practice" that occurs during learning sessions (1987, p. 17).

Schon believed thought followed a pattern not unlike Dewey's description of thought. In the beginning there are spontaneous responses based on our previous knowledge, we act intuitively as long as the problem is familiar. The routine response then does not bring about the expected result, causing us to have to reflect on what happened and why. This is what Schon describes as "reflection-in-action".

This reflection-in-action is critical because it causes us to question our assumptions, how we have framed the problem and our understanding of the phenomena.

> Reflection gives rise to on-the-spot experiment. We think up and try out new actions intended to explore the newly observed phenomena, test our tentative understandings of them, or affirm the moves we have invented to change things for the better (1987, p. 28).

Schon refers throughout his writings to John Dewey. Another educator influenced by Dewey is Max van Manen. van Manen extends Dewey's definitions of thought and reflective practice by saying there is a direct relationship between pedagogy and reflective practice."Teaching is done in an

intentional manner that constantly distinguishes what is good or most appropriate from what is bad or inappropriate for this child or those children in particular circumstances" (van Manen, 1977).

van Manen questions Schon's ideas about "reflection-in-action". van Manen says that it is "unlikely" that one can actually think and react to a situation at the same time. He posits that "phenomenologically it is very difficult, if not impossible, for teachers to be emersed in interactive or dialogic activities with their students while simultaneously stepping back from the activity" (1999).

However, van Manen does describe "interactive reflection" as a kind of reflection. The difficulty in teaching, according to van Manen, is the ability to find time to reflect, to be deliberate, make choices and come to decisions about the action to take.

van Manen defines degrees of systematic reflection as:

> (1) Everyday Thinking - This is made up of the "habituated, partly routinized, partly intuitive, pre-reflective, and semi-reflective rationality."
>
> (2) Incidental - We reflect in "a limited way on our practical accounts of our actions; we recount incidents, tell stories, and formulate rules-of-thumb."
>
> (3) Systematic Reflection - We reflect "in a more sustained way on our experience and others' experience with the aim of developing theoretical understandings and critical insights about our everyday action.
>
> (4) Thinking-About-Thinking - "We reflect on the way we reflect to form our theorizing, in order to come to a more self-reflective grasp of the nature of knowledge, how knowledge functions in action, and how it can be applied to our

> active understanding of our practical action" (1991, p. 512).

van Manen goes on to say that reflection can be anticipatory, interactive, recollective and mindful:

> (1) Anticipatory reflection helps us be cognizant of alternative solutions and actions, plan for experiences and be prepared.
>
> (2) Interactive reflection is the decision we must make at the moment a problem presents itself.
>
> (3) Recollective reflection is the gaining of deeper insights into past experiences.
>
> (4) Mindful reflection is the awareness of the pedagogical moment. The "mindfulness" of reflection leads into the "tactfulness" of teaching, which van Manen sees as being our responsibility for "protecting, educating, and helping children grow" (1991,p. 522).

Reflective practice can not be separated from life in general, but definitely has strong connections to what we want to develop further in teachers. Dewey, Schon and van Manen have set our sights on what education can be if we have caring, thoughtful, reflective teachers.

## REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

One of the goals of teacher education programs is to produce teachers who can become "professionals". Schon argued that "reflective practice, not repetitive practice, is the hallmark of a professional" (Clarke, 1995). Anthony Clarke, using Schon's writings, says

> when intuitive action leads to surprise,

> as in the case of a non-routine problem, practitioners respond by reflecting on their practice. However, when intuitive spontaneous action yields nothing more than the results one expects, as in the case of a routine problem, some practitioners tend not to think about their actions (Clarke, 1995, p.245-246)

Any definition of professionalism is complicated by the nature of societal expectations for what teachers must be and do. Because of the complexity of teaching in today's society, we must prepare teachers who can "analyze the sources, meanings, and implications of their beliefs about their students and the learning process" (LaBoskey,1994).

There is general agreement that reflective practice must be part of the teacher education program (Grimmett,1988; Spodek,1990; Zeichner,1994). But,there has been much discussion about forms of reflective practice and how it is best developed.

The following sections illustrate what various programs have used in the support and development of student teacher's reflective practice.

## Journals

Journals are used in some capacity in almost all of the teacher education programs which emphasize reflection. Through journal entries, instructors can set up an ongoing conversation and window into student teachers' thought processes.

Francis writes about the use of journals for analysis of a critical incident identified by student teachers. The student teachers wrote a short description of an incident on one page and then used a second page to write about feelings, beliefs, application of theory, and comparison to other events and questions. These descriptions and initial analysis were then discussed with a small cohort group for generating different ways of viewing the incident. The student then returned to the incident and reconstructed meaning. The journal activities were specifically designed to help student teachers construct knowledge (1995).

In Zeichner's program, student teachers were asked to keep journals that followed specific guidelines. These journals were then shared at intervals with the student teacher's supervisor who would respond in writing. The journals were designed to give the student teacher a systematic process for reflection (1987).

Journals were used as a source of reflective thought in a program that also used interviewing and card sorting. The student teachers wrote reflective passages about university class content and about events that they felt had impact on their teaching. Researchers looked for development and change over time of 'practical theories". It was found that journals helped make practical theories more explicit, but did not necessarily help develop critical reflection during student teaching (Kettle, 1996).

## Interviewing

Interviews were the most common method used to capture the understanding of preservice teachers of their learning (Bain et.al., 1999; Bolin, 1998; Clarke, 1995; Ellwein, 1990; LaBoskey, 1994). Interviews served several purposes; exploration of practical theories, information about participants' knowledge and experience, examination of value systems, and oral descriptions of student teaching experiences.

Kettle and Sellars found that by moving from a comprehensive level in early interviews to a specific focus in subsequent interviews, participants were able to reflect on experiences and clarify practical theories of teaching. This enabled the researchers to assess the influence student teaching had on practical theory development (1996).

In Loughran's study, a dramatic increase in one area of reflection, suggestions, was noticed when participants changed from reflective writing to verbal communication during interviews with supervisors.(1996). The difference may be explained by the writing ability of the student teachers or the flow of thought that takes place in conversational situations.

Using interviews, as part of the teacher education program, adds to the supervisor's or instructor's knowledge base about how the student teacher is using components of their education to frame problems and reflect on practice (Zeichner, 1987; Ferry, 1998).

## Videos

Video taping has not been reported as being a widely used tool to facilitate reflective practice. One study done by John Loughran showed that its use could be beneficial to those students who were "ready and willing to see" (1996, p. 188). The main usefulness of video seemed to be in creating a better understanding of the student's ability to "reflect-in-action" (Schon,1987). The instructor noticed that the general "withitness" of the student teacher seemed to effect the student's ability to reflect on unanticipated problems.

Dawn Francis used video demonstrations of role-played lessons with particular emphasis on critical viewing for "question type, power structures established, ownership of knowledge, usefulness of knowledge, and focus of observation established" (1995, p. 234).

Video taping is suggested as a way to develop learning opportunities. By video taping children participating in an activity, student teachers may be able to step back and reflect on what they see and understand. Certification portfolios sometimes require video taped lessons for review (NAEYC, 1996).

## Case Method

Henderson writes, "the primary significance of a case is not the description but rather the consideration of a problem..."(1992, p.124) Asking student teachers to identify problems through examination of cases is a popular method to encourage reflective thought.

Case methods were used extensively in LaBoskey's 1994 study. Four case studies were written by the student teachers over a two year period which included a class that was not part of their student teaching program. The first case focused on a student in their observed classrooms, the second focused on themselves, the third was about the instruction process in their own classroom and in a colleague's classroom and the last was a case on the influence of context on a student. LaBoskey found that the first case was most problematic in that it was the first time student teachers had written a case. Besides the inexperience with writing cases, the student teacher's preconceptions of race and gender were more apparent (1994).

Case method was also used in Jin's study that focused on developing student teachers' ability to "think like a teacher" (1996, p. 1). Concerns of student teachers were explored through analysis of cases presented in class and through cases the students wrote. Jin found that student teachers identified interesting problems and formulated reflective questions through writing case reports. Recommendations included having the student teachers share their cases with each other for further reflection and discussion.

## Lesson Planning and Reflection as Story

It has been suggested that the traditional lesson plan is one of the roadblocks to better teaching (Doyle and Holm, 1998). To encourage a more learner centered approach preservice teachers were asked to write their lesson plans as

though they were stories with beginnings, middles and ends. The preservice teachers had to describe the setting for the lesson, who the students are, who will engage in the lesson, who will formulate the questions, what is being taught and what will happen at the end of the story. The authors of the study point out that "if one of the goals of teacher preparation is to help beginning teachers examine their own teaching, then story may be a way to meet that goal" and "story may also help preservice teachers learn to plan in a more open-ended, cyclical manner that reflects more closely what experienced teachers do" (p.71). One of the main goals was to encourage the preservice teachers to be more learner centered.

## REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER EDUCATION

Early childhood preservice teachers must be able to reflect on all aspects of a developmentally appropriate curriculum and how it informs their practice and practical theories. Developmentally appropriate practice requires early childhood teachers to focus on child process and use teacher observation of individual children to form curriculum.

Early childhood teachers must understand how children learn through play and what kinds of teacher behaviors extend and support play. Through play, children initiate activity and construct meaning. This is considered essential to developmentally and culturally appropriate practice (Wien, 1995).

Early childhood teacher educators must match the requirements of high quality, developmentally appropriate

early childhood classrooms with the desired behaviors and knowledge of early childhood teachers. Early childhood teacher educators must support the development of early childhood teachers who can reflect on their practice.

By understanding developmentally appropriate practice in a constructivist framework, early childhood student teachers can begin to understand why it is so important for them to be highly reflective in their practice. By focusing on children's learning process, student teachers can reflect on the formative assessment documentation provides (Black, 1998).

Reflective practice has been supported and encouraged in many early childhood teacher education programs (Dana, 1997; Fosnot, 1996; Fraser, 1998; Goldhaber, 1997; Helm, 1998; Henderson, 1992; Kasten, 1996; McCarthy, 1990; Rogers, 1997). Early childhood provides some unique considerations for teacher education programs. Programs have responded by developing specialized learning for students.

One such program administered by Dana and Westcott required early childhood student teachers to verbalize explicitly their values and beliefs about early childhood education. The students had to place 20 concepts/resources associated with child care in prioritized order of importance and then defend their choices. This was done in small groups so that the defense of choices began with initial ideas and then had to be generalized to the larger group. One aspect of this approach was the push for students to reflect on how past life experience can affect the perception of child care and teaching (1997).

Swaminathan utilized 'exit slips' in a foundation course

to encourage early childhood students to reflect on their learning. The students were asked to jot down one thing they had learned in class that day and include questions about class discussions. These slips were one piece of data used to enable students to see their own growth in learning. Swaminathan emphasized the need for reflection to be in all of the early childhood courses leading up to student teaching. What the students are learning has to be connected to the effect on their thinking (1998).

Van Scoy and Freeman developed observational forms (Teacher Observational Tools) to be used by student teacher supervisors and student coaches. The focus of the observations is to enable the student teacher to "see" her own practice in the most objective way possible.

The forms are useful in early childhood classrooms where teachers have to plan for a large variety of learning activities. The tools have been designed to pinpoint data observable in the classroom, such as, variety of activities, appropriateness of lesson sequence, individual children's behavior and interaction of student teacher with children (1998).

Early childhood constructivist programs have strived to introduce student teachers to their own thinking (Burk and Dunn, 1996; Castle, 1997; Fosnot, 1996; Rodgers and Dunn, 1997). Burk used reflective journals, a Socratic style of questioning, class negotiation of grades and project choice to support the development of teaching beliefs in preservice teachers. Using the principles of constructivist education, Burk designed a course which would enable preservice teachers to question their own learning and be able to use that

reflection in their teaching.

"As they transform their own theories, their ideas about teaching begin to center around children's understanding, rather than a traditional approach of covering the content" (1996, p. 11)

## RESULTS OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE FOR STUDENT TEACHERS

All of the reflective practice methods seemed to show that preservice teachers can progress in their ability to be reflective. Most authors looked for changes in teacher belief. Evidence of teacher practice matching theoretical knowledge also seemed to be a result of reflective thought.

It was found in several studies (Bolin, 1990; Francis, 1995; LaBoskey, 1994; Loughran, 1996; Rodgers, 1997) that students who came into the program fairly strong in their reflective abilities showed growth and that those students who were originally weak in their reflective abilities showed very little,if any,growth. Bolin makes the point that student teachers can enter "a preparation program with a great deal of craft knowledge and whose work reflects care and skill that is more intuitive than thoughtful...without established habits of introspection and a conscious rationale (they) are unlikely to develop beyond a skills approach to teaching" (1990, p.11).

More growth was shown when reflective methods varied (Francis,1995; Ellwein et.al., 1990). If writing was difficult for a preservice teacher, verbal reflection was often used as a way of encouraging written dialogue (Loughran, 1996; McMahon, 1997).

Student teachers doing a self-critique was found to be an effective method in more than one study (Loughran, 1996; Van Scoy and Freeman, 1998). Discussions stemming from self-critique brought up theory to practice discrepancies and questioning of specific teaching behaviors in a non judgmental manner.

All authors propose further study of the use of reflective practice by preservice teachers. It is seen as a relatively new field of thought with questions to be answered about how much a preservice teacher can reflect, what methods provide the best reflective opportunities and what reflective practice means to the quality of teaching.

Methods, without a theoretical basis of belief, will produce empty effects. Many of the reflective methods described in this section were developed around constructivist theory. Several authors specified the need for more learner centered-ness in preservice teachers' beliefs. The theory chosen for this study which seems to best describe how learning is acquired, is the theory of constructivism.

## CONSTRUCTIVISM

Constructivism has been defined and discussed earlier in this paper in reference to Piaget's work and Constance Kamii's definitions. Constructivism has unique defining qualities for teacher education.

Fosnot defines constructivism using four main principles; knowledge is built on past constructions, self-regulation comes through assimilation and accommodation, learning is a matter of invention rather than accumulation

and that "meaningful learning occurs through reflection and resolution of cognitive conflict and thus serves to negate earlier, incomplete levels of understanding" (1989, p. 19-20).

Other Piagetian scholars have upheld the notion that learning must be meaningful for true assimilation and accommodation to occur. Eleanor Duckworth makes the point that constructivism follows a biological model and not one based on the mechanics of physics. She uses an investigation done by Greco in Greco and Piaget's Apprentissage et Connaissance (1959) to show that it is the child's making sense of data that contributes to learning and not the weight of the data itself (1996). In other words, one cannot expect to "speed-up" real learning through manipulation of tasks outside the understanding of the child.

"Making sense of data" must be a self-regulated activity. Learning cannot be constructed without the autonomy of the learner.

> Autonomy is not anarchy since critical thinking and self-indulgent thinking are not the same thing. Autonomy is excluded when knowledge is acquired heteronomously out of suspect obedience...children who produce correct answers on the basis of a(n) (authoritative) teaching procedure...may have been changed by their schooling but not in an altogether epistemologically valuable way (Smith, 1998)

Piaget's theory of autonomous learning has been misinterpreted as an endorsement of individualistic learning, but Piaget posited that schooling must be a value laden activity where children learn to become less egocentric in order to develop reciprocal relationships with others. Piaget actually wrote about the necessity of social interaction in the development of intellectual structures (Smith, 1998).

DeVries and Zan emphasized the social interaction of children in their book, Moral Classrooms, Moral Children. They posit that social, moral, and affective development as well as intellectual development is necessary in the constructivist classroom. Through reciprocal relationships between the child and the teacher, socio moral knowledge will be constructed. The teacher must take the role of observer, facilitator and guide, changing from the traditional role of authoritarian (1994).

"Teachers struggling with their own role have difficulty following the first principle of constructivist teaching: to think about how children are thinking and feeling" (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1987, p. 379). The constructivist teacher realizes that to understand the thinking and feelings of children, she must observe their work, language and interactions with others closely. She must be cognizant of how they are constructing their knowledge. By documenting children's work, the constructivist teacher can begin to connect children's learning to her practice.

## DOCUMENTATION OF CHILDREN'S WORK

Teachers who are trying to facilitate a constructivist atmosphere in their classrooms must contend with a traditionally structured system. However, the traditional system does not work very well in a society that demands accountability and development of life-long learners. Assessment of schools and educational programs has become a hot topic of public and political interest. There have been a variety of ideas about how to assess school programs and what that assessment means. To the classroom teacher, assessment of the learning in his/her classroom might mean the difference between a pay raise or dismissal.

In recent years there has been a great emphasis nationwide to rely on standardized tests for accountability of schools and their programs. The United States Department of Education is offering monies to states that adopt "proven" educational models (Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program, 1998). Usually the proof means that the models raise standardized test scores. Black and Wiliams point out that "pressures (for standardized testing) have been felt from political movements characterized by a distrust of teachers and a belief that external testing will, on its own, improve learning" (1998, p.).

Standardized tests were developed based on theories of child development that hold a static view of what "normal" means. Testing has come under fire for ignoring the multicultural influences on children's development. Standardized tests reduce learning to quantifiable bits and pieces. Graue points out that, "we...test what is easier to

measure, then define what we are looking for in terms of what is on the test. Forgetting that tests are representations of an idea, we allow them to become the idea in ways that drive research and practice (1998, p. 40).

Standardized testing seems to assume that knowledge is only transmitted socially. A program based on constructivist tenets, however, follows the idea that assessment must be based on the individual child's attempts to make sense of the world (Kamii, 1990).

> Assessment is not an appendage to an early childhood program. It is a system of collecting information, analyzing it, and making decisions about the progress of children, which is carefully planned within the context of the program goals...(teachers must) analyze the information...use information to guide practice, and...communicate information to parents (McCarthy, 1990, p. 93).

Standardized testing is an inadequate means of assessment. "As we move to more complex curricular goals, simple, quantitative measurements will not capture what children are doing and learning" (Chaille, 1997, p. 55). Elliot Eisner says that "our children will need to know how to frame problems for themselves, how to formulate plans to address them, how to assess multiple outcomes, how to consider relationships, how to deal with ambiguity, and how to shift purposes in light of new information" (1999, p. 1).

Therefore, in early childhood education, a core piece of assessment is the documentation of a child's progress in

learning. Documentation of a child's work which shows how the child is making sense of the world fits into the constructivist theory of knowledge development. Black and Wiliams refer to this kind of assessment as "formative" because the documentation is used to inform the practice of the teacher (1998).

In the Reggio Emilia schools of northern Italy, documentation has become a standard part of school life. Teachers in the Reggio schools operate on the theory that children construct their own knowledge. Listening to children as they work, observing children closely during activities and documenting projects carried out by the children is seen as a vital part of the teacher's role of understanding knowledge construction.

"Documentation is the process of reciprocal learning. Through documentation we leave traces that make it possible to share the ways children learn, and through documentation we can preserve the most interesting and advanced moments of teachers' professional growth" (Edwards, 1998, p. 121). In other words, documentation does not become something simply "done" to children, it becomes a process for the teacher to come to know her own learning. In order to document children's learning, the teacher must reflect on all connections and aspects of the program.

Helm, Beneke and Steinheimer point out that careful documentation of children's work can provide a strong argument for effective programs. They outline several benefits of documentation:

* provide evidence of children's learning in all areas of their development: physical, emotional,

social and cognitive

* provide insight into complex learning experiences when teachers use an integrated approach
* provide a framework for organizing teachers' observations and recording each child's special interests and developmental progress
* emphasize learning as an interactive process by documenting what children learn through active exploration and interaction with adults, other children and materials
* show the advantages of activities and materials that are concrete, real and relevant to young children, as opposed to abstract and artificial events such as group testing situations
* enable the teacher to assess children's knowledge and abilities in order to increase activities' difficulty , complexity and challenge as children develop understanding and skills (1997, pp. 200-205).

Teachers who use documentation are more effective when they use it to inform practice. Documentation can aid in making decisions about the set up of the classroom, what to do next, what questions to ask, what resources to provide and how to individualize learning.

Through documentation, teachers come to understand that learning cannot be artificially imposed on children. They understand that learning must be authentic and meaningful. Teachers who are always asking questions about learning, learn along with the children in their classes and no longer see themselves as givers of knowledge. Teachers who have

reported moving towards a more constructivist view have reported that as they reflect on their practice, they realize that what children say about their own learning should be a priority for curriculum planning. These teachers say that observing children's activities and learning process gives their teaching a different focus that is not always planned, but is extremely powerful. They find that writing down children's words is the most informative piece of documentation they use (Martin, 1998). Capturing what is going on in children's heads is more important than what is happening in their hands (Chaille, 1997).

Katz and Chard have connected documentation to the quality of an early childhood program in six ways.

* Documentation contributes to the extensiveness and depth of children's learning
* Documentation shows children that their ideas and work is taken seriously. Documentation is not intended primarily to be decorative.Children then tend to approach their work seriously and responsibly.
* Teachers use documentation to plan continuously and can encourage greater interest and representation skills than if children planned alone
* Documentation helps parents to become "intimately and deeply aware of their children's experience in the school." Parents become naturally involved in the school process, offering ideas, materials, time and ideas.
* "Documentation is an important kind of teacher research, sharpening and focusing teachers'

attention on children's plans and understandings and on their own role in children's experiences." Data can be collected that provides information for support of individual children's learning.

* Documentation provides "compelling public evidence of the intellectual powers of young children that is not available in any other way" known (1996).

Documentation of children's work seems to have particular implications for reflective practice. Student teachers can use children's work to ask questions of their own understanding and theories of teaching and learning.

This review of the literature highlights the role reflective thinking and practice has in learning to be a professional teacher. It is also through the literature that we find a need to explore more thoroughly the knowledge formed by student teachers when they are asked to reflect on children's work.

# CHAPTER III

## METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

### Nature of the Study

"Phenomenological human science is the study of lived or existential meanings; it attempts to describe and interpret these meanings to a certain degree of depth and richness" (van Manen, 1990, p. 11).

To begin to understand the reflective practice of student teachers one must use phenomenological research. van Manen speaks to this when he makes connections to the reflection of experiences that is necessary in the making of meaning.

"Reflecting on lived experience then becomes reflectively analyzing the structural or thematic aspects of that experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 78). Through the act of reflecting on experience we come to know ourselves as teachers.

By asking student teachers to reflect on their experiences during student teaching, the meaning of those experiences can be conveyed. "A phenomenological study focuses on descriptions of how people experience and how they perceive their experience of the phenomena under study"(Glesne, 1999, p.7). van Manen (1990) states "Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences."

This study lends itself to a phenomenological approach because my purpose is to capture the perspectives of student teachers who bring to the educational process numerous

perspectives and experiences. "Phenomenology ...shows us what various ranges of human experiences may be described, and how language (if we give it its full value) has powers to disclose the worlds in which we dwell as fathers, mothers, teachers, students,..." (van Manen, 1996, p. 48).

Past studies have attempted to look at how student teachers use reflective practice by extrapolating reflective thought and viewing it as a separate entity (Cruickshank, 1987). Returning though to van Manen's descriptions of phenomenological inquiry, we must look at the concrete experience as part of what it means to be a reflective teacher. Abstraction is seen as being an alienating practice; therefore, if we ask student teachers to describe their practice phenomenologically, we are helping them make crucial connections to what it means to be with children (van Manen, 1996). I am searching for the full picture of what it means to student teachers when they are asked to reflect on children's work and this is best done by understanding their "words".

Through the student teacher's words their "stock of knowledge" becomes apparent.

> Schutz noted that an individual approaches the life world with a stock of knowledge composed of common sense constructs and categories that are social in origin. These images, theories, ideas, values, and attitudes are applied to aspects of experience, making them meaningful. Stocks of knowledge are resources with which persons interpret

> experience, grasp the intentions and motivations of others, achieve inter subjective understandings, and coordinate actions (Holstein, 1998, p.139).

It is also important that my research participants feel a degree of investment in this study. Fosnot (1996) writes about the need for teachers to be aware of their own learning. By doing phenomenological research, the early childhood student teachers can observe their own learning. By using children's work as a stimulus experience for the student's reflections, I am attempting to strengthen the reflective - learning process. van Manen says that phenomenological research "finds its point of departure in the situation, which for purpose of analysis, description, and interpretation functions as an exemplary nodal point of meanings that are embedded in this situation" (1990, p.18). In other words, using children's work for reflection concentrates the student teachers' attention on a particularly meaningful area of teaching.

Also, by directing student teacher's attention towards their students, I hope to tap into their "tact" of teaching. Being "tactful" as a teacher is being cognizant of pedagogical thought. van Manen points out that "tact means the practice of being oriented to others"(van Manen, 1991, p.528). van Manen believes that "thoughtful reflection discovers where unreflective action was 'thoughtless', without tact. Thus the experience of reflecting on past pedagogical experience enables me to enrich, to make more thoughtful, my future pedagogical experience" (1991, p.532).

Hopefully, by asking student teachers to reflect on the work of the child, I will create an opportunity for them to develop the reflection necessary for thoughtful and caring pedagogical tact.

## DATA SOURCES

### Participants

In LaBoskey's (1994) study of the development of reflective practice of preservice teachers, participants needed to be "highly motivated, verbal, and academically successful" (p.22). LaBoskey makes the point that "if we can examine the results of some of our best efforts with some of our best students, we may derive a clearer vision of what, if anything, reflective teacher education can hope to accomplish" (p. 22, 1994). My participants will not be chosen based on preconceived criteria, but will provide a variety of abilities and diversity of perceptions.

Sampling in this study will be purposeful. "The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research..." (Patton, 1990, p.169).

Students enrolled in an early childhood teacher education program in a Midwestern university made up the student teaching class. There were fifteen students enrolled for the fall semester. The instructor for the course assigned seven student teachers to me for supervision during the second eight week part of the program. Assignments were based on the proximity of their placements to my home. The

possibility for participation in my study was discussed with these students. They were under no obligation to participate. Six signed letters of consent for participation. One student teacher declined to participate because of personal considerations.

The university program is designed to facilitate the student's entrance to a practicum of teaching in one of three primary grades; first, second or third in the public school system. The students are in the university classroom for the first eight weeks of the semester, spending one Monday each week in their future teaching sites. The instructor for university course work completed during the first eight weeks assigned all final grades. I did not participate in grade assignment.

At the end of the eight weeks, the students entered their respective public school classrooms, where they remained for the last eight weeks of the semester. Evaluation was recorded as pass/fail for the student teaching experience by the course instructor. I did not make the pass/fail decision. All participants successfully completed their student teaching experience. The day after completion of student teaching, they came back to campus to share their reflections about their experiences and turn in a teaching portfolio.

The students were at the end of a teacher education program that emphasized tenets of child development and developmentally appropriate practice in connection with two semesters of experience in the university child development laboratory school. The students were expected to complete student teaching experiences with infants through five year

olds in the lab before beginning their public school student teaching experience.

Placement procedures started the semester before the student teaching course. Students were interviewed by the instructor who took into account travel requirements and personal preferences before selecting a public school classroom. Classroom teachers were also interviewed by the instructor to try to find teachers who used developmentally appropriate practice and had early childhood certification. This was not always possible, but finding classrooms that matched university expectations was important.

## University Program Requirements

During the first eight weeks of the course, students were expected to reflect on their own early school experiences and how those experiences connected to their decision to become an early childhood teacher. They also reflected on their Monday classroom visits through semi-structured writing in journals which were read and responded to by the instructor and me.

After the student teachers had initial experiences in their school sites, they designed a unit of study covering a topic of their choice. These topics are chosen by the student teachers' reflecting on their own interests and needs, the cooperating teacher's plans and the needs and interests of the children in the classroom. I helped the student teachers critique their topic of study by providing feedback. This is also an opportunity to further understand their use of reflective practice as they discussed why they chose their

topics, how they planned on implementing the topic and what part children played in the design of the topic.

Once the students began their student teaching assignment they were visited by either the class instructor or me a minimum of three times. These observations were designed to support the student teacher by offering opportunities to reflect on practice through journal writing and conversation.

The opportunity for reflection was a regular part of the program. By being a part of their lived experience I provided further opportunities for reflective practice to take place. By asking the student teachers to reflect on children's learning experiences in their classrooms, my study facilitated their own construction of knowledge about how children learn.

## DESIGN OF THE STUDY

My role in each participant's student teaching class was to assist with routine class activities. During their student teaching I observed them and provided support. It was not my responsibility to assign grades for the final evaluation in the first eight week course or to decide the pass/fail placement for the student teaching course. I was not involved in any of the placement interviews and did not meet the students until the semester began.

The study began the first week of class in August of 1999 and data collection concluded in December of 1999. Analysis was on-going during data collection.

By being a participant observer, I was afforded

information that would not have been available to me if I were coming in as an outside researcher. In Becoming Qualitative Researchers, Glesne says, "The more you function as a member of the everyday world of the researched, the more you risk losing the eye of the uninvolved outsider; yet, the more you participate, the greater your opportunity to learn" (1999, p.44).

To truly understand the student teacher's development and use of reflective practice, I had to participate in their lived experience. van Manen writes, "ultimately the project of phenomenological reflection and explication is to effect a more direct contact with the experience as lived" (1990, p.78).

By being with the students during their course work in the first eight weeks and visiting them during their student teaching experience I could validate their recollection of lived experience. van Manen also says, "a good phenomenological description is collected by lived experience and recollects lived experience--is validated by lived experience and it validates lived experience. This is sometimes termed the "validating circle of inquiry" (1990, p.27).

## Participant Considerations

During the first class meeting, I shared with the student teachers the topic of my study, why I had chosen to research their use of reflective practice, and how the study was to be conducted. They were given the opportunity to have full knowledge of the purpose of my study and were given

every opportunity to voice questions, concerns and interests in the study. As mentioned earlier, the students assigned to me by the class instructor were be my specific participant pool. I was available to all students in the class who asked for suggestions and help, so there was not any discriminating attention paid to the participants of the study.

The students from my assigned student teacher group interested in participating were asked to sign a consent form. The consent form briefly described the study, its purpose, the duration of the student's participation, how their identity would be kept confidential, and a description of the interviews to be done. The benefits of professional reflective practice were also described in the consent form. The study did not ask the student teachers for personal time outside of regular class requirements. The fact that their participation in the study did not have any effect on their final grade was discussed in class and specified on the consent form.

Participant anonymity was preserved in the study by using fictitious names and descriptions of participants and student teaching settings were edited for identifying elements. Only essential elements of location were kept. When the participants were given the consent forms to look over and sign, they were not told who agreed to participate. Since the activities they were asked to talk about and document were site based and part of their regular program, there were no special activities associated solely with my study.

Field notes taken during interviews with the student teachers were kept for the length of the study write up, a

period of three to five months. On the completion and final approval of the dissertation, the field notes were destroyed. Transcripts, shared with the participants, are included as Appendix A,B,C,D,E and F.

## DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The data for my study was comprised of the written autobiographies done by the participants, one journal entry of each participant's written reflections on children's work and two interviews with each participant about their own work in school as children and the children's work in their student teaching classroom. Observational notes pertaining to the research question were also used for data analysis.

All materials related to the data collection part of this dissertation were secured in the researcher's home and were not shared in any of it's original form with the instructor of the course or others.

### Interview I

After reading the autobiographical assignments, I interviewed the participants of my study to clarify concepts relating to early school activities and the connection with the participants' practice as teachers. van Manen reminds the researcher to "stay close to experience as lived" (1990, p. 67). By asking participants to elaborate on their memories of specific activities in school, I was able to facilitate reflection on and understanding of the meaning of experience

and it's connection to their teaching for some of the participants.

## Interview II

The participants were asked to reflect on children's learning by documenting an activity they had designed and implemented. Guidelines for effective documentation of children's learning were shared with the entire class during the first eight weeks. After the student teachers had an opportunity to collect documented children's work, I interviewed them during a regular visit. The questions during this interview were those that precipitate knowledge of developmentally appropriate practice, use of documentation of children's work and self evaluation. These questions were specific for the purposes of this study, but were not significantly different from those used during a typical classroom visit. Extensive field notes were kept on these interviews. The student teachers read transcriptions of the interviews for clarification and editing.

## Journals

The participants of my study were asked to reflect in their journals about their experience with documentation of children's work. During a regular visit with participants, I read the journal entry, gave written feedback and discussed it with the student teacher. I made a copy of the participant's journal entry for further analysis.

Observation

van Manen writes about "close observation" as involving "an attitude of assuming a relation that is as close as possible while retaining a hermeneutic alertness to situations that allows us to constantly step back and reflect on the meaning of those situations" (1990, p. 69). In this study, by keeping anecdotal notes I could "recollect" what had happened in the classroom that illuminated how the student teacher was using documentation of children's learning to inform her practice.

## QUESTIONS INVESTIGATED

"A phenomenological question must not only be made clear, understood, but also 'lived' by the researcher" (van Manen, p.44, 1990). My guiding question in this study is to find out what it is like for student teachers to reflect on their teaching through the documentation of children's learning. By keeping this question in mind throughout the student teacher's semester, both in the university classroom and their practicum site, I was able to find answers to this question through rich data collection.
Questions that facilitated a conversational inquiry and encouraged reflection on children's work included the following,

Interview I

* What are the most important things teachers do?

* How did you learn best as a child?
* Tell me about an activity (from the autobiography) you remember doing when you were a child in school. What made that activity memorable? Do you think that memory will effect the decisions you make as a teacher? How?
* What kinds of assessment did your teachers use that you felt were the most accurate?

Interview II

* How do you think children learn best?
* Tell me about this (documented) activity. How did you start?
* What do you think this (documented activity) tells you about the children who participated?
* If you had time to follow up on this activity what would you do next?
* How often do you think teachers should document activities in their classrooms? How often for individual children? Why?
* What do you think is the most important aspect of documentation?

## DATA ORGANIZATION AND INTERPRETATION

> Because experience is complex, the researcher must fluidly shift his or her focus from the experience itself, to the ground shaping the experience, and then

> back to the experience. As phenomena are viewed from these many different angles, a richer picture is seen (Eyring,1998, p. 121).

Themes relating to reflection were sought in the student teachers' journals, interviews and observation notes. Data interpretation was ongoing during collection. Glesne writes, "Consistently reflect on your data, work to organize them, and try to discover what they have to tell you" (1999, p. 130).

Theme analysis was done through selective highlighting. van Manen says to read the text several times asking, "What statement(s) or phrase(s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described?" (1990, p. 93) By selecting phrases and sentences that seem to capture the theme of reflective practice through children's work I began to construct the meaning student teachers make.

van Manen points out that in hermeneutic phenomenological research the interviewee becomes a collaborator when data are reflected on with the researcher (1990). It was my desire that the student teachers gained some insight from this research project that added to their educational experience. It was important to me that data were interpreted and reflected on with the participants. "By setting up situations conducive to collaborative hermeneutic conversations...participants (can) reflect on their experiences in order to determine the deeper meanings of themes of these experiences" (van Manen, 1990, p. 99).

The themes were then interpreted through a description of the student teachers' reflectivity. van Manen's degrees and kinds of reflection were used to frame the student teachers' thinking.

# CHAPTER IV

# FINDINGS

## INTRODUCTION

The main question for this study was: How do student teachers use children's work to reflect on their own learning and practice? Four areas of questioning guided the direction of this study.

A. What theories do preservice early childhood teachers use to understand children's learning?

B. What understanding do preservice teachers have of the importance of documentation of children's work?

C. What is the nature of preservice teachers' reflective practice in relation to the documentation of children's work?

D. How do preservice teachers perceive their abilities to reflect on their own practice during student teaching? What influences their ability to reflect on their practices?

Reflecting on children's work, in this study, was the process of looking at the work created by children to discover what children were learning and what the student teacher could understand about her own teaching. Student teachers collected books, pictures, and other concrete examples of work done by children in their classrooms. They were asked to choose work that held special meaning for classroom planning and teaching.

I asked that that they look for children's work that told them something about particular children's learning.

Most of the time, the student teachers were able to collect work done by the children relating directly to the student teacher's planning and teaching.

Seven early childhood student teachers were assigned to me for supervision. Six signed a letter of consent for the study. I talked briefly with them before they left campus to begin their eight week student teaching assignments. The students were not chosen based on any criteria of reflective ability and represented a fairly typical range of experiences and academic abilities.

I analyzed autobiographical papers written during their first eight weeks of on campus class work, observational field notes from my supervisory visits with the student teachers, entries from their journals taken during their student teaching assignments, and two on-site interviews about the nature of themselves as learners and their understanding of children's learning. This resulted in approximately 170 total pages of data. Samples of these data sources have been used in my analysis, but copies of the complete transcripts of the interviews can be found in the index. Quotes from the student teachers have been referenced to these transcripts. The amount of data varies with the individual student teacher, some being much more prolific talkers and writers.

"...To start with life as it is lived means that we must always situate our reflections about education...in the particular society and culture in which we live this life (van Manen, 1993, p. 214). The meaning these student teachers have made of their relationship with children can be better interpreted and understood by looking at the early childhood

program they have completed.

Their ability to reflect on practice by using children's work was constrained by the short period of time they spent with children in the classroom. Their early childhood university program facilitates an understanding of the importance of assessment of a child's learning through authentic measures. The mechanics of collecting children's work and using it to inform practice and planning is integrated into various early childhood education classes.

One of the early childhood program objectives is to prepare students for creating developmentally appropriate curricula for young children. The elements of constructivism and reflection are introduced in various classes through journaling and lecture, but are not emphasized in the program's philosophy.

Students participate in lab teaching experiences with infants through kindergartners. They also participate in one semester of public school student teaching in first, second or third grade. On completion of the program, the students meet the academic requirements for state early childhood liscensure. This particular group of students was the first to meet portfolio requirements. The portfolio is a collection of paper documentation of teaching experiences, class work responses and other indicators of learning. Fifteen different competencies are addressed through the portfolio. Reflective thought and practice was at the heart of the portfolio process, but getting the portfolios completed and turned in became an end in itself for the student teachers. Because my first scheduled interview was with Mary, I've chosen to begin

with her understanding of children's learning and her own practice.

## Mary

Mary was added to my list of student teachers for supervision at the last minute, but I had noticed the quality of her work and the thoughtful questions she asked during class discussions. Mary was twenty-two years of age, but had been married for most of her college experience and was expecting her first baby in the spring, after graduation.

In Mary's autobiographical paper she emphasized her relationship with her mother and her desire to "teach" her own children, recreating the relationship with her mom. She says, "I remember most...the times spent out of school with my mother. That is where I truly developed the desire to learn....My main interest in teaching came from my desire to be a good mother" (Appendix A, autobiographical paper).

She makes the comment that these early experiences will help later in her development as a teacher. She remembers positive school experiences, especially her kindergarten teacher's efforts to make a disabled child part of the classroom community by letting the children become familiar with the little girl's wheelchair and other equipment. In our first interview, she talked about this experience. "The teacher probably set an example, in that I expected my teacher not to be afraid, she showed me it's okay, (to be different)...I didn't recognize that she was showing (us something specifically educational)...I'm sure it was conscious on her part" (Appendix A, First Interview). I asked

Mary if she thought most teachers would do this kind of activity now. "By law they have to...I think teachers know now that's what children need, this type of experience, to learn" (Appendix A,First Interview). When asked about specific, teacher planned learning activities, Mary remembered a negative experience from third grade. "I didn't like third grade! We had to listen to...she played these records with the multiplication tables on them...I hated it" (Appendix A, First Interview).

When asked about work her mother might have kept from Mary's early school experiences she told me that in junior high school her mom paid her to go through all of the boxes of her papers and organize them. Mary ran across a cookbook made in kindergarten and loved reading it. "We made a class recipe book.

Everyone picked a recipe from home and came back to school and told it to the teacher...she wrote it down...I've read it once a year...she (the kindergarten teacher) never said, Are you sure you want to say that?" I then asked if she ever thought about what moms might keep when she plans activities and she looked surprised. "No! I think what are the kids going to gain...like what they are learning, but not long term...but I guess I should! I hadn't thought about it that way" (Appendix A, First Interview).

The elementary school where Mary did her student teaching, in a first grade classroom, was known for an overall high quality of teaching. It was located in a college town and had benefited from close working relationships with various university faculty. However, Mary's cooperating teacher ran her classroom in a traditional manner, with a

heavy emphasis on objectives and worksheets. The cooperating teacher planned activities based on district and state scope and sequence with little emphasis on children's interests. This created a few problems of adjustment for Mary. The first week was particularly difficult. Mary felt personally attacked when her cooperating teacher criticized Mary's planning. Mary told me that she left school in tears and really questioned being able to work with the classroom teacher. "...she wasn't happy with my planning...we hadn't talked about my lesson plans, so then that Friday she was telling me things she didn't like. But...I wanted to do things they could participate in..."(Appendix A, Second Interview)

The cooperating teacher expressed concern over the amount of "fun" activities Mary had planned and Mary responded by giving her cooperating teacher more written plans with objectives spelled out. Mary reached a point in her student teaching where she was able to articulate her desire to do things differently than what the cooperating teacher was doing. She was able to meet the teacher's need for control, but at the same time, respond appropriately to the needs of the children in the classroom. She stated in our second interview, "...my big things (classroom projects) were on purpose. They (the children) do a lot of things with pencil and paper, she keeps them busy. I've never seen a project though. We were (in an earlier interview with me) talking about the cookbook I did in kindergarten? I tried to use that when I was planning. Like the flannel board stories (they made in small groups) I think they'll remember them for a long time"(Appendix A, Second Interview).

When planning for her major teaching unit, Mary told me that her cooperating teacher expressed concern about the children illustrating a class book. "She didn't like it at all, that they were going to draw these things. She wanted them to trace stuff, she said, 'What if they can't draw?' But, I've done this with three year olds...I knew the first graders could do something similar"(Appendix A,Second Interview). Mary persevered and found that the children were able to illustrate quite well.

There was also some recognition of loss of control. "A lot of them kind of missed the point of what they were supposed to do for their book about animals getting ready for winter...it was cute, they read them to the class, it was fun and I enjoyed seeing them make their books...I encouraged them to draw and color...most colored something in their book." Since the process was important, Mary was able to point out which children strayed from the teacher's objective, but obviously were following their own objective. "Some of the pages she (child in class) did an animal activity (that matched the animal) like, dogs like to bark. She did that same thing on a few pages"(Appendix A, Second Interview).

The cooperating teacher liked the final projects the children did during Mary's teaching. She made comments about the projects being "cute" and took pictures of the children making their presentations. Mary disagreed though with sending the projects home. "If I was doing this in my classroom I would have them leave them there to tell the story again, but she (cooperating teacher) didn't even ask them if they wanted to...she just took pictures and sent them

(the stories home)"(Appendix A, Second Interview).

Mary focused on process when talking about the individual children in the class. There was one child of great concern who had already been identified because of low letter recognition skills and an inability to count and use number. Mary noticed during one of her planned activities with attribute blocks that this child was able to make intricate designs and problem solve. She brought the pattern he had made and was quite excited about it.

"This little boy, the one being tested? He did this with paper attribute shapes on his own. No one else did anything like this, I had to pinch myself!...he really got into this and figured out that if he put a drop of glue where he wanted the white pieces he could just go around and then put the paper down...it was like -dum,dum,dum, there! I've been paying attention to him ever since I saw this...he and another child were the only two who (consistently made detailed patterns). We did an activity with clouds and he could visualize shapes...he can recreate things in his mind...I don't know enough about him and why he struggles with everything else"(Appendix A, Second Interview).

This particular child moved before Mary could follow up on his testing, but he had obviously made an impression on her. This was another example too of Mary's cooperating teacher and Mary having different perspectives. Mary said that her cooperating teacher noticed the little boy's ability, but didn't seem to attach great significance to it.

During the student teacher's last visit on campus, after completing their student teaching and right before graduation, Mary spoke to her peer group about the benefits

of talking about children's work with me."I learned a lot about myself. Through my discussions with Sara, I learned about myself and I learned I could do things different from my cooperating teacher...I tried to plan things that were more developmentally appropriate...I think they worked, I saw the children get involved and interested"(Field Notes).

She went on to use the patterning project to illustrate what she felt she had learned about teaching. She emphasized that by close observation of the activity of one specific child in two projects, she had gained an insight into his learning that she wouldn't have had without these projects.

## Mary's Themes

In selective reading of the texts created by student teacher's writings and interviews, certain themes emerged. These themes can be described by "highlighting" phrases and statements that enlighten the reader as to the meaning early childhood student teachers made of their experience (van Manen, 1990).

Mary's themes were her autobiographical connection to teaching, teacher control, meeting individual needs, children's story illustrations and teacher/parenting.

### Autobiographical Connections to Teaching

van Manen writes that there are four kinds of reflection: anticipatory, interactive, recollective and mindful. These kinds of reflective thought can be leveled by degree into everyday thinking, incidental, systematic and

thinking about thinking (1990). Mary showed all four kinds of reflection through connections she made with past experiences to her practice in the classroom. The autobiographical paper assignment made incidental reflection possible by allowing her to remember how she felt as a child in a classroom with a teacher who emphasized relationships and community. She used this memory when she emphasized class discussions about relationships and feelings. When studying the Mayflower's voyage to early America, she asked questions which elicited comparisons with the children's lives now to the children's lives in the 1600's. She asked, "How would you feel in a dark strange place? (the hold of the ship) Have you ever been seasick? Have you ever moved to a new place? How did you feel about it?"(Field Notes).

She also used memories of relationships by planning activities that would enable children to work together to solve problems. She told me that one child who was always first and very fast in everything was placed with a child who was shy, to help the quieter child complete an activity.

The activities that held the strongest connection for her were from her kindergarten years and this was further reinforced through discussion about the documents left from the recipe book activity in kindergarten. Systematic reflection made it possible for her to carry out meaningful activities in her student teaching experience by encouraging an autonomous decision about planning and implementation.

**Teacher Control**

Though Mary kept going back to wanting activities to be meaningful she also had to reconcile the classroom teacher's

expectation for control. When asked about important things teachers do, she replied, "it is the attention and importance they make of each child...obviously children have to learn stuff...but that's (learning objectives) not the things they remember about from that year of that teacher or grade"(Appendix A, First Interview).

Her initial planning was not complete enough to assure her cooperating teacher that she had included expected objectives. This caused much discomfort for both of them, but was relieved when Mary decided, through interactive reflection, that meeting the cooperating teacher's needs had to be one of her priorities.

**Meeting Individual Needs**

This was brought up first by Mary's desire to learn how to plan for children of different levels of ability. As part of her autobiographical notes she says, "I enjoy watching children grow from having a lot of personal choice and control over themselves"(Appendix A,Journal). She also says that she hopes to learn how to meet all student's needs. Making choices available was important, but Mary didn't connect this to one way of achieving individualization in the classroom. The fact that her cooperating teacher did not include learning center choices in the classroom was another hurdle for Mary.

Through mindful reflection and close observation of the learning process of individual children she was able to plan small group activities which allowed higher and lower ability children to feel success. She saw her job, even as a student

teacher, as having to be aware of protecting individual children's rights to learn in interesting, meaningful ways.

This desire to meet children's needs also came up in her planning. When she put together small groups she made sure that children of different skill levels were in each group. She was quite pleased that the groups supported each other without teacher interference and saw this as a way to enable children to feel successful.

She was very excited about her observations of the child having difficulties and the recognition of his strengths. She expressed the desire to learn more about alternative assessments and what teachers can do about encouraging children who are at risk of failure.

**Children's Story Illustration**

Mary kept going back to what children were capable of doing based on her observations of their work. She was able to back up her decision to let the children illustrate their books because of what she had seen three year olds do in the campus child development lab.

When she discussed their work during our supervisory visits she was able to point out the strengths and weaknesses of children based on the process they employed in making book illustrations, flannel board stories and attribute block designs.

Mary showed me thumb print pictures the children had made. The lesson objective was for the children to practice counting by creating creatures and pictures from prints of their thumbs. In other words, page one would have one

picture, page two, two pictures, up to ten. She knew who had hurried through the activity, who had figured out shortcuts, who had verbalized knowledge while drawing and who had not understood concepts she was trying to teach. This knowledge about individual children was then used in planning future activities and assessments. She made the comment about one child's work; "He didn't put any detail in his pictures, and on this page, he doesn't have the correct number. But I think this activity was probably too easy for him, he was probably a little bored with it"(Appendix A, Second Interview). She had recognized that her knowledge of this child was more important to understanding the process of learning than a more traditional, prescriptive teaching theory would have been.

When she noticed how a child with special needs had solved design problems, she looked for other examples of his abilities through the work he did in class. These initial observations were separate from any "scope and sequence" of teaching objectives, but she was able to integrate her knowledge of children's learning process into planned activities.

**Teaching/Parenting**

In Mary's autobiographical paper, she emphasized a desire to become a Mother so that she could "teach" her child, much as she had been taught by her Mother. She makes the statement, "My main interest in teaching came from my desire to be a good mother...I feel that if I can be successful in giving my own children the opportunities and

experiences they need to be successful in life, then I will have accomplished my greatest task in teaching"(Appendix A, Autobiographical Paper).

This theme is carried out when she speaks of not liking report cards because of a younger sibling's problems in schools. "I've always thought they (report cards) were unfair...my brother never made better than a C...it did not bother him, but I could see it being unfair to him and other people." When asked how her brother should have been assessed she answers, "I think there should be many different ways a child should be assessed or whether they should go to the next grade...report cards put everything into a separate category...they don't tell you if a child can get along well with other children, if (they) are good at building with blocks or organizing games"(Appendix A, First Interview).

Her desire to connect the parenting role with the teaching role seemed to help emphasize for her the importance of planning activities that would be meaningful for children and their parents. Her recollective reflections helped give her the autonomous edge she needed in the face of cooperating teacher opposition.

She showed a level of care for children that connects back to her desire to recreate a mothering role as a teacher. van Manen says that asking student teachers to reflect on children's work is asking them to adopt a parenting attitude (personal communication, Spring, 1999).

## Mary's Summary

By the time Mary met with her peer group at the end of the semester she had used a high level of reflection, thinking about thinking, to reach the conclusion that she had learned more about herself than anything else. She could make connections with classroom theory (developmentally appropriate practice) to her practice. She knew that conversations with her supervisor had helped her see some of these connections and was aware of her own personal and professional growth.

She expressed pride in her ability to meet children's needs through careful planning and awareness of their strengths. She told the group that she had a renewed interest in teaching.

I believe Mary is a highly reflective student teacher. Even if I hadn't emphasized the need for using documentation of children's work, she would have done this on her own.

LaBosky writes of student teachers who come to the program already possessing "many of the attitudes, abilities, and ideas that will facilitate rapid growth". She labels these students as "Alert Novices" (1994,pg. 27). Mary is an example of an "Alert Novice". There were areas in her teaching knowledge that were weak, such as her initial written plans. She struggled with how to successfully navigate the landscape of teaching in the public school system and still be true to her own ideas and level of care.

van Manen stipulates that, "reflection in the field of education carries the connotation of deliberation, making choices, coming to decisions about alternative courses of

action" (1991, pg. 511). I did not have to explain to her why it was important to observe children's work process or what kinds of documented work to bring to our interviews. Mary was able to use the documentation of children's work as a springboard for deliberate thought and planning.

## Margaret

I was excited about working with Margaret because she had been placed in a first grade classroom taught by someone I knew. My own child had been in this particular teacher's classroom and I knew from personal experience that the teacher was sensitive to individual children's needs. It would be a classroom conducive to learning about the power of documenting children's work to inform practice and teaching. The cooperating teacher used children's work in the room rather than decorative, commercially made materials. Her teaching schedule included time everyday for individual conferences, small group work and activity centers. She shared her own reflections with Margaret about why things were done in a certain way and encouraged Margaret to ask questions.

Margaret was at first hesitant about this placement because of the open concept, the school being an open arrangement. However, she soon realized that this could be a positive element. She felt she learned more by being able to listen to and observe other teachers.

Margaret's memories of school included a very early desire to be a teacher. In her autobiographical paper she describes playing teacher and (loving) "the idea that I was

in charge of a group of people and they had to listen to me". She attributes this early love of teaching to "feelings (that) were instilled in me in kindergarten through second grade" because of "teachers who made it obvious to me that learning can be fun...(and) who not only cared about me as a student, but as an individual"(Appendix B,Autobiographical Paper).

Most of her experiences seem to have been positive, but she does write of dreading one particular teacher. "I heard and received the impression that he was a very stern and hard teacher. I know now that my fears were put inside my head from what other people had said". She went on to say that this particular teacher was not attentive to her needs and didn't seem interested in actually teaching anything. She was worried about being ready for junior high school and wrote, "Mr. P was not doing a very good job in preparing me for it"(Appendix B,Autobiographical Paper).

Margaret didn't describe any specific school activities, but did speak of wanting to "instill the same type of (positive) feelings in children...I want them to feel good about themselves as I did (in school) by caring about each individual child and (helping) them (to) see that they are important"(Appendix B,Autobiographical Paper).

From Margaret's perspective, the first graders in this particular class were difficult to "control". She had been told by the cooperating teacher that her student teaching experience might be tough because of an unusually difficult group. There were many children in this class who were experiencing highly stressful situations in their home lives. Two children were living with grandparents, one child's

mother was incarcerated, one child's mother was dying from cancer and a few others were dealing with learning problems.

Margaret's early attempts at whole class instruction frustrated her greatly. She reacted to it by writing,"I have realized that it is very hard for first graders to adapt to change...I know it will become easier as the days go on" and "This is an area (being in charge of morning calendar) that I know will take time for the children to get used to"(Appendix B,Journal).

Almost from the beginning of Margaret's student teaching experience, her cooperating teacher expressed concern to me about Margaret's planning and preparation. Several times, Margaret had not spent the time preparing for a lesson that her cooperating teacher felt she should have. The result was a lack of alternative behaviors for dealing with "problems" during a lesson. Margaret could not seem to find time to reflect on why the children were reacting and behaving the way they were.

In observed lessons, Margaret resorted to many reminders to the children about their behavior. In one observation, she commented on children having their hands raised and "sitting quietly" over and over. When asked, during our supervisory visit, what other ways she could have drawn children's attention back on track she was perplexed and had no other activities in mind. This seemed to be a lack of motivation to reflect on any level.

For another supervisory visit she prepared for her lesson at the last minute, running around, hurriedly pulling a sheet of craft paper out to make a number line for the children to walk on. She was unable to use our time before

the lesson to talk to me about her planning or concerns she might have had before starting the lesson. Her cooperating teacher had spoken to her about this lack of preparation and its connection to the problems the student teacher was having with discipline during lessons. Children were tuning her out and her response was to become more authoritarian and directive. Margaret's cooperating teacher wanted her to spend more time on planning and preparation so she would be able to respond more thoughtfully to children, but Margaret never seemed to "get" this connection.

Since Margaret's response to problems didn't seem to result in improved lessons, her cooperating teacher, the university class instructor and I agreed to cut back the required amount of time for Margaret to be in "charge" of the classroom, so she could do more "team" teaching with her cooperating teacher. This worked very well for everyone. Margaret expressed a sense of relief to me and her cooperating teacher said that things "flowed" better.

## Margaret's Themes

Themes that emerged from Margaret's experience were; transmitting knowledge, teacher as source of knowledge, theory to practice and control issues.

### Transmitting Knowledge

In her autobiographical paper, Margaret refers to ideas being "put inside" her head, teachers "giving" her a good education, feelings being "instilled" and wanting to

"instill" similar feelings about education. Her efforts at learning were diminished if she felt like the teacher didn't like her and were increased if the learning was "fun". There is no synthesis in her paper or in interviews about how her experiences might inform her practice. A reading lesson included having the children make their own cartoon strips. Margaret was not extremely pleased with the results. She seemed slightly concerned because she had "(written) characteristics of comic strips on the board...I showed them examples...then they had to write their own comic strip." She used one child's work as an example of what she had wanted from the children. She did know that this particular child usually produced more "examples" than necessary. When asked about what learning this child had shown, Margaret seemed confused. "I know she has an understanding of time, parts of the day, I don't know - we've talked about different parts of the day and I don't know if this - last week we measured shadows and I don't know, she may have connected last Friday to today...it's what you would expect, they understand the clock pretty well"(Appendix B,First Interview).

Margaret's understanding of her own learning and that of the children in her classroom is mired in "Everyday Thinking", "habituated, partly routinized, partly intuitive, pre-reflective and semi-reflective" (van Manen, 1990). She does not question the objective of having children create cartoon strips, it is listed in the teacher's guide so it must be done. It does not occur to her that first graders might have had very little experience with cartoon strips or that the activity involved several tasks, any one of which might have been very difficult for six year olds in the first

semester of first grade.

Margaret wrote about the need for things outside of herself to trigger certain memories and knowledge. She seemed to have a positivistic view of knowledge, that it is "out there" and can be manipulated. Learning activities were listed without reflecting on the meaning for them, she wrote about "feeling better about phonics", and "liking" certain activities without reasons why she liked them. She wrote that "a couple of lesson plans have been a little too hard for this class to do", but there was no reflection on why or what she might do. This is in keeping with a traditional view of teaching and curriculum. Without systematic reflection, Margaret is not likely to move beyond this level.

**Teacher as Source of Knowledge**

When she taught a lesson during her nutrition unit she had the children make a class book using the letters of the alphabet to stand for various foods. She wanted the children to think of foods for the letters, but quickly resorted to "giving them each a letter" and then "basically (giving) them all the words". The paper she showed me was of hurriedly drawn fruit, labeled with the names of the fruit. She indicated that the child who had made the picture was unable to think of any food on their own, and this was what she had supplied. She seemed surprised during this conversation that "there are some letters that don't have foods, even when I tried to think of foods that started with the letters, I couldn't come up with any". She had not thought to look at other resources besides herself for information. The work she

chose to share with me was simply whatever was on the top of the stack of papers and did not seem to hold any more meaning for her than any other paper (Appendix B,Second Interview).

Her ability to use interactive reflection was stifled because of the perception that she was supposed to know the answers. The problem of finding foods to go along with the letters of the alphabet presented itself, but her only response was to skip the letters. If she had used anticipatory reflection before this lesson she might have realized that she needed more resources than her own knowledge.

**Theory to Practice**

When we discussed the sample of work she chose to share from the cartoon strip activity, I asked her if she would have this particular student do the same activity as everyone else in math since this child seemed to understand time concepts. Margaret was quite perplexed. "I don't know how I feel about it...you mean, like get something a little more advanced for her?...How would you do that?" I probed for how Margaret had related to this child's work by asking if the student had explained her work to Margaret or if Margaret understood the child's process of thought. Margaret answered by saying "After they're finished they're supposed to explain it to me and read it to me. She didn't say anything..." I asked if Margaret had questioned the student. Margaret answered, "Not really"(Appendix B,Second Interview).

Margaret's ability to interpret information about teaching into her own practice seemed to be stuck at a very

low level of reflection. Even though she spoke often of the relationships with teachers in her childhood, she avoided one on one conversations with children in the classroom. An inability to use recollective reflection seemed to keep her from making some important connections.

**Control Issues**

Margaret describes playing teacher as a child as pleasurable because "people had to listen to me". In our first interview she told a story from third grade where she made her own behavior cards. "In third grade, the teacher had these table points. I would form my own cards to keep track (of) everyone's points at my table and I'd get real mad if we got in trouble." I asked her if the other kids liked that and she avoided answering directly by saying, "I was the teacher's pet. I did everything I was told - never wanted to get in trouble"(Appendix B,First Interview).

She took this picture of what being a teacher was all about into her first grade placement. She attributed behavior problems to the children's age, "(it's) hard for first graders to adapt to change"; the "crazy" schedule and to the fact that it wasn't "her" class. She wrote, "I enjoy teaching different lessons, but I wish they could focus, sit still and listen to me while I (am) teaching them...I have been reassured many times that my own class will not be like this"(Appendix B,Journal).

She knew she needed to concentrate more on adapting lessons to meet the children's needs, but did not verbalize or write about any ideas on how this might be done. It was

very difficult for her to make the connection between children's behavior problems and her lack of attention and planning.

## Margaret's Summary

Margaret's theory of learning seemed to come from a heteronomous view of education. Her position of authority in the classroom was supposed to be enough to cause learning to take place. Her concerns about this were written about, but never questioned. In this theoretical stance, documentation of children's work becomes meaningless, because it doesn't seem to be important to look at the child's perception. It is more important to be able to say, "I taught it, they should have learned it." For Margaret, "everyday thinking" was very intuitive and pre-reflective. Interactive reflection was difficult for her because she had not tapped into the power of using anticipatory reflection to guide her practice (van Manen, 1991).

LaBosky describes the "Commonsense Thinkers" as students who entered the program with a "commonsense view of teaching". They are students who are either "deficient in inquiry skills" or are coping with "attitudinal or emotional interference" (1994, pg. 57). In other words, they have trouble questioning their own knowledge and practice or are held back from reflection by dealing with overwhelming problems in their personal lives. Margaret would seem to fall into the "deficient in inquiry skills" category. When it was brought to her attention that her lessons were not being adequately planned or prepared for, she responded by taking a

lot of time outside of class to make individual number lines for the children's desks. This was appreciated and complimented, but had little to do with the problem that had been discussed.

She seemed to realize that relationships were very important for children and it would have seemed that this particular class would have benefited from having another caring adult to interact with, but she responded by leaving the classroom fairly often while her cooperating teacher was in charge. It was pointed out to her that she needed to use this time to interact with the children, especially the children who were in stressful home situations. Her interpretation of this was to see it as simply incidental. She told me what particular children were going through, but could not seem to see how to use this knowledge for systematic reflection on her own understandings of how to meet their needs.

LaBosky's (1994) study questions our ability to cause commonsense thinkers to grow much in their reflective ability. In Margaret's case, I did not see any growth in her ability or willingness to use reflection to solve any problem. As a matter of fact, her evaluation of student teaching described a wonderful experience, with little reference to the difficulties encountered.

In her last journal entry, Margaret writes about using documentation to track a child's progress and how she was very interested in seeing children's work the first day she was there and then seeing the progress they had made at the end of her student teaching. If she had not written about this, I would not have thought there was any recognition of

this benefit of documenting children's work. I saw no examples of her ability to put this knowledge into practice. When asked to bring meaningful children's work to our interview, she responded by "forgetting" and at the last minute, simply grabbing what was handy.

There is the recognition that reflection is a process. In our first interview I asked Margaret about the work her mother had kept from Margaret's early childhood years and she said she had never looked at it. At my next visit, Margaret was animated and enthusiastic about wanting to see the work her mom had kept. She made the comment "I've been thinking about what we talked about - you know, about my work my mom kept, and I called her the other day to ask about it. She said it's in the attic. I'm real excited now to see what I did"(Appendix B,Second Interview). I don't know how meaningful these pieces of learning will be for her. It would be something we would have to discuss after she viewed it.

Johnston's 1994 study of preservice teachers found that classroom experience was not viewed as educative when it did not coincide with the student teacher's image of what teaching should be like. Margaret did not seem to realize that the "time...spent in the classroom, observing teaching, interacting with children, preparing and implementing lessons was part of the learning process because it did not conform with (her) own (image) of what teaching should be like" (pg. 204).

Gwen

Gwen was placed in the same situation as Margaret, in an open school environment. I had worked in the same school for

several years and had worked closely with Gwen's cooperating teacher. Her cooperating teacher was a warm, sincere person who quite often had difficult children placed in her class because of the perception that she could manage problems well. Because the cooperating teacher used classroom learning centers and was genuinely concerned about children's emotional lives, her classroom also offered a transition from the child centeredness of the university labs to the more controlled public school program. Gwen and her cooperating teacher seemed to bond quickly and work as a team early in Gwen's experience.

Gwen's autobiographical paper describes her elementary experiences as being more urban than most, but were, for the most part, positive. She writes about being placed in a program for gifted students, but it was only for first and second grades. "They did not not explain the criteria for entering this program, but it made me feel special"(Appendix C,Autobiographical Paper). I asked Gwen if she had ever found out why she had been placed there, but she had not.

She describes her favorite teacher as someone who could "keep her class busy...". Gwen had this particular teacher for third and fourth grades and liked the fact that the teacher, "had many art and music activities for us to get involved in"(Appendix C,Autobiographical Paper).

Her least favorite teacher was a junior high teacher. Gwen describes her social studies experience with this teacher as boring. "Each day we did the same types of activities. These included worksheets, read aloud from the book, and (we) were to read to ourselves.

I was bored and unenthusiastic about the class. I later took other civics classes and found them very interesting, which made me think it was the teaching style that influenced my views on this social studies class"(Appendix C,Autobiographical Paper). She doesn't write about how the social studies teacher related to the students in the class on a personal level.

Gwen decided to become a teacher, "because I enjoy thinking of and implementing activities for children and I enjoy the type of setting a school system has. I feel very comfortable in the classroom and excited at the same time"(Appendix C,Autobiographical Paper).

Gwen and her cooperating teacher immediately fell into a shared sense of responsibility. The classroom teacher showed a respect for children's feelings by listening to them carefully before making decisions and she extended this same respect to Gwen. Gwen was not asked to do anything in a teaching capacity before she felt comfortable with it. Gwen responded to this by becoming more confident in seeing what needed to be done in the daily life of the classroom. She moved about the room easily and never expressed any discomfort with the environment. It was a warm, inviting atmosphere that fit beautifully into Gwen's memories of positive elementary experiences. Her cooperating teacher told me during supervisory visits that Gwen was a wonderful student teacher and she couldn't have done without her.

She showed awareness of individual children's needs by listening carefully to children's questions and answering them patiently. She used many encouraging comments such as, "You all are doing so well! You know lots of these words. I

see some people holding their pencils correctly"(Field Notes). She told me that it was important to her to use positive comments to encourage good behavior. At one point she wrote in her journal, "I worked on not calling children by name in disciplining. I tried to call out groups of children or specific activities. For example, 'If your pencil is in your hand, you are not following directions' instead of 'Kate, put down your pencil' For next week I plan to work on how well the children follow directions during instruction"(Appendix C,Journal). Gwen showed a strong desire to be mindful when reflecting on her interactions with children.

Her relationship with individual children in the classroom was positive for the most part, with only one child being seen as a particular "problem". Gwen writes of a behavior pattern with him that she felt unprepared to deal with. "I tell him what to do, but then he wants to argue his way out of it. I don't back down from what I want him to do, but by the time I get him out into the hall or across the room, he has disrupted the entire class. He will follow me around and ask why he has to go. Then he tries to bargain to stay at his desk. I don't know what to do...he only acts this way when she (the cooperating teacher) is out of the room"(Appendix C,Journal). Gwen describes the child as a low level reader. She knows from discussions with her cooperating teacher that the child's mother is not very involved in his school work. Gwen's journal entry about her problems with this child end in a reminder to herself to ask her cooperating teacher for suggestions.

## Gwen's Themes

Themes of developmentally appropriate practice versus school culture, learning to plan, telling as teaching, and teacher as activity planner emerged from Gwen's classroom experiences and writings.

### Developmentally Appropriate Practice versus School Culture

The tension felt by Gwen usually came from trying to incorporate a child development/developmentally appropriate practice into the structure and restrictions of the public school system. This was exasperated by the fact that the physical set-up of the school was totally open, with classes only separated by cabinets and movement through the building observed by everyone.

This became a problem for Gwen when the children were working in centers. "I don't mind if they talk as long as it is about the learning. When the talking becomes so loud that our neighbor classes can't concentrate it is a problem for our class. (cooperating teacher) understands that children will be loud even when they are being constructive. Therefore, we both have similar feelings about centers"(Appendix C,Journal). She looked to her cooperating teacher for affirmation of her own feelings about the value of letting the children continue working in centers.

The struggle between developmentally appropriate practice and school culture was also apparent when Gwen took the children to other locations in the building. "I found

it's hard to decide how much talking to allow in the halls. The children should be learning self-control and recognizing that when they're loud it disrupts the other classes. But, on the other hand, they are at the age where it is hard to put yourself in other's shoes. Also, the children have so much energy and excitement that asking them to be completely silent is a huge request"(Appendix C,Journal). She goes on to plan what she can do to prevent the problem, but also realizes that the children are constantly testing her ability to be consistent.

This awareness of developmental needs is inter-woven throughout Gwen's writing. She writes of enjoying a geography activity because the open-endedness of the lesson let "slower children (finish) the general map...(and let) ones who (needed) more enrichment (go) on to add many labels, make a map key and more"(Appendix C,Journal).

Grading was seen as a problem. "I've found it hard to grade with an S (satisfactory progress), P (Progressing), and H (Having difficulties) only...at their age, they are changing so fast that it's better to give general grades for some abilities instead of labeling them as an A, B, or C student"(Appendix C,Journal). She does not say what she would do as a result of this perceived problem.

She was aware of problems in "doing" calendar activities, but wasn't sure why it was a problem. "By the time we finish with all the duties and the calendar, half the class is doing something else or lost. I can't tell if it's because the children don't understand the different parts of the calendar or if they are not used to it because it is not done daily"(Appendix C,Journal). She seems to be seeing this

problem as one to be solved through better planning. She is not questioning the purposes of the calendar activity or what she might do differently.

**Learning to Plan**

Gwen's planning usually came from a base of teacher education classes, her expressed interest in providing a variety of activities and what she saw modeled by her cooperating teacher. She writes,"After watching Mrs.C. and reading information from my classes at university, I realized the students would benefit more from the book (she was using trade books to spark the children's interests in a topic of study) if I took time to involve them in discussion. Then, as I read I will stop and explain in other words or ask questions about the book. As the children share they work on higher-level thinking skills and can gain a better idea of the main ideas of the story"(Appendix C,Journal).

Plans were looked over at the end of each day with the cooperating teacher. "I found that Mrs.C. tries to over-plan to ensure we will have enough for the class to work on. I think this is good because I would rather have too much planned than to be unprepared for the day...(we) circle anything that needs to be covered on the following day...we look at the next days lesson plans and change the format to fit in the needed lessons or remove lessons that won't be covered"(Appendix C,Journal).

**Telling as Teaching**

Gwen wrote about explaining and teaching concepts from a teacher directed perspective. She wrote, "I walk around after the math is presented and look at the children's work...I stop and try to guide them through the lesson so they will better understand the concept"(Appendix C,Journal). This was usually in response to difficulties children were having in completing worksheets.

She was able to attend a meeting about new social studies software, which she found very interesting. She described the software as "works to teach maps, globes and other lessons about the earth." She was then able to show the children in the class how the software worked and "what they could learn from the program"(Appendix C,Journal).

When leading reading groups, she "discussed with them comprehension and the format of the book". It is difficult to tell from her observations what "comprehension" meant to her or to the children in the reading group. Her focus was on carrying out a behavior related to what she had seen her cooperating teacher do. She expressed a concern about this by writing, "I'm not sure what I'm supposed to write down once they are done reading to me"(Appendix C,Journal).

She used "focus books" to integrate science, social studies and math with reading. She described this activity by writing, "I read the focus books this week for magnets. The books helped the children gain important facts and information about magnets". In a brief reference to children's thinking about the subject matter, she used the phrase "think about the topic visually and orally for a

better understanding"(Appendix C,Journal). How one thinks "orally" is not explained.

One of the topics Gwen was in charge of planning was the use of maps and globes. She described this topic as personally interesting and her plans included, "guiding the children through...the activities that concern maps and globes"(Appendix C,Journal). Gwen planned for 3 dimensional activities, but these were more like worksheets rather than authentic projects. The focus seemed to be on the ability of the teacher to provide information.

At one point in Gwen's journal she perceived one of the problems with this mode of teaching. She wrote, "I have found that when you get home to grade papers you will be surprised on how well or not so well the students worked. Some papers will be wonderful after a short explanation. Then other activities will be unfinished and wrong after a long thorough explanation"(Appendix C,Journal). She does not analyze this or try to plan for alternative assessment. In one of our interviews I asked her how knowing what kind of learner a child is helped her to teach and she responded, "When there are kids not paying attention, I go back and explain...I plan on what I need to tell them"(Appendix C,Second Interview).

If she noticed that children were becoming bored during a lesson while listening to directions her response was to "find strategies that will capture their attention"(Appendix C,Journal). The meaning of the lesson was not questioned. She looked for ways to present the prescribed material in ways that would circumvent the children's behavior.

In her self-evaluation about her teaching experience she

described one use of children's work in the classroom as a source for prescription. "If a teacher takes the work and explains to the child what they did wrong and what they can work on, the child will see why they do work and how the teacher grades"(Appendix C,Journal).

**Teacher as Activity Planner**

One theme emerged early in Gwen's autobiographical paper. She described her favorite teacher in elementary school as providing a variety of activities and her least favorite teacher as doing the same thing all the time. This is a theme found in Gwen's planning and her practice.

When she wrote about planning with her cooperative teacher the only priority written about is the need for being "over-planned" or having enough activities so there is no "down time". She does not write about concerns on the teacher's part about what lessons are needed based on any kind of assessment of children's understandings.

When activities "worked well" Gwen describes them as "fun" and that the children were able to be "creative". One such activity was having the children measure a print of their hands. Gwen wrote that, "I wanted them to see a real life object and find the length. They had to write a sentence about their conclusion. The activity met my objectives and was effective"(Appendix C,Journal). She did not reflect on any authentic reasons children would be measuring their hands.

Based on her earlier assessments of activities, "effective" in this case meant that the children enjoyed the

activity and there were no major behavior problems. She described the times that went smoothly in terms of the class doing "well" because they "kept on track" and "paid close attention". These lessons were generally whole-class and very directed. They were part of the class routine and Gwen was able to keep to the schedule.

Gwen's planning seemed to center on providing a variety of activities. When asked about planning for learning, she replied, "I think they (the children) learn by listening to others...having new things to see, using their self-motivation...if they don't have self-motivation they get distracted...being challenged with things other than what they do on a daily basis...(different activities) keep their interests...if they don't understand one activity, they might understand another. They don't always tell you that they don't' understand"(Appendix C,Second Interview).

## Gwen's Summary

Rodgers says that "perhaps...personal beliefs remain so intractable because they are reflections of deeply held personal theories about knowledge and the learning process" (1997,p.12).

Gwen's personal theories of learning dominated her ability to use documentation of children's work to inform her own practice or to question the curriculum.

Gwen's theory of learning seemed to be that by providing the right activities, children will learn. When discussing the documentation of children's learning, she described what children had done on an alphabetizing activity and how it

related to her planning by pointing out who had trouble staying in the spaces provided and who already knew how to alphabetize. When asked how she would respond to a child's inability to stay in the space provided she replied, "she (the child) could practice writing smaller...give her an activity to focus on the size of her writing." When asked about the child who was already able to alphabetize she replied, "(the same activities) shouldn't be repeated...there are other activities for doing ABCs"(Appendix C,Second Interview).

Activities, to Gwen, were ends in themselves. The traditional view of "doing" school was so strong that she was unable to use children's learning to question her practice. The learning was happening on the paper and didn't seem to require any meaningful relationship for the child.

I probed for Gwen's reflection on what meaning children might get from doing the alphabetizing activity. She responded, "They can see how to alphabetize...they look for the beginning letter...it gets them used to writing words in alphabetical order". When asked why that was important, she said, "So they can look up stuff in a dictionary." I then asked what was the reason behind having to look up words in a dictionary. Gwen replied, "They have to use guide words...we did an activity where they had to look up words in dictionaries..." I made one final effort by asking, "So that activity was to use the dictionary for words given at random?" She replied, "Yes" (Appendix C,Second Interview). She went on to say that if they needed to know a definition, they would now be able to look it up, but she never described a connection to communication, writing or project work.

Communicating children's progress during parent conferences was the only modeling Gwen saw for the use of documented learning and even then, it was used to show the parents where their child fell in a learning continuum. It was not used to indicate personal growth of the child. Rodgers writes,"From a constructivist perspective...the information a student gains through watching teachers comprises only a part of the theory-building process" (1997,p.11). It was unfortunate that Gwen was not in a classroom where documentation of children's work was used more extensively to inform practice; however, her personal practical theory about learning probably wouldn't have changed without great provocation.

Gwen's ability to reflect on children's work remained at the incidental level. She could describe problems with penmanship by collecting papers, but she asked no critical questions of the activity itself. Using the children's work meant planning more activities that could fix problems. Children's work was seen as a way to match objectives from the second grade curriculum to individual children. This meant that Gwen could show the child what he or she had done "wrong" and tell them how to fix it.

Most of the questions Gwen identified in her journal centered around classroom management without recognition of the reasons certain activities were being done. Children's behavior was her indicator of a successful lesson rather than any apparent learning taking place. She was very uncertain about how to document learning because the teacher directed environment kept children from demonstrating learning.

Gwen's cooperating teacher gave Gwen high marks and felt

that her student teaching was quite successful. In terms of the traditional way of doing school, Gwen was very successful at fitting into the culture.

In terms of being a reflective practioner defined as a "moral agent...(able) to reflect critically on the injustice and inhumanity present in our society and our educational institutions (LaBoskey, 1994, p. 17)", there were too many situations unquestioned.

## Ann

Ann's background was rural and middle-class. Her descriptions of her elementary experience focused mainly on an injustice she felt she received in first grade. She wrote,

> One day I turned my paper in without coloring it. The directions were on the board, but I obviously did not read them. Four other students turned their papers in without coloring them, too. Mrs. S took the five of us into the hall and gave us spankings. I remember thinking that was a bad excuse for spanking a student. Today, I find it extremely severe. I know she was trying to make an example out of us, but an uncolored paper does not justify spanking a six-year old child." She went on to further analyze this incident by writing, "First graders make mistakes and their teachers must be

patient and reasonable(Appendix D,Autobiographical Paper).

She also told me that she still has a good friend who was one of the other children spanked and that they talk often of that incident and laugh about how absurd it was for their teacher to spank them.

Ann's first career choice when she entered college was any job that would pay her lots of money, but when she saw children playing at the child development lab she realized that "forever is a long time to work in a job you will end up hating...". She decided to go "with her heart" and work with "kids, no matter what the job paid"(Appendix D,Autobiographical Paper).

Encouraging student teachers to teach in inner-city schools is difficult, however, Ann enthusiastically chose to student teach in a lower-income, urban school. Her first choice was first grade, but the teacher assigned to her was a second grade teacher. Her cooperating teacher had an early childhood certificate, and had taught in this particular classroom for the five years she had been teaching. The school system was typical of large city systems, dealing with many problems of aging buildings, depressed test scores and stressed lower-income families. The response of the system was to mandate highly centralized curriculum expectations. Teachers were to give a specified number of grades starting with second grade and assign homework every night, starting in kindergarten.

Ann's cooperating teacher spoke often of the pressure she felt to stick to a rigid definition of teaching

prescribed by the system. She spoke wistfully of implementing more early childhood objectives, but in a later conversation asked a "rhetorical" question, "What was wrong with the way we were taught? We were in large classes...and everyone learned...I learned"(Field Notes).

Ann's first concerns in her student teaching position were the lack of learning centers in the classroom and the cooperating teacher's reliance on worksheets. Ann described the classroom as "traditional" and "teacher centered". She was very concerned that this would prevent her from implementing a more child-centered approach, but as she got to know her cooperating teacher, she realized that there would be some freedom to introduce a few new ideas and try things her way. In her first journal entry she was excited about, "rearrang(ing) the classroom. I have to keep the desks because of the classroom size, but I would like to group them in pods. I'm also excited to integrate centers into the classroom"(Appendix D,Journal).

There was also some recognition of the difficulties she might encounter. Ann wrote, "I think it will be difficult to change the class routine...I will have to be careful about explaining 'choices' to the children when introducing centers or the room will be chaos"(Appendix D,Journal).

In our first interview she talked about the need for teachers

> to (learn) to relate to kids and be concerned about spending more time on how they learn best and understanding them...teachers, like here, (are) not being personal enough with kids...if

> you're going to spend a whole year with children then teachers should get to know them even if you listen to stuff you don't want to hear (referring to neglected or abused children)...you should be there for the kids...kids should be first(Appendix D,First Interview).

I asked her about the spanking incident and how that kind of memory will affect the teacher she becomes. Ann replied,

> ...a lot of things kids get in trouble for, well, there's not that big an issue here to get worked up about...first and second graders talk, I don't see getting mad for talking quietly at your desk! They talk!...I think that it helps me reflect on what's really important for a teacher to do (Appendix D,First Interview).

Ann was bothered by the teaching she observed at her school. She told me, "A lot of teachers get stuck in a rut, it's easy to do worksheets...I try to think how I would do it different...I don't want that to happen to me...I have to keep reflecting on it"(Appendix D,First Interview).

She related some of what she was observing to her own experience in second grade. "I was good at (timed tests), but if you're not good you would hate them...SRA tests for free time in the second grade! Ooh Boy! That'll make you want to

finish your work! Second grade was not a good year for me"(Appendix D,First Interview).

When asked about work her Mom kept from her elementary years she was able to articulate why parents would keep things, "It's interesting for parents to see how kids that age think about their family, it may be totally different from what the parents expect." But, when relating it to her own teaching, she said, "I would tell parents why we were doing them (papers brought home)...to document learning...that we weren't just playing"(Appendix D,First Interview).

Ann worked hard during her student teaching to plan for activities that involved the children. She felt they learned best when "participating instead of always just (being told)...learning isn't just something you're told, you have to be involved." She taught a unit on Oklahoma and designed an ice-cream sundae experience to show the children how oil wells worked. She explained by saying, "You can tell them about oil wells and show them pictures, but the gusher activity really gave them the idea about what happens with an oil well"(Appendix D,Second Interview). The actual scientific principle was not questioned because her goal was to make the activity fit into the children's experiences.

Planning in a teacher-centered, structured environment presented problems. Ann gave up on the "pod" idea, realizing that rearranging the desks twice a day was not going to work. The schedule and the classroom teacher's expectations also caused her to scale back on using child-directed centers. However, she persisted in planning for a more activity based curriculum while still keeping the cooperating teacher's

interests in mind.

The classroom teacher told Ann that she needed to "cover" the Saxon Math concepts on money. Ann decided that she didn't need to use the Saxon Math materials for this. She designed and implemented a student "store", gave each child play money and had them make decisions about what to buy. She expressed surprise about which children were able to do this well and which had trouble with it.

> The kids that struggle with everything did best in the whole class. I think they use money more...one of them brought a $1.00 to school one day and lost it..(he thought) his Mom would hit him...that's not a good thing, that he has to worry more about money...I've seen on TV these kids in Mexico who sell stuff, they know how to use money! I bet that's how the kids here know about money too!(Appendix D,Second Interview).

One solution she thought about was trying to prevent problems rather than always reacting to them. Ann gave this a lot of thought in her own planning, always trying to incorporate activities that would relate to the children's experiences, but still have teacher control.

The children ended up sitting in their seats during her lessons, but she also put materials around the perimeter of the room that they were encouraged to take back to their seats. During her Oklahoma Unit she set up a special reading center, put up children's work, and tried, as much as

possible, to make the room seem more child-centered.

Ann struggled with grading. She made the observation more than once that, "The problem I had with planning was I had to have a daily grade for science and social studies"(Appendix D,Second Interview). It was difficult for her to make connections between the more authentic documents of children's learning, such as their Oklahoma journals and the need for a traditional "grade". Her cooperating teacher stepped in at least twice, running off papers in order to have something to grade. Ann said this was all right with her, that if it was that important to the cooperating teacher then Ann certainly wouldn't stand in her way. This was said with sincere concern.

When we talked about the journals she was able to tell me which children wrote freely and which struggled with not having words to copy. She said, "...there's this one girl who...is real artistic...I've noticed that she does that in her journal...I've seen some who (are not good students) do best in art...I don't have them read (the journals) to me, I read them at home and respond"(Appendix D,Second Interview).

## Ann's Themes

Emergent themes for Ann were; caring relationships, active and meaningful learning, going against the grain and multicultural awareness.

## Caring Relationships

Her concern about individual children was woven throughout our conversations, her journal and her classroom behavior. She noticed a child having to sit by himself in the cafeteria day after day and made the observation, "I don't think the teachers would appreciate their own child sitting by (himself) everyday!"(Appendix D,Journal). She was very uncomfortable with the way some teachers treated children in the building. "They talk down to the kids...I've heard people yelling in the halls, I can't believe they do that in front of everyone"(Appendix D,Journal).

She expressed surprise at her cooperating teacher's first response to being confronted by a child wetting herself two days in a row. The teacher debated on whether or not to call the counselor. Ann wrote, "I would have first consulted the nurse. I thought perhaps she (the child) may have a urinary tract infection and allergies (she had also had a bloody nose). I wanted to think of medical reasons before I jumped to conclusions about possible abuse. However, I did document when these events happened"(Appendix D,Journal). The need for documentation seemed to come from an intuitive idea Ann had about future possible actions and was not prompted by me or her cooperating teacher.

## Active and Meaningful Learning

Ann took several assigned lessons, ones which her cooperating teacher expected her to do using worksheets, and made them into experiences that related to the children's

lives in more meaningful ways. A reading comprehension test was one of the first classroom lessons she adapted. She told me, "One of the tests they took was supposed to be comprehension and they seemed to be bad at it...I made an activity where they had to put sentences in order...and they did good on it...I also had them act out the story...they got excited, but they understood!"(Appendix D,Second Interview).

She commented that, "I think teachers find it easier and more controlled if they do only a mostly teacher-guided activity." She also felt that she could, "mix up the different methods of teaching to complement each other." She did this when confronted with an assigned lesson from the second grade science book. She wrote,

> Even though this topic is in the second grade text book level, I find 'animals' to be a very lame topic for second graders. It is too broad. It would be more interesting if they studied a couple different types of animals thoroughly instead of covering it all in a week and a half (Appendix D,Journal).

She implemented group activities that involved sorting animals on a chart and used the big maps in the room to trace the migration of Monarchs through the state. Her focus throughout the lesson was to pull from the children's experiences.

When doing a social studies unit on transportation, she related as many activities as she could to the children's own experiences and neighborhood. At the end of the week, her cooperating teacher expected the children to take a written

test, but Ann wrote, "They demonstrated their learned knowledge...I did not feel that the children should take a written test, so I tested them orally...if the children did not understand a question, we discussed it further without revealing the answer"(Appendix D,Journal).

**Going Against the Grain**

Ann began her student teaching making many observations about how the traditional school program didn't seem to be in tune with children's needs and that she would try to "do things differently". She was able to negotiate a different way to implement some activities, but grading and homework expectations remained a point of contention.

The issue of not doing things exactly as expected did not create problems between her and her cooperating teacher, but at the same time, Ann wrote,

> I sometimes felt that throughout the week, Mrs. T. didn't feel completely comfortable with the hands-on approach I was teaching with. I urged the children to share ideas and feelings. I think (her cooperating teacher) prefers a more 'structured', traditional classroom. I feel she has good intentions to have an early childhood classroom, but feels more comfortable with traditional roles of the students and teacher (Appendix D,Journal).

One week, her cooperating teacher expected Ann to carry out all of the reading plans that had been written by the classroom teacher. Ann thought that it was her cooperating teacher's way of telling Ann that she thought there should be more control. Ann didn't like having to constantly ask her teacher what points she wanted emphasized. She wrote, "I just don't feel like I was given the freedom to teach the reading class effectively"(Appendix D,Journal).

She planned time at the end of the day for the children to "reflect" on the Oklahoma unit and encouraged "creative writing" in their journals although this was not how the cooperating teacher taught "writing". These activities were almost always done in an opposite way from the classroom teacher's method of teaching, but Ann was diplomatic each time, reassuring the cooperative teacher with well written plans and objectives.

**Multicultural Awareness**

Ann knew that teaching in such a different environment from the one in which she had grown up, might present surprises, but she didn't always feel prepared for them when they were encountered.

She knew that the way teachers treated children at the school was inappropriate, and this seemed to be the provocation for further thought about possible reasons. After a fifth grader was caught with marijuana, Ann wrote,

> This showed me how sheltered I am...I need to be more open on suspecting substance abuse, violent behavior...these

> children in this school do not have the advantages that most children do...however, most of the kids are stereotyped in this school and not seen as unique individuals...this really bothers me...I don't feel I am any more important than these children or their families (Appendix D,Journal).

She observed in the ED class and was impressed by the calmness of the teacher and her assistant in the face of bizarre behavior on the part of some of the children. Ann wondered if the children knew they were in a class labeled "ED" and how that might affect their self-concept. Ann even considered the possibility of pursuing a degree in special education after seeing the ED class in "action".

Her awareness of the children's cultural needs was apparent in her lessons too. During her Oklahoma unit she specifically chose a book about a woman's African American grandmother who had participated in the land run. Ann made sure the children were given time to ask questions about ex-slaves and other land run participants. She felt that this was an angle of state history that had not been touched on for them in the past.

### Ann's Summary

Ann's theory for documenting children's learning stemmed from an understanding of children's need for activity and involvement. She constantly looked for ways children could

"show" her they understood concepts. The second graders she taught were not proficient writers and had problems following written directions. Ann recognized that basic understandings could be documented by her as the children answered questions orally. This became an over-riding factor in her decisions about what and how she was going to teach.

Parent involvement was very low at this particular school, so there was little motivation for teachers to collect children's work to show to parents at conferences. Plus, the district's mandated curriculum further pushed teachers away from doing more authentic assessments. However, Ann showed an ability to make autonomous decisions about what kinds of activities and work the children would do because she understood the importance of meaningful learning.

Ann was able to reflect on the work she saw children struggle with. She exemplified van Manen's description of teaching as being "done in an intentional manner that constantly distinguishes what is good or most appropriate from what is bad or inappropriate for this child or those children in particular circumstances" (1977). Having physical documents of children's work was a secondary goal for Ann. It took all of her time and energy adapting lessons to meet children's needs. These activities were not done for "fun", Ann listened carefully to children's responses for understanding and further action.

Ann had not looked at her own learning and questioned it. Her response to the question about how she learned best drew a laugh She responded, "I don't remember...I mean...I've had people ask me that before and I don't think I can help you on that one..."(Appendix D,First Interview). She was able

to use all 4 kinds of reflection in her planning, but stopped short of systematic reflection or thinking about thinking. Hopefully, because of her sensitivity to children's needs and her ability to use mindful reflection, she will develop further reflective abilities. LaBoskey's "Alert Novices" asked many "why" questions-"directed at the roots of problems and at the meanings of ideas and actions. (1994, p. 125) Ann's questions were usually in the form of opinions, but centered around an implicit questioning of the status quo.

Her assignment to a traditional, structured classroom provoked her ability to reflect, but did not always support the growth of her ability to make crucial connections. She drew from her child development classes to want the children to be more active learners, but stopped short of the realization that children construct knowledge by thinking about relationships. Ann did not have the language to describe what she sensed was happening, though at times, she seemed to know this intuitively.

## Liz

Liz was placed in a student teaching assignment used often by the university. She was in a situation where her cooperating teacher worked very closely with another teacher, who also had a student teacher, in the same grade level. These two teachers expected their student teachers to plan together. Liz initially felt very comfortable in this position and did not have to struggle with what was expected of her. She was very happy that the children were excited when they found out that she would be their student teacher.

She wrote that it was the highlight of her week and that "hearing and seeing the children show so much excitement made me so comfortable"(Appendix E,Journal).

Liz made the decision to become a teacher when she was a senior in high school. Part of her duties, on the yearbook, was to take pictures of elementary classes. She wrote, "Seeing the kindergarten, first, second and third grade teachers with their students just made me want to get to have that experience with those ages of children." She saw these teachers after she started her studies and they always offered materials and suggestions. Liz remembered, "Seeing how those teachers taught their students influenced me in the manner that I want to teach in my classroom. I want to have a hands-on approach with a lot of integration mixed in"(Appendix E,Autobiographical Paper).

At one point, Liz told me that she remembered nothing about grade school, but in her autobiographical paper she had a vivid memory of her fourth grade teacher.

> My fourth grade teacher was the meanest teacher I have ever had...my parents came up to the school to talk to the principal and my teacher about why she (was) failing me each week on my spelling test...(she said) it was because my penmanship was not legible enough...after the meeting, my teacher would pass me on the spelling tests (Appendix E)

Liz also remembered her fifth grade teacher winning teacher of the year. She wrote, "(In fifth grade) each

project that we were assigned was hands-on and integrated in some shape or form...she really built the self-confidence of her students"(Appendix E,Autobiographical Paper).

Other memories of childhood and school were "blanked" out because of her parents divorce and a move to a new school. School became more difficult after her father left and Liz struggled with reading, deciding that she didn't like it. She wrote, "I was lost without him (her Dad) to check my work for any errors"(Appendix E,Autobiographical Paper).

Her experience with the penmanship grade came up in our first interview. In response to questions about how she was assessed in school as a child, she said, "I always did okay in school. I had a fourth grade teacher - she would make you cringe! My penmanship was really bad and I wasn't passing spelling tests...I was scared to death. I was just a little fourth grader and she would flunk me for my writing! I still have to be careful." I asked how that experience would affect her teaching and she replied,

> Not every child develops skills at the same time. I'd never treat a child like that! I'll have them spell it for me and if some people just don't have good penmanship-I'm not going to fail them! I'm not going to count it wrong. I'll be very open...Yesterday (a little girl had hurt her arm)...she couldn't lay it on her desk to write so I wrote what she told me...(My fourth grade teacher) didn't care-it was no skin off her back! I think you should want all your students

to do their best and pass the class

(Appendix E,First Interview).

Liz was very aware of each child's penmanship. During our discussion of documented class work her second graders had done, she pointed out who had a "good" paper, meaning that it was neat and well illustrated.

## Liz's Themes

Liz had two major emergent themes; learning just happens and knowing through seeing.

### Learning Just Happens

I asked Liz how she learned best as a child. She responded, "Oh, to be truthful I don't remember grade school at all...I was very auditory, like when I heard someone say it, if I can listen, I'm okay...I didn't like to read when I was younger and still don't. That's probably important to the way I learn"(Appendix E,First Interview). She seemed to be trying to define learning through her senses, but was not sure what I meant by the question. When I probed for a greater description of how she saw herself as a learner, she talked about reading. "I was scared to take a speed reading class...I would watch kids who zip through reading and it's pretty discouraging"(Appendix E,First Interview).

We talked about the discouraging aspect of trying to read when you don't like to read. I asked her how she would work with children who also didn't enjoy reading and she said, "If I know (they don't like to read) I'll talk to

them...we can work on it together. I know reward systems are negative...(but) some sort of treat to encourage reading...seems to work. I'll read to them...maybe tell them I like to read...we'll talk about the things we like, find more interesting"(Appendix E,First Interview).

A reluctance to look at other behaviors for learning caused her to write, "Two of my students acted ugly during math meeting board. (Her cooperating teacher) was so-o mad at those students for acting that way to me. I guess sometimes that just happens"(Appendix E,Journal). She did not follow this up with any ideas about what had happened during morning meeting or what she might do if it happened again.

A spelling lesson she taught was a lost opportunity to think about learning. She told me, "They had to really listen for sounds in the words...they learn how to spell because they see it on the wall...they'll get better at it (spelling) and not know it"(Appendix E,Second Interview). It seemed to be enough that the children were having to look at the words. Liz did not have any questions about how children learn to spell. By saying, "they'll get better at it and not know it" is a strong statement about Liz's theory about learning.

**Knowing Through Seeing**

I asked Liz if she had seen work kept for portfolios. She indicated that she had and that the portfolios in her student teaching classroom had been used to "show growth". I was interested in what kind of work Liz and her cooperating teacher had chosen to document children's growth and Liz replied, "We have a Make-A-Book...if they edit the sentences

right...you can look through the whole journal and see if their handwriting has improved...I don't know if art goes in...you can stick (different) math things in there"(Appendix E,Second Interview). She also said that she would keep portfolios in her own classroom and that these would be better than report cards because portfolios "tell you more". An important aspect of using portfolios would be so "they (parents) can see what we've done". Children's work was seen as a record of work completed, but she was vague on what else it could tell you.

Liz told me that journals "show" you the child's everyday experiences. She knew this to be true because a child in her class always wore camouflage and that's what he always drew.

Liz also was able to "see" who was using invented spelling. She told me, "Some will ask how to spell...I don't know if it's pride (the children who use invented spelling) or they don't care...I don't know what to say (to them)...Like this one (indicating another journal page) it really shows how she hears the letters...I looked at it a long time and I figured out that this is how she's hearing the sounds"(Appendix E,Second Interview). Liz was looking for correct spelling, but realized that this particular child was sounding out the words. Earlier, Liz had mentioned invented spelling, but she doesn't seem to understand what that means and how it works in the development of children's writing.

I asked how she would use this information to inform her teaching and she said, "to teach complete sentences...the more they write, the better they spell and read. They can see how the word looks in print, like that's (referring to word

in journal) pretty close to the word 'Halloween'"(Appendix E,Second Interview).

## Liz's Summary

Bain (1999) found in his study of the use of journals to enhance reflectivity that "initial reflective ability and willingness to devote effort to the task are the best predictors of final performance" (pg. 70). Liz did not want to keep a journal. Her first entry was a page and a half and by her fifth entry she was down to one paragraph. There was no meaning for her in the exercise of writing down her thoughts. This was seen in Liz's lack of analysis of learning. Not understanding how children learned to read or spell didn't seem to bother her. Reflection, according to Dewey, involves searching for "the ground or basis for a belief" (1910/1997, p. 1). Liz was given the opportunity to search for meaning through keeping a journal, visiting with her supervisor and documenting children's learning, but none of these options provoked her awareness of problems to be solved. Her theory of learning appealed to the senses - if you saw something often enough or heard about it, you would learn.

Liz had come into the teacher education program wanting to recreate things she had seen, but with no clear picture of what that meant. Recollective reflection from her autobiographical paper was brief and emotional, but there were few connections made to how those memories informed her practice as a teacher.

This reflection on what she saw, fit into how she

interpreted documentation of children's work. Children needed to see their work so they could fix it and parents needed to see what the teacher had planned and accomplished. Liz knew that part of a textbook answer for the value of documenting children's work should be "to show growth", but she couldn't visualize what that meant to her practice or to a child's learning. Not being able to visualize this was a deterrent to further questions.

The main purpose for documenting children's work seemed to be for prescription. She could look at their work and help them with misspelled words, or encourage better handwriting. Looking for understanding of a concept was not in Liz's understanding of her own work or in the children's work.

Liz knew that her journal was to be reflective, but it didn't seem to make sense to her to have to write things down. Most of her brief journal entries were lists of activities or descriptions of the schedule of the day. In three separate entries she complained about working with the other student teacher, not having time to work on her unit, and having to leave materials she had created at school. But these situations provoked no problem solving.

There was also no indication that questions arose for her about anything she had experienced in the classroom in her relationship with children. Most entries which mentioned the children referred to the class as a whole and described how smoothly the lesson went.

The environment did not provoke questions for Liz. Her cooperating teacher had had many student teachers and knew exactly what she wanted them to do. The situation was prescribed for Liz, which fit into her image of what teaching

was all about. She was very comfortable teaching from the classroom teacher's plans. Liz saw herself as part of a well-oiled mechanism that enabled the classroom to run smoothly without major problems. Lessons were deemed successful when behavior was well managed. Liz had an intuitive ability to create activities that the children enjoyed while still sticking to the prescribed objectives.

Loughran's 1996 study concluded that, "research heightened the participant's reflective abilities, but an individual still only sees what he or she is ready and willing to see. The major influence still resides within the individual" (p. 188). This seemed to be true for Liz. Though she knew the topic of my study, and we discussed the kinds of things that documentation of children's work could do for one's planning and knowledge, she still struggled to understand "what I wanted". This lack of textual reflection and thought resulted in only two identified themes. LaBoskey states, "we must be cautious about inferring inability from an absence of reflective thinking" (1994, p.70). However, Liz and Meg both presented the most difficult student teachers to analyze because of the lack of material generated by their writings and interviews.

## Meg

Meg's placement mirrored Liz's. The cooperating teacher laid everything out for Meg and was highly instrumental in Meg's description of what teaching was all about. The school environment was also comfortable for Meg who had grown up in a similar, small rural setting.

Meg's memories of school were brief, but had strong emotional ties to her image of teachers. Her family still lived in the small town where she attended school and trips home often included conversations with the teachers mentioned in her autobiography. These discussions evoked the same positive or negative feelings left from childhood.

Meg attributed her desire to become a teacher to the observation she had made several years ago that there "aren't enough good teachers". This observation was strengthened when she got to know a young man in high school who was learning disabled. She wrote, "I realized I wanted to be a teacher and be aware of these learning disabilities and try to help or find help for those children..."(Appendix F,Autobiographical Paper). She told me that she planned on working on her Master's degree in counseling. Meg saw herself going into classrooms and helping teachers "come up with ways to help the kids"(Appendix F,Autobiographical Paper).

Most of Meg's planned and observed activities revolved around children using their spelling words and punctuation. The classroom teacher set up the expectation for the lesson by telling the children that they would be graded on punctuation and spelling. Meg picked up on this as an objective and worked punctuation and spelling words into several lessons.

Meg saw her role as carrying out her cooperating teacher's plans, but she also questioned the appropriateness of the unit topic used in the writing lesson. She told me, "I thought - how in the world are we going to do this (topic on Pilgrims)? But it's turned out different from what I thought it would...the only thing you see (in most classrooms) is

Pilgrim 'cutsey'"(Appendix F,Second Interview).

Meg struggled with the meaning of the children's work because of strong concerns about classroom management. Two children in the room were quite assertive and difficult for Meg to bring into group expectations. One child spoke no English and Meg was worried about meeting this child's needs. Meg had a hard time imagining what kind of work this child would be able to do. I asked her if she spent more time with this child when her cooperating teacher was in charge and Meg indicated that she did try, but that she didn't know what to do.

How to regain control was a recurring question directed towards her cooperating teacher. Meg's questions were specific to certain activities and the classroom teacher was able to guide Meg through planning for different behaviors. Meg usually wrote about these incidents in her journal and was able to plan for alternative behaviors that would enable her to feel more confident. She saw the problems as stemming from things she was or was not doing. She wrote, "I felt like I was doing something wrong, because the students were not focusing at all. (Her cooperating teacher) said it was not my fault, that they do that to her sometimes"(Appendix F,Journal). Meg's cooperating teacher did give her suggestions about ways to control the children. She suggested that Meg not try to talk over them. That she should stop talking and wait until they had stopped. Meg decided that she would tell the class that they could work on the textbook activity during center time if they continued talking. Meg wrote, "I told them I would just wait until after they were ready to listen and that we would do our English now

or...during center time (they love center time) This worked pretty well, they quieted down to listen"(Appendix F,Journal). There were no questions asked about the appropriateness of the lesson.

## Meg's Themes

Like Liz, Meg presented problems of analysis because of the brevity of her writing and thought. Two themes identified were; feelings and basic skills.

### Feelings

How one feels about school and the relationships found there was Meg's main recurring theme. Her memories of school centered around how she felt about activities. She wrote that learning about "greater than" and "less than" was difficult and she (felt) "very frustrated and embarrassed". Her only other vivid memory was of "feeling very proud" of a T-shirt she had decorated (Appendix F,Autobiographical Paper).

In her first interview she told me that her Dad could easily upset her if he just "raised an eyebrow" and that he told her that all kids were different and had to be raised differently. She talked about teachers being patient with her because she would get upset. This sensitivity was extended to wanting to work with learning disabled children "to help or find help for those children".

This emphasis on feelings also colored her interpretation of the children's work. When asked about the meaning of children's work for parents, she answered, "(You

would have) things that show what they (children) can do...information about who they are, drawings where they weren't told what to draw...journals about feelings"(Appendix F,First Interview).

Her unit of study was about Pilgrims and the most meaningful part for her seemed to be teaching the idea that "it wasn't just this fun trip for the Pilgrims". She knew that the second graders in her class would probably remember activities she had carried out that involved role playing. "...They might remember the game in our little boats, we had them stand on the paper areas for their boats. They didn't want to fall off, we wanted them to get an idea of the amount of room the Pilgrims felt, room they had..."(Appendix F,Second Interview).

I asked Meg what she thought she would do with children when they didn't understand a concept. She responded, "When a kid has a hard time, maybe it's something that's really hard for them and it does not work (the way you've been teaching)...you stop and think about how they're feeling"(Appendix F,Second Interview). She did not indicate that she had developed any plans for doing this.

**Basic Skills**

Meg's focus when giving feedback to the children about their work centered around quality of handwriting and use of punctuation. Her responses to questions about the understanding children showed in their writing usually started out as a search for meaning, but quickly digressed to pointing out punctuation and word use. She described her

behavior during spelling/writing lessons as prescriptive, "I remind them to spell correctly, use end marks. I walk around and help...remind them about punctuation"(Appendix F,Second Interview).

She expressed concern about the children not liking to do creative writing. She told me, "I don't know if they don't like to write...they say a lot, 'I don't know what to write, I don't know what to write...there's a few that do"(Appendix F,Second Interview). We talked at least twice about children being stifled in their creative writing by too great an emphasis on punctuation and spelling concerns. Meg always agree with me, but did not make any noticeable changes during writing lessons.

When asked for documentation of children's learning, Meg brought a few spelling journals to show me that particular children were able to use their spelling words correctly. She told me that the purpose of using "spelling" journals was so the children would "get used to writing about what we are talking about (Pilgrims)

> ...we told them we were grading on handwriting...she (indicating particular child's journal) used punctuation, even though I didn't say anything about grading their punctuation. I can tell she understands what she was writing about and she knows how to put sentences together...this one (different journal), her sentences don't make sense, there's no punctuation and I can tell she doesn't pay attention to the punctuation,

capitals...but, I can tell she knows what, uh...we've been reading in class (Appendix F,Second Interview).

Meg did not interpret the children's understandings of Pilgrims. She seemed to get a "feeling" about their level of understanding, but was not able to describe it for me.

## Meg's Summary

In our first interview, Meg expressed a desire to go on to graduate school and get a Masters in Guidance and Counseling. Because of her strong emphasis on the emotional aspect of her own learning and a sympathy for others, she had come to the conclusion that counseling would be easier for her than trying to teach. This was a recognized strength for Meg and she may have used "mindful reflection" to come to this decision.

Thinking about what children were learning was difficult for Meg. Observable action and teacher behavior defined the act of teaching for her. The obvious and concrete skills were easy to prescribe, but the construction of knowledge by the children was not recognized. When she wrote about the documentation of children's work, she was quick to say that she could tell if they "are using capital letters, end marks and spelling wall words correctly". Other purposes were vague, becoming a way "to make various judgments about their (the children's) level of understanding" and looking at "the content of what they write"(Appendix F,Second Interview).

Using documentation as assessment was also very vague. When I asked Meg about the use of report cards she answered,

"I don't know...you definitely need something to show parents...I wish there were another way, as far as A,B,C,D,F...all teachers write comments...maybe have different columns...how well they do things, I know something needs to change, but what's the best way?"(Appendix F,First Interview). She seemed to be in the process of asking some probing questions, but her motivation to find the answers was not apparent.

Meg could use anticipatory reflection to solve self-identified problems of classroom management. She never questioned the purpose of the lessons or thought about the possibility that the children were losing interest because they could not see any reason to pay attention, other than the one that was coerced. She was eager to write down suggestions I offered that applied to classroom management and sought out the advice of her cooperating teacher, but she did this from a survival mode of thinking.

Meg's level of reflection became incidental when thinking about the emotional aspect of learning and teaching, but remained firmly based in everyday thinking when it came to teaching specific concepts. She had the opportunity to use recollective reflection and make connections between her own teaching and children's learning when she talked about what she remembered doing in school as a child. She said, "I remember doing stuff with my friends...Oh...I remember in second grade...I still have this...we colored pictures and the teacher ironed it on tee shirts...made angel ornaments...but no real learning." I asked her to explain "real learning" and she replied, "well, academic"(Appendix F,Second Interview).

"Academic" used in this way seemed to mean that there is a separation between activities enjoyed by students and the activities designed with objectives in mind by teachers. Meg's understanding of learning is somewhat like taking medicine; it only works if it tastes bad. She had not made connections between theoretical information about how children learn to her practice in student teaching.

## SHARED ESSENTIAL THEMES OF REFLECTION

"In determining the universal or essential quality of a theme our concern is to discover aspects or qualities that make a phenomenon what it is and without which the phenomenon could not be what it is" (van Manen, 1994, p.107). Each student teacher was viewed as unique; each with different perspectives, each constructing her own knowledge of what being a teacher was all about. As I read and reread the thoughts and words of these student teachers and reflected on their practice, it became apparent to me that there were themes shared by all of them. Themes that could be identified by common descriptors, but enacted differently by reflective or nonreflective thought. It is important to note that incidental themes were inter-woven throughout all six student teachers' experiences, but the essential themes were themes of reflection that seemed to shape the student teachers' thoughts and practices most closely. The following themes can be used as guide posts for our understanding. Natural lines of demarcation arose from the data between those student teachers who had successfully reflected on children's work and those who had struggled with this process.

The shared themes of reflection were; authentic activity, children's needs versus student teacher's needs, and construction of knowledge versus prescriptive teaching.

## Reflecting on Authentic Activity

The essence of "authentic activity" is not grounded in concrete examples that follow a dichotomy. The casual observer would not be able to state unequivocally that a particular activity, taken out of context, is more meaningful than another. Each student teacher created her own definition of what was meaningful and authentic in the classroom. An authentic activity could be grounded in what met the needs of the participants at the moment or in the scope of the program. The more reflective student teachers seemed to take into consideration the personal interests of the children when designing learning activities. They were also able to use theoretical knowledge about child development and early childhood education to systematically reflect on what was meaningful and therefore, more authentic.

Mary and Ann shared a common desire to involve children in personally meaningful, authentic activities. These were activities that were designed to mean something to the children participating and not just a way to meet teacher objectives. They were able to reflect on what this meant to individual children in their classrooms and then act on this reflection. What made their decisions even more profound was that they were both in classrooms easily described as traditional and teacher centered. Both Mary and Ann adapted the lessons their cooperating teachers chose to do, to fit

this expectation they had for activities to be authentic. Mary created meaningful learning opportunities by asking the children questions designed to strengthen connections between topics being studied and events in children's lives. Ann did it by thinking about the things children had contact with in their everyday lives and using these connections to make school topics more meaningful.

In contrast, Margaret and Gwen took lessons from their cooperating teacher's plans or texts and simply carried them out. There was little adaptation and reflection about what the activities might mean to children's lives. When questioned about the meaning children might make from the activities, these student teachers struggled to answer. Liz and Meg chose activities that were commercially well designed, but did little to adapt or change them to meet individual student's immediate needs and interests. These four student teachers were more interested in being able to "do" activities. They took their cues from their cooperating teachers about appropriate activities and used few methods to gain personal information about the children's questions. They did not question the reasons behind the choices. The major criteria for "meaningful" activities was how well the activity fit a standard objective. The value of the activity was to finish an assignment, produce "quality work" or carry out the cooperating teacher's plans. The idea that activities could be authentic did not appear in these student teachers questions.

Asking student teachers to reflect on meaningful or authentic activities seemed to uncover a basis of thought about whose needs were most important in the elementary

classroom. This provided another essential theme for reflection; that of children's needs versus the needs of the student teacher.

## Reflecting on Children's Needs versus Student Teacher's Needs

Understanding children's needs and using that understanding to design and implement an appropriate curriculum was at the core of the university's early childhood program. Developmentally appropriate practice guidelines formed the framework for most of the early childhood student teachers' classes. However, the school culture that the early childhood student teachers found themselves immersed, directed planning and thought away from meeting children's needs. Their classrooms were quite similar and most could be described as "good" classrooms in the tradition of teacher centered education. This, then, was an excellent opportunity to capture different ways of reflecting on similar concerns. How the student teachers reflected on children's needs versus their own immediate needs and the objectives of the school curriculum was highlighted by their interpretation of children's work.

Mary and Ann both viewed children's work as concrete indications of children's understanding. Mary deliberately chose to closely observe the work process and products of a particular child to gather information about that child's level of understanding. It would have been easy for Mary to buy into the prescriptive stance many teachers take when confronted by a child who is struggling with classroom

assignments. However, she chose to concentrate on what that child could *do*, rather than what he couldn't do. With this information, she was then able to plan activities which used his strengths to further his understandings. She successfully incorporated the stated requirements of the classroom into her planning, but the essence of her planning revolved around the child's abilities and needs.

Ann's interactions with children were based on her view of them as unique individuals. She was able to change her expectations and behavior towards each child according to the work she had observed them do and the understanding they brought to various assignments. When she planned lessons, she kept in mind classroom management concerns, but made the needs of the children the focus of her final decisions about what kinds of activities to introduce.

Both Mary and Ann were told by their cooperating teachers to use school curriculum guides in planning. They both struggled with maintaining good relationships with their cooperating teachers and their belief systems about appropriate early childhood curriculum. This balance was successful due, in part, to their ability to reflect thoughtfully on the importance of meeting children's needs, even if it meant more work on their part.

On the other hand, Margaret, Gwen, Liz and Meg made their cooperating teacher's or personal needs, the focus for classroom decisions. Margaret chose activities that required little preparation. She left the room frequently to attend to housekeeping chores or personal needs, effectively avoiding having to develop a personal knowledge of each child. Without careful observation of individual children,

Margaret's knowledge of their needs and level of understanding was limited. Though she could recite the problems various children were having in the classroom and give details about the problems they were encountering at home, she was unable to make this a focus for planning. Her interpretation of their work showed very little concern or reflection on what the children learned from participating in the activity.

Gwen based her interpretation on children's learning and work on how well it fit into her model of teaching as telling. She constantly reflected on what she needed to do, but not on why she needed to do it. She could address individual children's abilities as long as she could stick to a narrowly defined objective. Gwen reflected on how well the children completed required assignments, but could not reflect on how those assignments might be addressing individual needs.

Liz talked about her own struggles with reading, but had not come to any conclusions about how she could use this in trying to teach reading. Her disinterest in reading was a missed opportunity for recollective reflection. Her image and definition of teaching did not include how self-awareness affects teacher's abilities. It was easier for her to concentrate on how she could meet the requirements for student teaching. This accounted for a highly prescriptive view of teaching. Children's work was viewed as an indicator of how well they could follow rules.

Meg was concentrating on her desire to counsel children and help them emotionally. This was a distraction for her because she could not envision how this could strengthen her

planning and interaction with children in an academic setting. Classroom management overwhelmed Meg's ability to address children's individual needs. Her personal goal of becoming a resource person instead of a classroom teacher seemed to keep her in a survival mode of thinking. This survival mode of thinking caused most of her reflections on children's work to be prescriptive.

An essential theme of teaching for all the student teachers was the theory of learning they took with them into their cooperating classrooms. This particular theme could be considered pivotal. When asked about children's knowledge construction, the early childhood student teachers could almost all give textbook definitions of how children construct knowledge. However, the "appearance" versus the "essence" of their practice showed through their interpretation of children's work (van Manen, 1990). They could believe in the efficacy of developmentally appropriate practice, but not be able to overcome the "script" for teacher behavior already learned (Wien, 1995)

**Reflecting on Construction of Knowledge versus Prescriptive Teaching**

"Teaching for constructed knowledge requires patience, flexibility, and resistance to providing the 'right' answers to students who are dependent on being told" (Castle, 1997, p.65). This description of constructivist teaching implies that early childhood student teachers who allow children to construct knowledge will follow teaching methods and beliefs designed to encourage thinking.

Ann and Mary were able to look at the big picture in their interpretations of how children were understanding. They saw their roles as teachers as facilitators of learning. They were aware of the specific misunderstandings and mistakes children made, but did not try to correct children's thinking by telling them what they had done incorrectly. Instead, Mary and Ann's planning, questions, and actions indicated that they used children's work to formulate plans which would build on children's need to make sense of their world. Mary and Ann searched for ways to enable children to show understanding in ways other than the prescribed school curriculum materials provided. They valued the process children went through to understand concepts and did not concentrate on grading a final product.

Meg, Gwen, and Liz used their observations of children's work to prescribe for children exactly what they had done wrong and how to correct it. All three gave thought to the big ideas they wanted children to come away with, but could not keep this in mind when "teaching". Creative writing activities became opportunities to correct handwriting or to grade for punctuation. Illustration was seen simply as creative expression and another opportunity to point out to children that they were not doing their "best work".

Margaret seemed to have no interest in using children's work for either understanding children's thinking or prescription. Her descriptions of the work done by the first graders was done in a dismissive fashion with no motivation to uncover children's understandings. She could only use children's work to let me know or to let her cooperating teacher know that she had "taught" something. She

acknowledged that children enjoyed looking at their work and reading it to the class, but this seemed incidental to her role in the classroom. There were no questions asked about what children got out of reading each other's work.

## Summary

The six early childhood student teachers in this study held six distinct perceptions of themselves as teachers. Asking them to discuss and describe children's work was one way to uncover essential themes of reflection. These themes can be described as reflecting on authentic activities, reflecting on individual children's needs versus student teacher's needs, and reflecting on construction of knowledge versus prescriptive teaching.

By focusing on children's work, the student teachers were asked to reflect on their own teaching and what children were learning in their student teaching classrooms. A phenomenological study highlights what meaning is made of the experience being studied. The essence of reflective practice and thought was highlighted through the written words, interviews and practice of the participants.

The guiding questions of this study were answered by each student teacher in unique ways. The first question about what theories preservice early childhood teachers use was fairly clear. Mary and Ann both seemed to use constructivist theory to explain children's learning while Meg, Gwen, Liz and Margaret stuck to learning as transmitted knowledge.

The second question; what understanding do preservice teachers have of the importance of documentation of

children's work was a little less clear. None of the student teachers were in classrooms where cooperating teachers made consistent efforts to use children's work to document learning. Gwen knew that her cooperating teacher showed parents work children had done, but it was usually the same work for each child so comparisons could be made. Ann and Mary tried to hold on to evidence of children's learning by keeping work related to the topics they taught. Liz and Meg only referred to portfolios in passing and Margaret was totally unaware of what her cooperating teacher kept.

The third question had to do with the nature of preservice teachers' reflective practice in relation to the documentation of children's work. Ann and Mary spoke of the evidence of children's abilities by looking for expressive writing and drawing. Gwen was able to identify individual children's strengths and weaknesses based on their written work, but designed the work to be teacher directed. Liz and Meg only seemed to see children's work as opportunities for prescriptive direction, while Margaret exhibited little interest in why children's work was not what she expected.

The last question; how do preservice teachers perceive their abilities to reflect on their own practice during student teaching, brought up issues of autonomy. Ann and Mary both indicated that they wanted to reflect on children's work, but had to try very hard to create opportunities for children to produce meaningful work. They did not consider filling in blanks on worksheets very meaningful. Margaret was in a good situation for reflecting, but did not carry through with any problem identification that she seemed to feel she could solve. Most of the problems she did identify had

sources that she felt were out of her control. Gwen identified several problems and reflected on their causes and came up with possible solutions. However, her reflections were not critical, she did not question why certain topics were important. Meg and Liz perceived few problems and the problems they did identify, such as, classroom control, were not closely studied. They did not see their role in the classroom as having to identify problems or reflect on causes. They were there to fulfill the cooperating teacher's wishes or meet requirements of the university program.

A deeper understanding of what teaching means to early childhood student teachers was sought. The results of this study will generalize to other student teachers only to the degree to which they resonate with the experiences of others. Each group of early childhood student teachers will have many individual ways of knowing, however, by focusing on the understanding of our students we can hope to facilitate their own construction of knowledge about what it means to be a teacher. The impact of this kind of knowing is tempered by the tacit knowledge of the reader.

# CHAPTER V

## THE STUDY

This study attempted to uncover the reflective thought and practice of early childhood student teachers by asking them to talk about children's work. The current emphasis in the professional literature on documenting children's learning was part of the reason for focusing on children's work. Another part was the pedagogical desire to strengthen the early childhood teacher's understanding of the impact of teacher's practice on children's learning.

I was constructing knowledge of the learning process of the early childhood student teachers in my study just as the student teachers were constructing knowledge of the children's learning process in their student teaching classrooms. A constructivist lens was used because of the need to understand learning and teaching as a converging, complex activity.

Though the student teachers each brought unique ways of seeing and understanding to the study, three shared essential themes of teaching emerged from the data. These themes were carried out and acted on in six different ways by the student teachers. Understanding what the themes were can help in the ability of the teacher educator to support or confront the theories early childhood student teachers bring to their practice.

By organizing the early childhood student teacher's understanding into three shared themes of Authentic Learning, Children's Needs versus Teacher's Needs and Construction of

Knowledge versus Prescriptive Teaching, it is not meant to imply that construction of knowledge can be divided into neatly understood groups for quantification. Rather, it is to highlight the complexity of teaching and learning.

The study also identifies the context of these student teachers in order to present a picture of their understanding at the moment. They were involved in a process of developing and understanding. Some of them brought a deeper reflective attitude to their student teaching and were therefore at a different place in their ability to reflect on the meaning of children's work.

## INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

Interpretation, in a qualitative study, requires that the researcher "gain access to the multiple perspectives of the participants" in order to "understand and interpret how the...participants...construct the world around themselves" (Glesne, 1999, p. 5). In this study, it is necessary to look at the university program's influence on the student teacher's construction of knowledge about themselves as teachers and their role in children's lives.

As described earlier, the university program these particular student teachers had experienced, did not base its program on reflection. There were assignments that asked for reflective responses and instructor responses in the form of questions were designed to further support reflective thinking. However, the program did not describe itself as a reflective teacher education program in terms of its goals. The student's perception of reflection tended to be that of

writing. They would comment that they were tired of reflecting, when they meant they were tired of writing.

One of the program's stated objectives was the development of child-centered teaching through the guidelines of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The NAEYC's guidelines support developmentally appropriate practice. Teachers are encouraged to consider developmentally appropriate practice with children, birth through age 8.

Developmentally appropriate practice guidelines influenced the student teachers in my study. Mary, Gwen, and Ann used developmentally appropriate practice guidelines to question what they were doing and what they saw. It was the discrepancy between their understanding of why the guidelines were meaningful and what they saw enacted in the classroom that seemed to provoke reflection. Margaret, Liz and Meg, however, rarely questioned the differences between the guidelines and what they saw or planned in their student teaching classrooms. For them, it was as if the guidelines only pertained to preschool classrooms, or the university's child development lab.

Asking the student teachers to reflect on children's work seemed to have the greatest affect on Mary and Ann. Mary was able to use a heightened awareness of a child's learning process to enrich the curriculum. Ann analyzed children's work for connections to authentic learning. It was hoped that specifying a focus on children's work would provoke the reflective ability of all of the student teachers. However, even after university class lectures on the value of documenting children's work, practice planning

documented activities in the child development lab and a discussion about it with me, Margaret, Liz and Meg could offer little in the way of meaningful interpretation of children's work. Their interpretations remained prescriptive and image bound.

There did seem to be a positive effect on the amount of discussion during supervisory visits when the student teachers were focusing on children's work. It is apparent from reading the transcripts of all of the student teachers' interviews that they were much more descriptive and engaged when talking about the work being done by children in their classrooms than when they were talking about their memories and experiences in school. Margaret, Liz and Meg went from brief responses to more complete narrative answers.

## IMPLICATIONS

### Professionalism in Teaching

Professional organizations have more influence today in the preparation, certification and development of teachers than ever before (Darling-Hammond et.al., 1999). The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has identified five core principals of the philosophical beliefs of its writings. They are: commitment to students and their learning, subject matter knowledge and teaching, management and monitoring of student learning, systematic thinking about their own practice and learning and active membership in learning communities.

The National Board describes teachers who learn from

systematic thinking about practice and experience as "models of educated persons...(with) the capacities that are prerequisites for intellectual growth: the ability to reason and take multiple perspectives, to be creative and take risks, and to adopt an experimental and problem-solving orientation" (p. 57). Standard VI: Reflective Practice states, "Teachers regularly analyze, evaluate, and strengthen the quality and effectiveness of their work" (National Association for the Education of Young Children, p. 93).

The use of children's work to self-assess teaching effectiveness, is stated explicitly as part of reflective practice by the National Board. This self-assessment starts in the university classroom when students plan activities for children, carry them out and reflect on the results.

My study highlights the difficulty student teachers have reflecting on their practice. For Margaret, Liz and Meg, "the ability to reason and take multiple perspectives, to be creative and take risks and to adopt an experimental and problem-solving orientation" (NAEYC, 1996), is questioned. Their prescriptive interpretation of children's work superceded their ability to see what the learning task meant for individual children. Margaret could not identify ways to experiment with the curriculum to solve problems. Liz and Meg allowed their teaching behavior to be strictly dictated by the traditions of their respective classrooms.

Mary and Ann experimented with the limits of the classroom quite successfully. They saw opportunities to adapt to the needs of the classroom teacher without abandoning the needs of the children by being creative problem solvers.

My study supports the continued expectation for student

teachers to exhibit professional orientations. If classroom teachers must analyze their own teaching and what it means to children's learning, then we need to support and facilitate the growth of reflective, critical analysis and thinking in student teachers. By having early childhood student teachers focus on children's work, we can strengthen the knowledge base they will need when they are in their own classrooms.

## Teacher Education

A major factor shaping the learning of the early childhood student teachers is what they've seen modeled by classroom teachers throughout their years as students. Mary M. Kennedy writes, "...the received wisdom model is less useful when teachers are expected to learn a version of practice that they have not already examined for thirteen years, for it does not include a place for teachers to learn alternatives to traditional teaching" (1999, p.56). The early childhood student teachers in my study had had thirteen or more years of learning about teaching by observing their teachers. This "received wisdom" is a powerful image of what teaching is all about. Mary Kennedy goes on to say "...teachers' ideas become more and more dominated by prescriptions as they move closer and closer to the action of teaching" (1999, p.69). This was true for the early childhood student teachers, but especially true for those student teachers who I identified as being non-reflective. This "model of received wisdom" became the most limiting factor of all for some of the student teachers and has been identified in other studies as being part of a

practical theory of teaching (Bolin, 1990; Doyle, 1995; Halliday, 1996 and Rodgers, 1997).

All of the student teachers mentioned influential teachers, but the more non-reflective student teachers embraced the behaviors of their former teachers and the teachers in their cooperating classrooms. They explicitly stated that their cooperating teachers gave them wonderful experiences and problems were rarely identified. When problems did arise, the cooperating teachers were seen as the only real source of answers.

I would argue that putting great emphasis on developmentally appropriate guidelines, without an explicitly stated belief in critical reflective practice, encourages dichotomous thinking. The guidelines are written to be used by teachers in a thoughtful, tactful way. However, without an emphasis on teacher thinking and reflective practice, the guidelines tend to become a list of things to do, without understanding the reasons behind their development. Early childhood students need to know that the foundational theories of developmentally appropriate practice are more important than the guidelines themselves.

Constance Kamii says that constructivist classrooms are classrooms where students argue, with each other and with the teacher (personal notes, 1998). Early childhood students need to argue their opinions which will help make their practical theories more explicit. They need to hear different perspectives to understand that learning is a multiplicative process and not a linear path. Until they understand this about learning, they may believe that the DAP guidelines are set in stone instead of being templates for practice.

It is not enough to simply tell early childhood preservice teachers that they are to closely observe children and reflect on what they see in order to inform their practice. Teacher education classes need to allow for time - time to describe observations of children's work, formulate questions about what was seen, advance opinions about meaning, analyze answers, confront biases, and develop ideas for future practice.

Specific situations and problems can be presented in case analysis or video taped teaching activities. Children's work can be brought into the teacher education classrooms so that students can discuss, argue and analyze their perceptions of what the children's work means. Real problems, with real children can be the focus of the teacher education program. Teacher educators can then act as guides and facilitators, drawing connections to theory and highlighting appropriate practices.

Korthagen and Kessels write that we should not focus "on the question of whether teacher education should start with theory or practice instead of the more important question of how to integrate the two in such a way that it leads to integration within the teacher" (1999, p.4). Their paper goes on to describe a teacher education program that used a "realistic approach" (p.14) to teacher education. This means that student teachers are guided through reflection and problem solving by teacher educators and cooperative teachers who are themselves highly reflective. The situations being reflected on should come from problems and interests identified by the student teachers themselves. The university classes should mirror the integration of teaching by not

making clear distinctions between subject matter.

I agree with this model, but I would add the centrality of the child in the reflective process of the student teacher. By having the student teachers examine the learning process of individual children, we might be able to support a change in their perspective of teaching and planning. Documenting a specific child's learning would support a more thoughtful approach to curriculum planning by the student teacher.

## Teaching as a Reflective Process

How do we enable student teachers to take their "received wisdom" about teaching and create new paradigms for practice? Emphasizing reflective thought and practice is one method identified in this study. By asking early childhood student teachers to think about children's work, I supported the "child-centeredness" of the university program, and at the same time, stretched the student teacher's practical theories of teaching.

A variety of methods have been identified as having an effect on the reflective practice and ability of student teachers (Bolin, 1990; Clarke, 1995; Dana & Westcott, 1997; Dieker, 1995; Doyle & Holm, 1998). Many of these methods have the student teachers reflect on their behavior and planning. Few of them, however, have the students focus on the learning of the students in their care.

Since my lens is that of a constructivist, I wanted to provoke the student teachers' thinking. I wanted to put them in a position of having to look at their own learning in a

different light. The method I chose was to have the early childhood student teachers respond to questions about children's work in a reflective, thoughtful manner. This method also benefited me in my quest for better understanding of the early childhood teacher's experience in learning to become a teacher.

Christine Chaille refers to the role of the teacher as "an active facilitator, setting up educational contexts, carefully observing young children as they engage in learning, interacting when and where this encourages theory building, modifying the environment and activities based on what children do and how they interact, and supporting children in their interactions with others so that they learn how to resolve conflicts, express themselves, and interact constructively" (1997, p.13). This role of the teacher was the one I wanted to emphasize for the early childhood student teachers. Through a pedagogical lens, I saw the purpose of my study as being an added opportunity for growth, for both the student teachers and me. Construction of knowledge about reflective practice is a time consuming, process oriented activity. The university program sets the stage for the growth of a professional way of thinking.

## Future Research on this Topic

How do we teach reflective practice to student teachers if there are no classrooms practicing reflection? How do we maintain our own ability to reflect and ask questions of our own practice? These are two important questions that need to be researched further.

Ideally, we would be able to follow these six early childhood student teachers into the classrooms they will call their own. We would be able to document their development and growth as reflective practitioners as they negotiate the hills and valleys of the first year teacher. Perhaps, by studying this journey, we would be able to go back to our students in early childhood education with a renewed hope of facilitating reflective practitioners. We could build on this community of learners by never thinking that we have reached the end of a journey, that we have found "the answer" and that there is nothing more to be learned.

We need to ask more questions about the ability of early childhood student teachers to reflect on children's work. How much assessment of children's learning can be done by a student teacher who is only in the classroom for approximately eight weeks? How important is the teacher's knowledge of the total child to the teacher's ability to assess? What kinds of children's work would be the easiest for the student teacher to assess and have more information than just a child's ability to parrot the right answer? Research into possible answers for these questions would require a very close working relationship with teachers in schools. If we want to focus on children's learning then we need to be in real classrooms, working alongside student teachers and their cooperating teachers.

To extend the research done in this study and to help make connections between theory and practice, cooperating teachers need to be part of the conversation. According to Sluss and Minner, professional development programs, which emphasize practioners' roles in teacher preparation, have had

positive results (1999). At the same time, this can be one of the hardest parts of teacher preparation. Deborah Ball and David K.Cohen write about the "politeness norm that dominates most current teacher discourse" (1999, p.27). They recognize the accepted mode of behavior for teachers to see differences of belief and opinion as something wrong, as one of the roadblocks to productive conversation. By including the cooperating teachers more, traditional lines that create gaps between theory and practice might be blurred.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

LaBoskey (1994) found that the nonreflective student teachers in her study did not develop more reflective skill during their university experiences. However, the reflective students demonstrated significant growth in their ability to reflect. A similar phenomenon occurred with the student teachers in my study. From the beginning of the semester to the end, I did not observe significant changes in the ability of individual student teachers to reflect on practice. Those students who began the semester with few questions, complaints about the value of journaling and a "Common Sense" view of teaching, ended the semester relatively the same.

However, I believe that the students who showed an inclination to be reflective showed growth in their understanding of children's learning and their own teaching by being asked to observe and reflect on children's work. They were able to recognize in themselves a development of understanding. They discussed the things they were surprised about and how they had grown as teachers.

By being a participant in this study, I was able to document their thinking and practice. The most reflective student teachers in my study were able to ask critical questions of their own learning, the children's learning and the school culture. The least reflective student teachers jumped into the stream of school culture and allowed themselves to be swept along. In general, they showed no real interest in developing and maintaining caring relationships with individual children.

Just as we talk about children's construction of meaning and the importance of knowing individual children's understandings, we need to know individual student teachers' understandings. Each early childhood student teacher had unique themes found in her words and practice and there were essential themes shared by all and enacted in unique ways. We cannot hope to effect learning for early childhood student teachers with generalized assignments which only require "correct" answers. For learning and development to take place, we will have to view each student as an individual with unique ways of knowing.

I would recommend that university programs which hope to prepare reflective, thoughtful, and caring teachers, make construction of knowledge about teaching more critically analytical. If every class the early childhood students take has as its stated purpose the development of critically reflective practitioners, students might learn to see the problems inherent in teaching as problems demanding reflection and professionalism.

The construction of knowledge needs to be thoroughly self-analyzed. Once the student has come to know herself or himself as a learner, that process might be captured for children.

In a quantitative study, there would be the expectation that findings could be generalized to a certain population. In a qualitative study such as this one, the findings contribute to our greater understanding of the unique perspectives individuals bring to learning. By understanding these unique perspectives, we can begin to develop our own knowledge about how to facilitate the growth of professional, caring and thoughtful teachers.

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# APPENDIXES

# Appendix A

## Mary

**Autobiographical Paper:**

I attended a large elementary school from kindergarten to fourth grade. There were about six or seven classes per grade, with about 20 students or so in each class. My family moved during my fourth grade year, and I then attended a small school with only two classes per grade. It was quite a change, but I really enjoyed the smaller, personal setting. My memories of school are pleasant; I have always enjoyed school and learning. I remember being involved in various activities and school programs, as well as spending time with friends. While I remember liking all of my teachers and enjoying their classes, the things I remember most are the times spent out of school with my mother. That is where I truly developed the desire to learn. The list of activities and experiences, such as going to the library, the park, or just "playing" at home, is endless. She constantly nurtured my curiosities and helped me learn new skills. I also remember her always being very involved in the classrooms that I was in.

My favorite teacher was my kindergarten teacher. I remember our classroom being full of materials and items to explore with. We also had a mini-trampoline that we all loved to play on. She was such a kind and loving teacher, and gave each child in the class opportunities to learn and grow. Several experiences are still very vivid in my mind. There was a girl in our classroom who was paralyzed from the waist down, and obviously was in a wheel chair. Periodically, my teacher would let the girl's mom bring some of her equipment (wheel chairs, scooters, etc.) to class and we all got to take turns riding in and using them. There was also a diabetic boy in our class, and I remember the teacher letting him show us how he got his shots. He used the needle and poked it through an orange to demonstrate it. These experiences helped me learn to accept and appreciate differences in all people, as well as recognize similarities I had with others, even though they may seem very different. It was also very educational to learn about different health issues. I have always been grateful to this teacher for her allowing me the opportunities to learn some important lessons, that sadly, some people never learn. Since kindergarten, I have never been afraid of people who are different.

I feel very fortunate to not have any bad elementary experiences that stick out in my mind. I remember all of my elementary school teachers' names and what their classrooms looked like. I do not recall having a teacher that I did not like. I guess that makes me very lucky, but may also mean that I had some great teachers. I am glad that I have so many positive examples of teaching to look back on.

My main interest in teaching came from my desire to be a good mother. I love children and have always eagerly anticipated the day when I could start my own family. Now that my husband and I are expecting our first child, my desires of teaching are even greater-my dreams will soon be a reality! I feel that if I can be successful in giving my own children the opportunities and experiences they need to be successful in like, then I will have accomplished by greatest task in teaching.

So far, working with Pre-K age children has been the most fun for me. When my children get a little older, I would really enjoy working with children in his age range. Their ability and excitement to learn is overwhelming, and their simplicity is inspiring. I am confident that in teaching my own children, as well as future students I may have, my positive experiences as a child combined with my later development as a teacher, will be a great asset to me.

**Journal:**

I am a patient person and understand that some people need more time than others to accomplish certain tasks I enjoy watching children grow from having a lot of personal choice and control over themselves.

I feel I am not as strong in adapting curriculum and instruction to a wide range of abilities in the classroom. I want all children to be successful, but I have a difficult time planning activities that will be challenging to all not just some of the students.

As stated above, I hope to gain knowledge and experience in the areas of curriculum and instruction, so that I can effectively meet all student's needs. I also hope to gain a better understanding of how a teacher can be in control of the class but still allow lots of child-directed activities.

**First Interview**
**October 14, 1999**

Sara: What are the most important things teachers do?

Mary: I guess, overall, I think it is the attention and importance they make on each child, indirectly areas of self-esteem. I guess basically, self-esteem is a general term that is a lot of the curriculum or part of teaching. It's important because kids- obviously they have to learn stuff- but that's not the things they remember about from that year or that teacher or grade.

Sara: So you do remember...

Mary: My kindergarten teacher was very before her time- I'm not that old!, but I guess she was before her time. There was this girl in my kindergarten class who was paralyzed from the waist down and my teacher would let her Mom bring in lots of equipment, she had scooters, wheelchairs, stuff and we got to ride in them and got familiar with it. I remember it being fun-of not being afraid. Eventually she was one of my best friends - at first I was scared and I really feel ever since kindergarten that I've been open to people who are different from me. I see that - that's the most vivid memory.

Sara: How do you think you learned best?

Mary: With interacting with things, with materials and people. The teacher probably set an example, in that I expected my teacher to not be afraid, she showed me it's ok, so...not consciously. I mean, I didn't recognize that she was showing...I'm sure it was conscious on her part...I don't think most...

Sara: Why do you think most teachers would do it now?

Mary: By law, they have to...I think good teachers feel that because it has a positive impact - I think teachers know now that's what they need...this type of experience, to learn ...

Sara: Do you remember specific learning activities that you got a lot out of?

Mary: (Long pause) I guess I never thought about this before, I mainly remembered stuff like...we had a boy who had diabetes in my kindergarten class...he had to give himself shots and he brought an orange to school and showed us, with the orange how he did it. I remember what he looked like, where we all sat on the rug. I didn't think he was weird. I don't remember...like a teacher planned...I didn't like 3rd grade! We had to listen...she played these records with the multiplication tables on them...I hated it!

Sara: How much did she do that?

Mary: It seemed like we did it everyday!

Sara: Did your Mom keep your school work?

Mary: Oh yeah, she had boxes of stuff...Oh! in junior high school she paid me to put all of that stuff in a scrapbook so I had to go through all of it...it was so much fun, I had forgotten doing so much of that stuff...I got to go back and the stuff...I had this recipe book that I read...we-this was in kindergarten too!-we made a class recipe book. Everyone picked a recipe from home and came back to school and told it to the teacher...she wrote it down...I've read it once a year-I don't remember doing it-they are hilarious!. I do remember the activity, obviously we couldn't write our own recipes and she never said "Are you sure you want to say that?- I do remember!

Sara: Do you ever think about what Mom's will keep when you are planning an activity?

Mary: No! I think what are the kids going to gain, ok, like what we they learn, but not long term.

Sara: Is that important?

Mary: I remember a lot of positive things in kindergarten- like people who were different. Like it helps me today - I don't think every little thing will be long term.

Sara: Did your Mom keep report cards?

Mary: Yes - but I don't really like report cards. I've always thought they were unfair, I'm the eldest - I always did extra well in school without trying very hard, until college!. I have a sister 2 years younger and a brother 2 years younger than her, he had a pretty extreme learning problem, he never made better than a C. It did not bother him, but I could see it being unfair to him and other people. I'm a black and white person, if it does everyone good, it's fair. I have a real problem with rewards, they discriminate against kids. They are not fair to the kids who cannot sit still.

Sara: Was that the only kind of assessment you remember?

Mary: That's all I remember.

Sara: How do you think your brother should have been assessed?
Mary: I think there should be many different ways a child should be assessed or whether they should go to the next grade. A report card automatically puts everything into a separate category with math, spelling, reading...it doesn't tell if you can get a long with other kids, if you are good building with blocks or organizing games on the playground. They say these things (report card subjects) matter but I think it's the opposite. You need some (standards) assessment, you can't (simply) move children a long who can't read, but it shouldn't be the sole assessment.

**Interview #2**
**November 29, 1999**

Sara: What did you bring to talk about today?

Mary: I had a few things - it was hard to get stuff to bring because a lot of kids wanted to keep their stuff. These were center activities. These were thumb print pictures - they could make anything they wanted out of their thumb prints - this little boy - you can see he hurries through everything. And on this book, they were supposed to draw the number of objects and label with the number, he did it quickly, he didn't write the number - it's pretty sparse - he didn't even put 5 things on this page. It was interesting to compare their work - this one was wonderful, look at her drawing - she does better than my examples!

Sara: Did you see him - the child who hurried - working on these?

Mary: I knew he was working at the center (didn't watch him complete project). At first there no words written and it's that way every time. He's really smart - he's fluent in Spanish and English...

Sara: Is he Spanish?

Mary: Mexican-American

Sara: Are his parents on the faculty at the university?

Mary: I don't thing so - well, his father might be - I'm not sure what they do, I get them mixed up.

Sara: Why do you think he goes so fast?

Mary: I'm not sure. Mrs. C. told me his dad is strict and pushes him - not in a bad way, you know, just lets him know what he wants, but is not a laid back person - I'm sure that has something to do with it. His writing though is increasing, he writes at least 3 sentences and with other kids it's like pulling teeth to get them to write - here are other kids - he sounds every word out so well. I don't know if he just does like this - but at first I thought he was bored, but he's fast - like at recess, he is always the first out the door, wants to be first in line. Just seems to be a part of him.

Sara: Were you thinking about him when you planned this activity?

Mary: No, not specifically, there's another little boy at the same level but...so this activity...was the big, class thing we did and I felt all the children could do it at their own speed and so I...I wasn't keeping him specifically in mind - but I felt I was keeping high, low and middle abilities in mind. I tried to do things with the shapes so that the activity wasn't diminishing anyone's intelligence, but I didn't do this for children who didn't know their shapes.

Sara: Have you considered gender differences?

Mary: I haven't noticed it a whole lot. On the flannel board stories...that's where I noticed it the most. The boys weren't as meticulous and neat like the girls. I don't feel like I saw whole lot of things that would be gender differences - I wasn't specifically looking for that. When I did the pilgrim unit...I read the Mayflower stories because one is about a girl and one is about a boy and a lot of girls may have a hard time relating to a story about a boy. It was interesting, their Mayflower journals showed that kids identified with the kids in the stories. I looked for the Mayflower activity about the size of the boat, but I couldn't find it and I wasn't going to tell them that "this was the size of the Mayflower" when I didn't know the exact size.

Sara: Well, it was just a measuring activity - the teacher wanted the children to solve a problem using measurement...What else did you bring to talk about?

Mary: There are two children in class that really struggle - one, the one we had problems with the Mom?, he was struggling. I was so impressed with his effort - he tried so hard to sound out words he wanted to say (in his journal). That was the first time either one of us (coop. teacher and student teacher) saw him do that on his own. We had told him how to spell words before, but this was the first time he tried it on his own, he knew what he wanted to write. A lot of times he would just copy others or from the board...but they moved!

This girl, she's a very nice artist, it's her favorite thing to do is draw. A lot of them kind of missed the point of what they were supposed to do for their book about animals getting ready for winter (unit on hibernation). Like on this page, an insect does this...some of the pages she did the animal activity instead (dogs like to bark). It was cute - they read them to the class, it was fun and I enjoyed seeing them make their books. Before we started I took a book out and explained there's a cover, a title page...I encouraged them to draw and color. Most colored something in their book.

Sara: How much time did they have to do their books?

Mary: They worked on them all week, off and on - the ones who were through read them on Thursday and the rest finished up the next week.

Sara: Do they do many activities like that?

Mary: No, that's why my big things were on purpose. They do a lot of things with pencil and paper, she keeps them busy. I've never seen a project though. We were talking about the cookbook I did in kindergarten? I tried to use that (thinking of meaningful projects that are kept) when I was planning. Like the flannel board stories, I think they'll remember them for a long time.

Sara: What did your cooperating teacher think of the projects?

Mary: She took pictures of them reading to the class, so she thought they were good enough to take pictures, she thought they were cute. When I planned for them to do these books they illustrated, she (coop. teacher) didn't like it at all that they were going to draw these things, she wanted them to trace stuff, she said, what if they can't draw? I've done this with 3 year olds...I knew they could do it because this summer I did it with older kids, I knew the first graders could do something similar...they could make up a story...um, so it was a different point, concept and then the kids did it fine and I knew they were capable.

Sara: Why do you think that was her first reaction?

Mary: Well, it was all on that first Friday of the first week and she wasn't happy with my planning, the time she criticized me?...we hadn't talked about my lesson plans,so then that Friday she was telling me things she didn't like. But...I think I did...I wanted to do things they could participate in...I grouped the kids for the flannel board stories and this one group had the lowest boy, he's being tested - he's already been in transitional first grade and still doesn't know his letters and can only count to 11 - that group was absolutely precious, I really liked doing this because they really enjoyed doing it and they did such a good job. since they worked in groups of 3 they were able to delegate very easily, you know, if one ...we had one that's struggled all year and one that's shy, but draws well - he drew the detailed pictures and the one that talked presented to the class, the story. It was interesting to see them divvy up tasks without knowing what they were doing - I didn't have to tell them, now you do this part, and you do, you know?

Sara: They were all able to feel success?

Mary: Yeah, they were able to do it without a lot of teacher...some groups told different parts of the story, some had one child read the whole story. It was definitely my favorite activity.

Sara:What did they do with these flannel board stories? Did they leave them in a reading center...?

Mary: If I was doing this in my classroom I would have them leave them there to tell the story again, but she (coop. teacher) didn't even ask them if they wanted to...she just took pictures and sent them (the stories) all home.
Sara:Did you bring something else?

Mary: This little boy , the one being tested? - he did this with paper attribute shapes on his own. No one else did anything like this, I had to pinch myself!

Sara: Didn't it take him a long time? It's so detailed.

Mary: No, he really got into this and figured out that if he put a drop of glue where he wanted the white pieces he could just go around and then put the paper down...it was like...dum,dum,dum...there!

Sara: Do you have any explanation for this?

Mary: I've been paying attention to him ever since I saw this...first graders here do this Native American patterning activity and they made these belts that were supposed to look like beaded patterns, only he and one other child really had something that looked detailed and actually had a pattern...I think he's able to visualize things like this for some reason, I don't really know...we did an activity with clouds and he could visualize shapes...he can recreate things in his mind - I don't know enough about him and why he struggles with everything else.

Sara: Have you read much about Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences theory?

Mary: No, I've heard of it, but I haven't really read about it.

# Appendix B

## Margaret

**Autobiographical Paper:**

As I was growing up, I recall that going to school was a big part of my life. I do remember that there were good and bad times during this experience. I was fortunate to spend first through sixth grade at the same elementary school. I was a block from my house which made it very easy to get to. It was an average size school, in a large school district that consisted of 17 elementary schools. I remember having about 25-30 children in each of my classes. I was a child who never wanted to get in trouble and always wanted the teacher to like and be proud of me. I loved being the teacher's helper as often as possible. I remember in my early years of school I was often called the teacher's pet. Sometimes, I liked being called that and other times it hurt my feelings. I also recall that at times I had difficulty in some subjects that we studied. I would get upset and would want to quit trying. I would always take things very personally and would always try to do my best at everything I did.

One of my very favorite teachers that I had was Miss S. I was fortunate to have her for second and fourth grade. I feel that this benefited me in two ways: I was already used to her teaching style and I knew that she was a teacher that I really liked and trusted. She was so kind and caring to me and gave me the attention that made me feel, at times, that I was her only student in the class. She was able to focus on each child as if they were the only one in the class. I feel that this helped me and many others in numerous ways. She was able to bring out my strengths as well as the weaknesses that I needed to improve on in a way that didn't make me feel that she was condemning or putting me down. One thing that I will always remember about Miss S. is that she always had a smile on her face through rain or shine. I feel that this improved the attitude of the classroom atmosphere.

One of my least favorite teachers was Mr. P., who was my sixth grade teacher. I remember on the day I found out that he was going to be my teacher I began to cry. I did not want him to be my teacher at all. I heard and received the impression that he was a very stern and hard teacher. I know now that my fears were put inside my head from what other people had said. I remember that I felt very intimidated by him because he was a man. He made it very clear that he praised and gave more attention to the boys. This made me very upset because I felt that there was nothing I could do to make him proud of me. He would yell as the class at least two to three times a day which made us be sure that we wouldn't upset him in any way. I remember that sometimes during the year, he wouldn't really teach the material that he wanted us to learn. He would just give us the assignments to see if we knew what we were doing and what the right answers were. My sixth grade year was probably the very hardest for me throughout my elementary years. Especially, since I would be encountering a whole new atmosphere the next year in junior high, and Mr. P. was not doing a very good job in preparing me for it. Fortunately, I had an easier time adjusting to junior high than I thought I would.

I believe that it was either in first or second grade when the idea came into my head that I wanted to be a teacher. I remember very vividly that I would play school every afternoon after I had gotten home from school. I would always be the teacher, and if I was playing with my friends, they would be the students. I loved the feeling that I was trying to help others learn something. I loved the idea that I was in charge of a group of people and they had to listen to me. I believe that these feelings were instilled in me in kindergarten through second grade. In my early years of school, I had teachers who made it obvious to me that learning can be fun and that my teachers not only cared about me as a student but as an individual. These feelings continued to grow throughout my elementary and high school years. As I got older, it became very obvious to me that I had a deep interest in children and there was definitely no other job that I could picture myself doing other than teaching. Except for a few teachers throughout my whole school career, I was fortunate to receive teachers that made it evident to me that learning and to have an education is important. I want to be able to instill the same type of feelings in children in the most important time of their lives, when they are starting school I want them to feel good about themselves as I did, by caring about each individual child and help them see that they are important.

I love helping people, and I feel that teaching is a great way to help and make a difference in the life of a child.

**First Interview**
**October 18, 1999**

Sara: What's the most important thing teachers do?

Margaret: Oh! my, I hate questions like this - I've been thinking that there is something I'm going to leave out - I'm afraid there's something - I don't -something I'll forget to do as a teacher that'll make a difference because I'm not sure.

Sara: Do you have a sense of what that might be?

Margaret: Maybe - many different things - I don't know.

Sara: How do you learn best?

Margaret: I'm, was a visual learner and I like to work in groups with other people.

Sara: You still like to do that?

Margaret: Yeah, today she (coop. teacher) tried cooperative groups for the first time - it wasn't too bad.

Sara: What is one of your vivid early memories?

Margaret: In third grade the teacher had these table points - and I would form my own cards to keep track - I gave everyone points at my table and I'd get real mad if we got in trouble.

Sara: Did the other kids like that?

Margaret: I was the teacher's pet, I did everything I was told, never wanted to get in trouble.

Sara: You played school a lot?

Margaret: I had this chalkboard - played everyday.
Sara: Do you have siblings?

Margaret: A younger brother.

Sara: Did your mom keep you and your brother's work from school?

Margaret:We still have some of it, I think.

Sara: Have you ever looked at it or anything?

Margaret: Not in a while, it's in a box somewhere

Sara: What about report cards? Any good or bad experiences?

Margaret: Fifth and sixth grade were the hardest - got a C.

Sara: What happened?

Margaret: I cried over taking tests and we had a man teacher who was mean, favored boys over girls - he was mean! We thought he was gay for a while and then he got married.

Sara: How do you think this will affect you as a teacher?

Margaret: I don't want to favor anyone - I want to show kids the value of work - that it's not scary or hard.

Sara: Were your assessments fair?

Margaret: I think so.

**Second Interview**
**November 17,1999**

Sara: (I want to talk a little more about what we were talking about the other day, about your work that your Mother may...

Margaret: Oh yeah! I started thinking about that!

Sara: Why do you think Mom's keep some things but not others?

Margaret: Well...I guess they can tell what it is...what their child worked hard on. My Mom kept my book reports and tests I got As on. I'm kind of excited, I asked my Mom where my stuff is. She said it's in the attic and now I'm real interested in getting it down and looking through it...now I want to see what I did. It's kind of fun.

Sara: What did you bring to show me today...

Margaret: These are examples of stuff we did today. We talked about genres and specifically, comic strips. I wrote characteristics of comic strips on the board, you know, like speech bubbles, left to right movement of pictures. I showed them examples, like wind blowing a hat, there's a hat in the first picture...the last shows the hat blown off. Then they had to write their own comic strip. I told them to use their first grade spelling. (Indicates strip showing sun going down and different times showing) She has the time written up here and the sun...going down. She (indicates child who made strip) usually has more examples (work) than is necessary.

Sara: How many concepts do you see...think she is understanding?

Margaret: Well...she has time, invented spelling, she has a beginning, middle and end. She said this is 1:00, 3:30 and 5:00 and those are hour and a half increments every time...

Sara: How does this help you plan curriculum?

Margaret: I I know she has an understanding of time, parts of the day - I don't know - we've talked about different parts of the day and I don't know if this - last week we measure shadows - I don't know, she may have connected last Friday to today. (Refers to unit in book covering the concept of time) ...it's what you would expect, they understand the clock pretty well.

Sara: Would you have this student do the same thing in math as everyone else, even if she understood more?

Margaret: I don't know how I feel about it...you mean, like get something a little more advanced for her?...How would you do that...
Did this student explain why she did her pictures the way she did them? Did she explain why she chose to do it this way?

Margaret: After they're finished they're supposed to explain it to me and read it to me. She didn't say anything...

Sara: Did you ask questions about what she did?

Margaret: Not really.

Sara:(How did the others turn out?

Margaret: This is A's. He only writes to get something done. I said, "A, you need to tell a story." He said he just did 3 things - I said, you need to do more. When I sit down to do things with him he understands very well, but won't do it on his own. I gave them... two were talking about nutrition...I gave them each a letter. I was going to give three letters, but that was too hard. These (indicates pictures of foods whose names start with different letters of the alphabet) I basically gave all them all of the words. There are some letters that don't have foods, even when I tried to think of foods that started with the letters, I couldn't come up with any.

Sara: So you told her what to write?

Margaret: At first I was going to brainstorm ALL the letters, but I got to E and thought, this isn't going to work.

Sara: Was there any specific reason to choose 3 letters?

Margaret: I guess...you can read these (indicates other papers)...except for her, I don't think I gave them ideas. I wanted to make a class book, but there are only 21 kids. I know when we make a class book they love to get up and read their page.

Sara: You've seen them interact with class books?

Margaret: Yes

Sara: What did your cooperating teacher use during parent conferences?

Margaret: She kept the same things to show to parents...work that showed progress and interactive writing. She used report cards to show parents where they (the children) should be, like on Dolch words and other things where they should be. People who needed help...she would give them ideas on how or what to work on. The majority don't do it anyway...

Sara: How did the parents take this information?

Margaret: I realize that you learn a lot at parent conferences, it's easier to understand why some kids don't get it...like this child whose Mom is dying of Cancer, he always wants attention...he doesn't know she's dying, he just knows she's real sick, but sometimes he is clingy...

Sara: What would you keep for parent conferences?

Margaret: like the idea of showing progress, things that they do over and over...and keeping different stuff that shows understanding of concepts.

Sara: Do you think you will rely on report cards or portfolios?

Margaret: I'd probably do what my cooperating teacher does...she pulls the report card out to guide the conference and then she can pull the portfolio out to show examples of their work. I never thought about doing that, but (nods yes)...

Sara: Do you think there are any similarities between the child's portfolio and the one student teachers have to keep?

Margaret: I don't...ours is different...if they hadn't told us - WHAM - here's all you have to do, all at once. You know, if we could have been told...since we are the first group to have to have one, if we could have been told all along, it would have been better. For me, the portfolio I guess is good because I have things stored in my head - I have to go through my portfolio and have things triggered, I have to have things reviewed and be reminded of what I did.

**Journal**

10-11
This was my first week of student teaching and it definitely was interesting. Every day had its crazy parts. It was very hard at first, to get control of the children. I have realized that it is very hard for first graders to adapt to change. That was one of the most frustrating parts, but I know it will become easier as the days go on. This week we had the theme of day and night and bats. Some activities that were implemented included measuring bat wings, making quilts by using patterns, writing three facts about bats, making clocks and graphing what time they went to bed. I started to do the calendar at the first of the day. This is an area that I know will take time for the children to get used to.

10-25
This was my third week of student teaching. I really do enjoy working in this school and with first graders. Starting this week, I definitely have started being responsible for certain areas throughout the day more than I have before. On Monday, I started to do guided reading with the two higher reading groups that are in the class. I wasn't sure at first on how it would go. Reading is one main area where I do not feel real comfortable in teaching. Mrs. L. has done a great job in explaining to me how she does her reading groups and it has helped me feel more comfortable about this area. I am also staring to feel better about the whole area of phonics and how I will teach that as well. On Tuesday I did guided reading again and then on Wednesday I did a making words activity. I liked the making words activity. I am excited to be learning this type of material and what the easy ways are to teach it to the children. Thursday was a crazy day. We had school pictures, a birthday party for one of our students and you could definitely tell that the children know that Halloween was on the weekend. Thursday evening and Friday morning were interesting to be a part of because it was parent-teacher conferences. I am happy that I was a part of that and now I have a better idea of what they are like.

11-15
This is the week I am in charge of teaching everything. I wasn't too nervous because I was in the classroom last Tuesday by myself so I had an idea of what to expect. I enjoy teaching different lessons, but I wish they could focus, sit still and listen to me while I was teaching them. This has been the most frustrating thing in my teaching experience.

I have been reassured many times that my own class will not be like this. I guess it is kind of good I am getting the experience with this type of class so I will not be shocked if I happen to have a class like this in the future.
I feel that my cooperating teacher has been a great help and encouragement during this experience. I know that I need to work on is the age level of my lesson plans. I have found that with a couple of my plans, they have a been a little too hard for this class to do. I need to learn how to adapt and plan lessons that will meet my students needs and levels.

Children's Work
I was able to observe, collect, and see many different types of children's work during my student teaching experience. I feel that it was very interesting to see a child's work on the first day that I walked in the room and then to see how much that child progressed by looking at his work on the last day I was there. I feel that it is very important to keep a portfolio of each child's work so the teacher can have an actual record and assessment of the child's progress for their own benefit and others as well. I wish I was able to make a portfolio of each child during my experience. I feel that it would of been helpful to keep out again one day when I have a class of my own. Through my experience, I have learned that with my class, they loved to have their work displayed and to be read to all the other children. They also like the idea of being able to look at their work and their other classmates work, maybe a couple of days later. I tried to provide activities that would include a class book to cover that area.

# Appendix C

## Gwen

**Autobiographical Paper:**

In elementary school I was the type of student who always finished my work and stayed out of the way of others. I talked to my friends but was afraid to get in trouble in the classroom so I tried to stay quiet most of the time. In the first and second grade I was in a program for gifted students. They did not explain the criteria for entering this program but it made me feel special. I worked harder after entering this program because I thought they expected more of me.

I attended L. Elementary School. There were not over two classes for each grade level and sometimes only one class for (each) grade level. The school was set in a lower income neighborhood but I did not realize it at the time. I enjoyed every year I was at L. Each of my teachers made an impact on me except second grade. I have little memories good or bad of this year.

My favorite teacher was Mrs. J. Her class was both third and fourth grade. She was a very loud and strict (teacher) with her classes. When I first found out that I would be in her class I cried and asked my parents to find me a different teacher. Once I was in her class, I had the best year. It took getting used to her personality but in the end, she was the nicest teacher I had at L. Mrs. J. (kept) her class busy and fun. she made sure we used our time wisely. When we did something good, she would praise us in front of the entire class. She also had many art and music activities for us to get involved in.

My least favorite teacher was in junior high at T. She was my social studies teacher. Each day we did the same types of activities. These included worksheets, read aloud from the book, and read to ourselves. I was bored and unenthusiastic about the class. I later took other civics classes and found them very interesting which made me think it was the teaching style that influenced my views on this social studies class.

My decision to become a teacher was made for two main reasons. These are because I enjoy thinking of implementing activities for children and I enjoy the type of setting a school system has. I feel very comfortable in the classroom and excited at the same time. I believe that because I had a good experience in my elementary school it gave a reason to enjoy school. Teachers can have an impact on students and I have already watched this in my observations as a preservice teacher. I would like to see my students have the same impact.

**First Interview**
**October 18, 1999**

Sara: What is the most important thing teachers do?

Gwen: Um...they...I think they continue on teaching the child where they were...what they learned the previous year and also behavioral, like how they act in public. What I mean by that is like in first through third, on the level they were on...the advanced ones can be (?) and the ones below can catch up.

Sara: How would you know where they are?
Gwen: As far as assessment?...by looking at writing and listening to their reading, observe how they act in class. Looking at how they do math-if they get done soon, document how fast they get done, how well they know math or reading.

Sara: How did you learn best?

Gwen:Through visual aides - like if they, the teacher, had visual aides like numbers on the wall or if the teacher used visual aides, more than just listening.

Sara: So - you visualize. What's your most vivid memory?

Gwen: Anything? First grade, I remember learning my left from my right in first grade. I don't know why - I would picture myself in that classroom (first grade) when I was in second or third - I don't know why. That year was the only year they took our picture outside, other than school pictures. The teacher put our pictures on these posters and we put our favorite foods and things on it - my arm was broken, that's how well I remember that picture. That was first grade.

Sara: Did you like your first grade teacher?

Gwen: Yes, I don't think I remember a lot about the first grade - I think in 3rd or 4 th grade we had...I remember doing a lot on the computer with these little worksheets and that kind of thing. A bad experience?...I can't really remember...I think...I always got a long and never really said anything.

Sara: How do you think these memories will help you in teaching?

Gwen: I think it makes me pay attention - you have to, you know, have math, science but I'll always have activities they'll remember - like, how to get along with your friends and people. Be aware of activities you can do where they learn social things on top of learning core subjects.

Sara: Do you know what grade you want to teach?

Gwen: Just because I had a good experience in third in S, but I like second too.

Sara: Did your Mom keep a lot of your stuff from school?

Gwen:Yeah, but I haven't seen it or asked about it. I know we have a box from preschool through elementary.

Sara: What kind of assessment was used with you in school?

Gwen: It wasn't like grades...it was E's and U's, for uh...(unsatisfactory?) Yeah, I remember they were always good. If it was an S or something, my parents talked to me and my brother.

Sara: What did they talk to you about?
Gwen: If it (the S) was for talking too much or reading...why I thought it was like that or what I could do about it.

Sara: Is your brother younger? Was his experience similar to yours?

Gwen: They never compared us, we had pretty much the same experience. He may have had more problems with behavior in school, like on the playground. Now that I look back, I know school was easier for him.

Sara: Why was it easier for him?

Gwen: Well, it seems like I had to pay close attention and it seems that he didn't have to pay as close attention. He can just figure it out and I have to have prior knowledge on it.

Sara: Thinking about the kind of learner you are - does that affect your planning?

Gwen: When there are kids not paying attention - I go back and explain - and some don't! - but maybe it's just because I'm the type that needs - when I'm planning - if they don't know anything about this - I plan on what I need to tell them.

**Second Interview**
**November 17, 1999**

Sara: What did you bring?

Gwen: I don't know if this is what you want...these 2...I brought this boy's and two other students to compare his work and these 2 about their penmanship. OK, this is J and he...he's very creative and his higher level thinking, he'll really think about his answers. He answers in 3 sentences, but he spells everything wrong. There's some that can't spell, so they won't write - they get done , maybe half a page. He just writes invented spelling, so...

Sara: So these others...they don't write?

Gwen: I think it's good that he does that. (invented spelling) This is S, I brought some of her center work also. At first, she does first 3 (on page), but I don't understand anything she wrote. I know she was talking during the instructions so I asked her to move and she went and sat down and now all her answers match the questions. She also has higher thinking - I did know this and I wasn't surprised that these weren't hard questions for her to answer.

Sara: You knew she could do the work?

Gwen: I knew she could do it...she could do the work. If she gets to talk, she'll just play. I realized it was a good idea to move her away from her friends for her to be able to do quality work...This (indicates another paper) I brought to compare how they write (not spell) (page of boxes for sorting words alphabetically to then put in list form) On this one, there's so much stuff you can't read it. They had to write 4 words in this box - you can't tell what the words are on hers - and his...you can tell he lined things up and you can tell he knew he had a smaller box...

Sara: What is the meaning of this activity?

Gwen: Instead of going 1-20...instead of thinking out in their head they can list them in these boxes and by the time they get them all...they have sorted them and they can just list them over here. The first time they did it they were lost.

Sara: How do children learn best?

Gwen: I think they learn by listening to others - having new things to see - using their self-motivation...if they don't have self motivation they get distracted and being challenged with things other than what they do on a daily basis...

Sara: Like what?

Gwen: Like if we did this every week (indicating word sorting)...if shouldn't be repeated...like, there are other activities for doing ABC's, different ideas for same concepts.

Sara: And you would have different activities too...

Gwen: To keep their interests...if they didn't understand one activity, they might understand another. They don't always tell you that they don't understand.

Sara: Did the ABC activity make you think about meeting individual children's needs?
Gwen: At first, I thought you could blow up (make a larger projection of page) the spaces from this paper and give her bigger spaces to write in. (child who had trouble organizing words in space on worksheet) ...she could practice writing smaller. Giving her an activity to focus on the size of her writing and talk to her...explain about her writing being hard to read.

Sara: How would you do this?

Gwen: Maybe take the words on the board and give them lined paper and have them keep their writing above or below the lines...

Sara: How would you this child's needs?

Gwen: Go over and talk to her quietly about what she could concentrate on in her writing. Explain to her what she needs to work on, put her by the chalkboard or by the teacher.

Sara: Which kind of documentation would show growth?

Gwen: (Indicates paper with short answers) This would be better, it shows spelling, punctuation and higher thinking skills - this is copied from the board.

Sara: Do you think...you'll know what...what documentation you've seen, how your cooperating teacher does it?

Gwen: I'll probably do the same...like reading - as far as listening in small groups for fluency and understanding. We do...she uses report cards, math and reading scores for parent conferences. She tells them when she thinks scores were higher or lower than what child can understand...she went through every section of the report card, you know, and talked about their penmanship or how easily distracted they might be.

Sara: So you haven't seen a portfolio approach?

Gwen: Not really, but I've heard her talk about keeping things for portfolios, I guess for the end of the semester.

Sara: Keeping work and keeping notes that refer to past work?

Gwen:...(you can look at that information) before going to use of the objectives. Then you can look back at objectives to make sure objectives are being met...you can always check later. You can check children's work with the objectives and look at it and see what you really need to change to meet the objectives or the children's needs.

Sara: Going back to this ABC activity...what meaning does the child get from doing this?

Gwen: They can see how to alphabetize - they look for the beginning letter...it gets them used to writing words in alphabetical order.

Sara: Why is that important?

Gwen: So they can look up stuff in a dictionary. They have to know how to go to the e's or the e's. If they have to be in a line, they have to know where to go to get in line.

Sara: Do they do these things in class?

Gwen: They have to use guide words. We did an activity where they had to look up words in dictionaries. They have to learn to look at the top of the page instead of looking at whole sections, page after page.

Sara: So that activity was to use the dictionary for words given at random?
Gwen: Yes

Sara: How meaningful is that?

Gwen: It helps them know how to use the dictionary...to know how to look, you don't have to look through 40 pages of words. If they needed to know a definition...they've had practice - you don't have to walk them through the whole process every time. They use their blue books in class to look up words.

**Journal**

10-11

This was the first week I began full time student teaching at this school. Before this week I assisted with some daily classroom duties. These included one lesson a day, helping the children individually with their work, and taking the attendance. I was able to get a feel for the classroom and the children before having responsibility of the children on my own.
Beginning Monday I took the attendance and lunch count in the morning. Every morning there is a daily activity on the overhead called the Daily Bite. These are four problems ranging from math to grammar to social studies to problem solving. the children have done these all year long and are familiar with the morning procedure. After a few minutes when I feel they're finished with most of the Daily Bite I go over the answers. I now know how it feels to have twenty children looking at you for the answer while they come up with difficult questions. I like going over the Daily bite because it gives me practice writing on the overhead and I get a feel for what mood the class is in.
When Mrs. C. takes over and presents math and spelling lessons I give assistance on an individual basis. For instance, I walk around after the math is presented and look at the children's work. If I noticed they are having problems I sop and try to guide them through the lesson so they will better understand the concept.
I also began taking the class to other parts of the building for specials or other activities. I found it's hard to decide how much talking to allow in the halls. The children should be learning self-control and recognizing that when they're loud it disrupts the other classes. But, on the other hand they are at the age where it is hard to put yourself in other's shoes. Also, the children have so much energy and excitement that asking them to be completely silent is a huge request. so, I remind them before we walk through the halls what is expected and why we need to walk quietly through the halls. When I take the children to other classes I feel as if they are testing me to see how quiet I expect them to be and to see what I will do when they play in the halls. Once we start walking they seem to remember the rules.
This first week went by very fast. At the end of each day Mrs. C. and I looked over the lesson plans for the next day. I found that Mrs. C. tries to over plan to ensure we will have enough for the class to work on. I think this is good because I would rather have too much planned than to be unprepared for the day. Therefore, at the end of the day we look at the lesson plan for the current day and circle anything that needs to be covered on the following day. Then, we look at the next days lesson plans and change the format to fit in the needed lessons or remove lessons that won't be covered. We go through each part of the lesson plan and talk about what that lesson plan will entail.

Now that I am in the classroom on a regular basis I have begun to find out where materials and resources are stored. It's nice to find these things out early on so I can have more time to help and work within the classroom instead of asking where general materials are stored.
On Wednesday the Nature Club met to work on bird feeders and the outside of the school. I helped by organizing the children while they worked and keeping them on task. Even though this is a fun time the children had to guided to get work done on the butterfly garden and the green house. It was good for me to see how an after school program can work and who helps with it. There were two teachers and four parents volunteering for the Nature Club. I also attended a faculty meeting on Thursday at 8:00 AM. The meeting was to introduce a new social studies software program that works to teach maps, globes and other lessons about the earth. It was interesting and I was able to work with the students in our class to show them how to work the program and what they could learn from the program.

10-18
This week was Fall Break so the children only attended school on Monday and Tuesday. The teachers had an in-service on Wednesday. I continued to do the opening activities and worked with them on the calendar. The calendar is hard for some of the children to understand. By the time we finish with all the duties and the calendar half of the class is doing something else or lost. I can't tell if it's because the children don't understand the different parts of the calendar or if they are not used to it because it is not done daily.
I worked with my first reading group this week. I had observed and sat in on other reading groups that Mrs. C. taught. But, having my own reading group was a different experience. Each group is on a different level. I'm not sure what I'm supposed to write down once they are done reading to me. I discussed with them comprehension and the format of the book.
This week I started to evaluate my discipline procedures. For instance, when the children walk down the halls it is hard for me to encourage them in a nice way and at the same time make them realize I am serious. I have tried only a few strategies but even the children who normally listen seem to get bored with listening to directions. I feel like I need to find strategies that will capture their attention. This class seems to do fine if you can get them to pay attention for just a minute. They remind each other of the rules if you establish the rules up front. So, next week I may try a couple of new ways and see if they do better.
We had a faculty meeting this week to discuss things the teachers needed to review. It was very interesting to listen to some of the issues that the faculty brought up and how they were handled. i was asked to do morning duty in the cafeteria if the faculty meeting ran long. When I went to the cafeteria I had to keep the children quiet on my own. I felt more comfortable disciplining the children this week in the cafeteria than last week when Mrs. C. and I had morning duty every day. When we had duty last week I wasn't familiar with the rules and procedure of morning duty so I just tried to help when I could and noted the procedures. But on this particular day I was on my own and didn't have the convenience of another teacher working with me so I had to make decisions on my own.
The topic of study this week was maps and globes. We started it and will continue through the end of next week. This topic is very interesting to me so I will be guiding the children through most of the activities that concern maps and globes. Mrs. C. has been helpful in working with me to find activities that I can do with the children and to be involved in the class when I'm comfortable. She hasn't thrown me into any activities without discussing the activity with me first. So far I feel like I'm having a good experience in this school. Although, I sometimes feel overwhelmed with the paperwork that is required by the school and district, not to mention the classroom documentation.
This was a short week but the high point was when I did an activity that the children and Mrs. C. enjoyed. I modeled how to draw the state of Oklahoma and put a few symbols on the map. Then, I asked the children to do the same and add two other symbols.

The children were very creative. Some labeled the school with a dot, others labeled their favorite town, and others added the surrounding states. The children that are slow got finished with the general map. But the ones who need more enrichment went on to add many labels, make a map key and more. This was an activity that was a fun and a learning experience.
The low point of my week was when the teacher came into the cafeteria from the gym to see why the children were too loud. I hadn't realized how loud they were but I calmed them down after that by asking them to use six inch voices, asking them to not disturb the hallways, and separating the ones who continued to talk.

11-1
This week I have had more time with full responsibility of the class for certain activities. For example, Mrs. C. has me take and pick the class from specials and lunch. Also, today I was the only one in the room during one center.
I've found it is hard to keep them quiet during centers. I don't mind if they talk as long as it is about the learning. When the talking becomes so loud that our neighbor classes can't concentrate it is a problem for our class. Mrs. C. understands that children will be loud even when they are being constructive. Therefore, we both have similar feelings about centers.
The high point of my week was Monday morning. I started off the morning by reviewing the November calendar. Then I went through the math calendar with the class. Mrs. C. was going over behavior contracts with certain children so I continued with the math lesson. Then I went into the measurement lesson. Before I knew it, it was time for computers. It made me feel good because i just went with the flow and took the class through the entire morning without Mrs. C's help. I think the class did well because we didn't have a down part of the morning so they kept on track and paid close attention.
The low point of my week was when I couldn't get the class to be quiet during centers and I felt like it was disturbing Mrs. Penner's class. I knew they weren't deliberately being loud but I wanted them to realize how loud and disturbing they were.
I worked on not calling children by name in disciplining. I tried to call out groups of children or specific activities. For example, "If your pencil is in your hand you are not following directions." Instead of, "Kate, put down your pencil." For next week I plan to work on how well the children follow directions during instruction.
One of the activities I had the children do was cut, paste, and label a globe with all seven continents. After having the children work on this I realized that some of the continents were too little for them to cut out and recognize. The majority of the class was able to recognize all seven but probably 75% of them couldn't recognize the continents once they cut them out. Next time, I will make the copy of the continents larger so they can label the continents before they cut them out. This way they will not get them so mixed up on the globe they glue together.
For now the only activity that I'm unclear on is what documentation and evaluation goes along with the reading groups. I have had reading groups this week but have only writing the date, the name and level of the book and how well the child did on the reading.

11-5
This week the class studied measurement. The children had trouble with a few of the sections because it was a new concept for them. They were able to become familiar with different units of measure and how to use them a variety of ways. The high point the week was looking through the pumpkin cinquain papers. I walked the children through a pumpkin cinquain, which is similar to a poem. Then, they could make up their own or use the class model that was written on the board. The children were very creative and used their own ideas to complete their cinquain. I have found that when you get home to grade papers you will be surprised on how well or not so well the students worked. Some papers will be wonderful after a sort explanation. Then other activities will be unfinished and wrong after a long thorough explanation.

Grading papers is one way to find out a child's abilities and difficulties. It's hard for me to decide what to take a grade on because Mrs. C. set up the grade book and everyone records grades on different activities. I've found it hard to grade with s, p, and h only. I find myself giving pluses and minuses many times on the end of the letter. But, I realize that they will earn an average of all their grades so it may not be so important to add the + or - to a letter. Also, at their age they are changing so fast that it's better to give general grades for some abilities instead of labeling them as an A, B, or C student.
The low point of my week was working on disciplining one of the students. He listens to me when I tell him what to do but then he wants to argue his way out of it. I don't back down from what I want him to do but by the time I get him out into the hall or across the room he has disrupted the entire class. He will follow me around and ask why he has to go. Then he tries to bargain to stay at his desk. I don't know what to do. I need to talk to Mrs. C. to find out what she feels would be best. He only acts this way when she is out of the room.
One competency I worked on this week was to involve the students in the focus books I read after the daily reader. At the beginning of my experience here I would just read without prompting questions and interests. After watching Mrs. C. and reading information from my class at the university, I realized the students would benefit more from the book if I took time to involve them in discussion. Then, as I read I will stop and explain in other words or ask questions about the book. As the children share they work on higher thinking skills and can gain a better idea of the main ideas of the story.
I planned a measurement enter activity for one day this week. The students made a hand print of their hand with paint on construction paper. The next day they had the chance to measure their hand and write a sentence about it. They used an inch ruler to measure. I wanted them to see a real life object and find the length. They had to write a sentence about their conclusion. The activity met my objectives and was effective.

11-12
This week the planning was similar to week four. Although, I had more responsibility of the classroom during centers and math lessons this week. I have found out that the hardest part of the day for me is centers. I enjoy having centers and setting them up but they are so loud that our neighbor classroom can't hear their teacher. For next week I am planning on having one center be at their desks working individually. I realize that centers are a chance for the children to get out of their seats and work as a group. But, if they can't work together and keep their noise level low then they will have to work independently. So, I plan on trying this new idea out during center time at the beginning of next week.
I read the focus books this week for magnets. The books helped the children gain important facts and information about magnets. I feel that focus books are very important in the classroom. By reading a focus book you are integrating science, social studies, and even math with reading. Also, the children can think about the topic visually and orally for a better understanding. By realizing this i need to add many more books to my classroom book collection for next year.
The high point of my week was working with children that don't disrupt the class. I've found it hard to manage my time between the difficult children and the ones who listen and work hard. As I look back on the last few weeks I realize that all my time and energy in the classroom was spent on the children who disrupt the class. It started to wear on me to the point that I realized that they shouldn't have all of my attention. The children who do a good job should receive attention also. Throughout the week I tried to watch myself and go by to look at all of the children's work during the day. Just because a child is at a higher achievement level doesn't mean he shouldn't have encouragement and positive reinforcement from the teacher. I tried this at the end of the week. It really worked and I was more satisfied at the end of the day.

The low point of my week was letting one child get to me. He is very disrespectful and many times out of control He receives level ones and two's on the playground, in specials and has been kicked off the bus for two weeks. I am working with him all throughout the day because his reading is very low and I know he doesn't get help at home. When he was leaving one day all of the papers dropped out of his bag so, I asked him if they were his. He cam back and was mad and talked to me in a disrespectful tone. I thought to myself, why would he be like this while I'm helping him? Mrs. C. can't figure out why he is mad and hateful either. She has talked to his mom on many occasions.
I planned a theme project called a wonderful world for this week. The children were able to listen to and sing along with the Nat King Cole song What a Wonderful World. I read the book and big book also. The the children drew and colored their r own pages to make a big book of the song. It took us four days to complete. I had them work on the pages at one or two centers each day. They worked hard on the book and enjoy singing the song. I can't wait to see it all put together!

**Self-Evaluation**
**December 6, 1999**

Through this experience I have found a better understanding of the role of objectives in planning and teaching. It is important to have objectives and use them in planning activities and lesson plans. Objectives can keep a teacher focused on what the children need. They are also essential in assessing children's abilities. This experience also gave me a better understanding of how teachers choose their resources and how they adapt resources to their individual class. When I plan lessons I don't feel as overwhelmed as I did before student teaching. By easing into the teaching role I was able to feel comfortable with having responsibility for an entire class.

My previous coursework did prepare me for student teaching. What was helpful for me was learning about children's developmental stages and levels. By having a better understanding of their background I am able to nurture to and work with the children. I also thought the classes that worked on teaching multiculturalism were helpful. I was raised in inner city Oklahoma City and always thought of myself as a non-biased person but there is more to multiculturalism that that. Some of these include religion, economic status, and language differences. I feel this part of the program is helpful and should be emphasized as it is. The part of the program that I felt was left out was working with technology. I think everyone should be required to learn power point and other computer skills like spreadsheets.

My goals for this semester were to be organized and to find out how to plan for primary aged children. I do feel that I accomplished both of these goals. I was able to find new ways to organize myself by talking to my lead teacher. I also talked to and observed other classrooms to get a good feel and understanding for other ages than my student teaching grade.

I feel that my greatest strength is being flexible. I am easy to please and I don't get upset easily. Therefore working with children comes pretty naturally. Also, when I think about what grade I would like to teach (third grade) I know that if that doesn't work out I will be happy in another grade. My weakness is being too soft on children. I need to be more assertive at first instead of trying to make it up in the end.

My feelings about teaching have changed in that I didn't realize how much time public school teachers spent on lesson planning. I would suggest to next semester's student teachers to use the observation time at the end of the semester to see different classrooms and ages. This time was very helpful for me.

Children's Work

I have learned that children's work is very important and should be used in many ways within the classroom. First, children's work should be looked at by the teacher and on a regular basis discussed with the child. If a teacher takes the work and explains to the child what they did wrong and what they can work on the child will see why they do work and how the teacher grades. Also, children's work should be used at parent teacher conferences. This gives parents an idea of what the teacher is referring to and why the child is performing the task well or failing to complete the task. Parents need the work in front of them to understand what the child should be doing at their age. Another way children's work should be used is for assessment. It is essential for teachers to have a variety of children's work to base their grades on. Teachers can use children's work to see their writing skills and language skills without doing formal assessments.

# Appendix D

## Ann

**Autobiographical Paper**

I grew up in a small rural town in the panhandle with a population of 1,173. The elementary, middle and high school were all on the same campus. I always did fairly well in school so I don't have any extremely gab memories about elementary school. However, I do remember some areas that I had trouble in. In second grade, I was so confused about how and when to use -s,-es,or -ed. I always got the three mixed up and consequently got them wrong on papers. In first grade, I remember being in the slower reading group. I read really slowly, but i could comprehend the text. I hated to read out loud because I read so slowly. Even when I was in the sixth grade I hated to read in front of the class. However, I loved math. I remember feeling so excited before taking a timed test. I would study so hard the night before. The day of the test my adrenaline was pumping. I always did well so I loved to take the tests.
I can remember all of my teachers vividly.
My favorite teacher was my third grade teacher, Mrs. K. She was a very enthusiastic teacher. She had a loud voice that was usually laughing and always encouraging. The other third grade teachers were intimidating to a young student. I felt I got into the best class. My least favorite teacher was Mrs. S in first grade. One day I turned my paper in without coloring it. The directions were on the board, but I obviously did not read them. Four other students turned their paper in without coloring them, too. Mrs. S took the five of us into the hall and gave us spankings. I remember thinking that was a bad excuse for spanking a student. Today, I find it extremely severe. I know she was trying to make an example out of us, but an uncolored paper does not justify spanking a six-year old child. First graders make mistakes and their teachers must be patient and reasonable.
I didn't really decide to become a teacher until my second year of college. I came to college to prepare for a job that would pay real well. I later decided that forever is a long time to work in a job you will end up hating. I went with my heart and knew I wanted to work with kids, no matter what the job paid. I remember walking past the child development lab and thinking, "How fun would that be to work with little kids every day?" I thought about how as a child I looked up to and adored my teachers, or most of them. They seemed to be the prettiest and nicest people. Now, I know they all had faults, but in the eyes of a child their teacher is perfect. I'm never going to be materially rich, but by being a teacher and working with children I will have the most precious gift of all - the love of a child.

**First Interview**
**October 26, 1999**

Sara: What's most important thing teachers do?

Ann: Um...I think...does it matter what grade?...I think they should learn to relate to kids and be concerned about spending more time on how they learn best and understanding them - maybe it's because I'm a student teacher , I'm real gung ho -I see teachers, like here, not being personal enough with kids, I don't know...if you're going to spend a whole year with children then teachers should get to know them even if you listen to stuff you don't want to hear (refers to sad home life experiences)...I think they'll respect you more...you're not trying to have a best friends relationship, (you are trying to have) one where you can understand and relate to them. I think it's (her attitude) back to coming out of school (college) with a "cure the world" attitude, but so much in school has nothing to do with kids. I talk to my ? who is in Texas schools and we agree, it's not just in this school, but in all...you should be there for the kids...kids should be first.
Sara: How did you learn best as a child?

Ann: I don't remember...I mean, I really don't...I've had people ask me that before and I don't think I can help you on that one.

Sara: What is your most vivid memory of school?

Ann: I remember...one of the things...not really specific...I had so much trouble with, I had trouble with ed's and s's and that bother me so much when I was little. I didn't get it until the third grade, it finally clicked. Everybody else understood it, and I usually didn't have trouble but...I got a spanking in first grade and the more I think about it now...I know you're supposed to listen to directions but I didn't clear my paper when the teacher said to...and I don't think you should get a spanking for not clearing your paper!...one of my best friends, who got one too, and I still talk about it...(we say) can you believe we got spanked!

Sara: How does that kind of memory effect you as a teacher?

Ann: The spanking incident effects me 'cause a lot of things kids get in trouble for, well, there's not that big an issue here to get worked up about...first and second graders talk, I don't see getting mad for talking quietly at your desk! - they talk! Twos and threes move, first graders talk! I think that it helps me reflect on what's really important for a teacher to do. I notice things that I do here, I do because I'm in this school and I think the other teachers expect me to do certain things, as a student teacher I'm expected to...I can't change things. A lot of teachers get stuck in a rut, it's easy to do worksheets - they do that a lot here and I try to think how I would do it different...I don't want that to happen to me...I have to keep reflecting on it. I really like student teaching here...I see things here I would hope to God don't happen (inner city children's experiences).

Sara: What kinds of assessments do you remember from school?

Ann: Times tests - vividly! - I was good at them, but if you're not good you would hate them - SRA tests for free time in the second grade - ooh boy! that'll make you want to finish your work! Second grade wasn't a good year for me, those e's, s's and SRA's.

Sara: What kinds of things did your Mom keep from your schoolwork?

Ann: I haven't looked at it lately...little paper booklets you make about your family, maps to school, stuff like that.

Sara: Why did your Mom keep that stuff...why did she choose to keep that work?

Ann: It showed my perceptions of life and family at that age. It's interesting for parents to see how kids that age think about their family, it may be totally different from what the parents expect.

Sara: Do you think about what parents might want to keep when you plan activities?

Ann: When children show their parents some of the stuff we've done - I would tell parents why we were doing them...to document learning, that we weren't just playing.

**Second Interview**
**December 1, 1999**

Sara: How do you think children learn best?

Ann: I've seen...I try to do the opposite of what they have been having to do all year...I plan for them to get involved, participating instead of always just "telling". Learning isn't just something you're told, you have to be involved. Like when I was doing my Oklahoma unit and we made the "oil gushers" with ice-cream and chocolate syrup. You can tell them about oil wells and show them pictures, but the gusher activity really gave them the idea about what happens with an oil well...

Sara: Did you point out that oil is not chocolate syrup? (Laughing)

Ann: Yeah, we told them it represented the oil. They knew it wasn't...they made jokes about eating oil, they said, "Hey look Miss F. I'm eating oil", yeah.

Sara: When you look at their work what do you know about their learning?

Ann: When I look at journals I can see...well, there's this one girl who..the one who is real artistic....the one I told you about last time, you know with the detailed bee?...with her ability to do that detail in art, I've noticed she does that in her journal. I've seen some that struggle in the classroom when we do work that do best in art. When we did a money unit...I set up a student store, like the one they have here in the school...I wrote up a big list of what things cost. They each got some money and they had to decide what to buy and some of the ones that do better in class couldn't do it. The kids that struggle with everything did best in the whole class. I think they use money more...one of them brought a 1.00 to school one day and lost it. He said his Mom was going to hit him...that's not a good thing, that he has to worry more about money, but he just thinks like that. Another girl talked about money and had thought about it...

Sara: I noticed when I taught in the inner-city school that some of the kids who understood money were the ones who, probably starting around 4, had been given money to go down to the corner store to buy their "meals".

Ann: Yeah, I bet these kids have had more experiences...I've seen on TV these kids in Mexico who sell stuff, they know how to use money! I bet that's how the kids here know about money too!

Sara: So, you realized that by providing a variety of activities that you can tell more?

Ann: I think that before student teaching I was pretty confident with kids 4 and under, but coming to second grade - I realized they knew a lot more than I thought they would. I found out they had done activities in the first grade....so I did a KWL chart and asked if they knew about Oklahoma and some asked what the state flower was and some knew. I wondered how they knew! I found out...in April Land Run Day, the whole school does it and each teacher teaches something different about the state and the kids rotate through the classrooms. I thought I was introducing something new, but I was actually reviewing something...

Sara: How did that change what you were going to do?

Ann: I did not cover it as deeply. I thought 2 weeks was a long time - but it's not...it was good to know they had background knowledge.

Sara: Have you seen any carry-over from your unit?

Ann: They were out for a while, right after my unit, we were out for Thanksgiving. They remembered things from Monday - yeah, we did the oil things - Tuesday - that was yesterday? I don't know...

I read a story and one said "oil - that was where dinosaurs were from that time". I asked what lived millions of years ago. They had thought about it enough to bring it up the next day. I did the pencils (Oklahoma labels) they remember that, that was something...but over Thanksgiving- I mean - we talk about authors and one said they had been to Ponca City, where one of the authors was from so they do relate things to their own world.

Sara: How have things meshed with the way the coop. teacher usually does things?

Ann: We use a lot of pencil and paper things. One of the tests they took was supposed to be comprehension and they seemed to be bad at it. I made an activity where they had to put sentences in order - 12 was a bunch! - and they did good on it. I had them act out the story, I read the story and they acted it out. They got pretty excited, but they understood, they got into character and acted it out.

Sara: Have you done an activity like this before?

Ann: No, but this activity with sentences on the board took a long time because they had to transfer from the board to their pages. Some didn't finish, but we graded what they had gotten done. My biggest problem is with the grading, having to have 2 grades a day. I just don't know about that. My cooperating teacher struggles with it too. It just doesn't seem right, she's (coop. teacher) always having to worry about giving them things she can get a grade from. I had planned activities for my unit and she asked me if I had planned homework for their homework grade and I hadn't so she just ran off some worksheets so she could have a grade. It didn't really go with what I planned, but...

**Journal**

10-15
I really enjoyed the first full week. It was helpful to see the routines everyday. I observed several different things and have adjusted to being in the classroom everyday.
One incident that concerned me was with a little girl in the classroom. On Oct. 13 I noticed the child tugging at her shirt. After a while I noticed her pants were wet. I informed the teacher. She talked to the child privately. The child said nothing and didn't want to talk about it. We tried to call the mother for extra clothes. She was unavailable. With only 30 minutes left of school we let her stay with us in the classroom while the rest of the class went to music. The next morning I walked into the meeting room. As I walked in, the same child approached me with a bloody nose. I took her to the nurse's office. Here I noticed her pants were again slightly wet. On the 15th the children had lined up for lunch. I passed by the child and smelled urine. I talked to the teacher about the situation. This was very uncharacteristic for this child. She talked to another teacher and debated whether to contact the counselor. I would have first consulted the nurse. I thought perhaps she may have a urinary tract infection and allergies (the bloody nose). I wanted to think of medical reasons before I jumped to conclusions about possible abuse. However, I did document when these events happened.
This week, I was able to independently guide the children more. I am always thinking of ways and activities that would benefit the children. I am excited to integrate more hands-on group and active activities. the children are very willing to speak up and share but just aren't given much of a chance. I think that teachers find it easier and more controlled if they do only or mostly teacher-guided activities. By the classroom set-up I am aware that i will also have to do a lot of teacher-guided lessons.

However, I believe I can mix up the different methods of teaching to compliment each other. First, i want to rearrange the classroom. I have to keep the desks because of the classroom size, but I would like to group them in pods. I am also excited to integrate centers into the classroom. Since, the children switch rooms in the morning for reading, I plan to integrate centers into science, social studies and math. We will also do a lot of group activities based on Oklahoma authors and their books. I think it will be difficult to change the class routine. the children are very comfortable with the routine and point out when the classroom technique is disturbed. I will have to be careful about explaining "choices" to the children when introducing centers or the room will be chaos.

10-20

This was a short week. the teachers were very busy trying to get grades ready to be sent home. During this short week one 2nd grade teacher was absent and no substitute could be found for her so the other 2nd grade teachers shared her students. So, the classroom numbers were high and the teachers were working on grades. The children watched movies on Tuesday and Wednesday. Nothing was accomplished all wee. the teachers had been told to hold report cards until conferences by the principal. On Tuesday they were told grades had to be turned into the OKCPS by Wednesday. So, needless to say, the teachers were overwhelmed and put in a bad situation. Because of the short week and last minute change of plans my cooperating teacher and I decided that I could make plans for the following week. So, I made lesson plans for science and social studies. I planned a lot of interactive group activities. The children are currently learning about amphibians, mammals, reptiles, etc., where they live and how they grow.

One thing this week that bothered me is at lunch time one little boy has to sit by himself everyday. i feel like the teachers don't even give this child a chance. He is not a trouble-maker. He just likes to talk. I believe this child might not talk as much if he weren't secluded from the children. I think it is very sad. I don't think the teachers would appreciate their own child sitting by themselves every day.

I also learned about a different class this week called SED class, or severe emotionally disturbed class. I wonder if these children are aware of the name of this class. The class I saw was multi age. My teacher told me one of the little boys had chased his sister down the street with an ax. I asked what kind of counseling the school provided or suggested for the child and family. No such recommendations or services are provided. What a shame these children will have to get into trouble to get help. I asked the teacher why not try to prevent this behavior instead of simply "dealing" with it. I have never worked with these children but from observation I would interact with them differently than the current teachers. The teachers talk down to the children. These children already have low self-esteem. They need to be built up instead of beaten down even more.

10-29

This week I planned for science and social studies. These are taught in the afternoon. Mrs. T. wanted me to go along with the text book. The topic was animals, what they need to live and grow and their habitats. Even though this topic is in the 2nd grade text book level I find animals to be a very lame topic for 2nd graders. It is too broad. It would be more interesting if they studied a couple different types of animals thoroughly instead of covering it all in a week and a half. For activities I did a lot of group activities. The students were a little or very excited at the first of the week. I had to be very patient with talking and restlessness. They were very talky but I didn't keep on them about being quiet because they were talking about the lesson and being involved. The had to do some adjusting to my classroom management. They are not used to being allowed to talk to neighbors and openly share their ideas. However, the children were very interested in the different ways I presented the material. One day we grouped animals on a big chart. One day we used big maps to trace the migration routes of Monarch butterflies that actually travel through Oklahoma.

The only problem I had with planning was I had to have a daily grade for science and social studies and on Thursday I had to give the children homework. I didn't have one made up because I didn't feel the children needed homework every night. However, Mrs. T. asked where the homework was. I told her I didn't have any homework for the children. So, she went and ran some worksheets that would work as homework.

11-5
This week seemed to flow more. I planned for math, science and social studies. This takes up the whole afternoon. Mrs. T. wanted me to focus on neighborhoods and communities. She also wanted me to focus on the Saxon Math lessons. I found this all a little strange considering they had touched on neighborhoods 3 weeks before and not finished. the Saxon Math is covered off and on. However, Mrs. T. wanted me to finish up the neighborhood topic and she handed me 5 Saxon lessons to cover in 1 week. this is more than I have seen done in 1 week. However, I had no problems with planning. I decided I did not want to do the Saxon script in the lessons so I came up with hands-on activities that covered the objectives. For example, a lesson on temperature was taught by giving each child a popsicle stick with degree marks. The children loved having their own "thermometers". For a lesson on dimes and pennies I made up a student store similar to the actual student store they have at school. They were each given some coins (different amounts) and asked what they could buy, how much change they would receive. For the communities and neighborhoods I tried to relate it to their own world. I asked them about their city, what kind of workers work in their neighborhoods.
I also addressed types of transportation. I asked what they had been on: trains, planes, ships, boats, etc. and how they got to school: bike, car, bus, walk, etc. the children showed a lot of excitement. They demonstrated their learned knowledge at the end of the week test. I did not feel that the children should take a written test, so I tested them orally. I asked questions and had them respond on paper. If the children did not understand a question we discussed it further without revealing the answer.
I sometimes felt that through the week that Mrs. T. didn't feel completely comfortable with the hands-on approach I was teaching with. I urged the children to share ideas and feelings. I think Mrs. T. prefers a more "structure", traditional classroom. I feel she has good intentions to have an early childhood classroom, but feels more comfortable with traditional roles of the students and teacher. However, she was very encouraging towards me and allowed me to use my own ideas.

11-12
This week proved to be more challenging than the weeks before. Mrs. T. chose to make the plans for the reading class for this week. However, it was my responsibility to teach it. I understood that she has ideas on how and where the class should go since other classes integrate during reading class. However, I also felt that she might have thought that the class should be a more "controlled environment". I found it hard to present the information that she had planned for. I wasn't sure what points she wanted stressed or how she wanted it presented. I didn't like having to ask her continuously what to do next. I didn't feel like the class flowed well when I had to ask, "What would you like to do next?" I just don't feel like I was given the freedom to teach the reading class effectively.
I feel the class went okay for the children, but I wasn't given the confidence to feel real comfortable.
On Wednesday, Mrs. T. was in a computer workshop all day. She got a substitute. Although a substitute was present I was in charge of the classroom. The children were respectful of me as an authority. the day flowed well. The substitute was very complimentary and expressed her compliments to Mrs. T.

11-19

This week I planned for the entire week and introduced my Oklahoma unit. I was very excited to start my unit and felt prepared. I decided to cover my Oklahoma unit in the afternoons in the time allotted for math, science, and social studies. Mrs. T. and I decided this would be best since the morning is reading class and the 2nd grade classes are mixed. In the afternoon I would be working with the homeroom class, however, I planned activities that also included reading, writing and literature. Some of the daily activities I planned was an Oklahoma writing journal. I made these in the shape of Oklahoma. The children would be given time at the end of the afternoon to reflect on an aspect of Oklahoma that we covered. I also started an Oklahoma author chart. Each day we read a book by an Oklahoma author the student-of-the-day would write the person's name, title of book, song, etc., if they are an author, illustrator, or musician. I also have another chart with the book titles and children's names. This chart we will vote on our favorite book by an Oklahoma author at the end of the unit.

Another daily activity I introduced on Monday. We read the book This Land Is Your Land by Woody Guthrie. We then learned the song. I wrote the words on a big chart. the children loved the song and were excited to share it with the music teacher.

Mrs. T. wanted me to work Saxon Math into my lessons. I had no problem with this. I used the afternoon to integrate math and science and social studies into the same activity. I also worked literature in with a daily children's literature book or newspaper article. They used creative writing in their journals. The children were very excited about the Oklahoma pencils I used for learning their Oklahoma symbols. I was a little apprehensive about changing the routine of the reading class. the children are very programmed into their weekly routine. However, I tried to make the reading class more interactive and hands-on. I used several different types of games using spelling words, long/short vowel sounds and contractions. I was concerned about their past spelling test and comprehension test results. I tried to find ways to focus more on comprehension than just reading it. I asked the children questions before, during, and after the story. The results improved; however, I feel that the children seldom get much help at home.

Mrs. T. had only one suggestion in my planning that I did not completely agree with. I had to have at least two daily grades and one homework grade for each subject during the week. Otherwise, I was very pleased with the week and happy with the interest of the children.

Also, this week, a fifth grader at the school was found with marijuana. I was a little shocked that someone that young would have access to such substances. The 5th grade teacher I talked to said she had been trying to catch the girl for some time. This showed me how sheltered I am. I hate to expect something like that but I feel I need to be more open on suspecting substance abuse, violent behavior, abuse/neglect, etc. These children in this school do not have the advantages that most children do. They grow up in a neighborhood where negative things occur too frequently. However, most of the kids are stereotyped in this school and not seen as unique individuals. They are often looked down on for their family, status, clothes, etc.. This really bothers me. I don't feel I am any more important than these children or their families.

11-23

This week was only two days because of Thanksgiving break. Mrs. T. and I decided that I would break and continue my Oklahoma unit next week so I would have two full weeks of my unit. I decided to do some observations this week since I wouldn't be teaching. I decided to ask a kindergarten, 1st and severe emotional disorder class. On Monday, I observed the 1st and kindergarten class. My observation notes are in the back of my journal.

I first observed the 1st grade classroom. At this time the teacher was doing a Saxon Phonics assessment. Although I'm not real excited about Saxon in the least, it seemed to be working for these 1st graders. They knew their sounds better for their letters and diagraphs. They did not ask the teacher what words were. I heard them continuously sound out words on their own throughout the classroom.

I have found with the second graders they continually want to be told the word and when asked to sound it out they become frustrated. These second graders do not have the phonics background that the first graders are getting. I saw the first grade teacher presenting the same material as the second grade teachers and the 2nd graders are lost and just not "getting it". I really think the phonics, not necessarily Saxon, gives the first graders confidence and independence to become good readers.
That afternoon I observed a kindergarten class...they only go to centers in the afternoon. In the morning they do Saxon Phonics and math. I don't think that kindergarten students should have to sit through that. I also was disappointed to see that they are assigned homework every night...they just rotated through centers that they were assigned to. However, the centers were very creative....I saw some interesting things I would use...I think it (severely disturbed class) would be a fascinating career to look into later. However, I wonder if it would be as fulfilling as straight ECE.

11-30
I've tried to think of several activities I feel that the children have benefited from. I am very proud of the Oklahoma journals. At the end of my unit activities I gave the children an opportunity to write in their own journal. These children aren't given many chances for creative and expressive writing. With this, the journal was difficult for many children. They are used to copying words directly from the teacher or text book. In the journal they are expected to come up with words to express what they read, participated in or felt about Oklahoma. One little girl did great in her journal. She is very imaginative, creative, and artistic. The journal gave her a way to excel. She did not have to be urged to write. She was always eager to write and and share her writing with me although I did not ask the children to share with me. However, I read them at home.
One day, we talked about the OK land run. I read a story called, I Have Heard of a Land by Joyce Carol Thomas. Thomas, an Oklahoma native, wrote the story about her grandmother. Thomas'' grandmother was an African American that participated in the land run. This was an angle the children had never been told. They had many questions about ex-slaves and other land run participants.
We then did an activity where each child was given a big Oklahoma shape on paper with a square in it. Each child was given a page with a square in a different location. This square was the land they got in the land run. Then I passed each child a slip of paper with an 8, 4 or 2 on it. the child was asked to divide their land into that number. Each child got one piece of that square. They then had to color in their share and write the fraction they received; either 1/2, 1/4 or 1/8. This covered the Saxon Math I had to cover....This gave the children a chance to work with maps and relate a map to a real location in Oklahoma.
Another activity the children really enjoyed was when we talked about the Oklahoma Oil Boom. We first read about where oil comes from - underground and from dead animals millions of years ago. We then did a cooking activity to demonstrate where oil comes from and how we get it. I made directions on pieces of paper. They first put a layer of chocolate, then vanilla, then sprinkled Graham crackers, and stuck a clear straw in the cup. Then, the children and I discussed what the pudding stood for: oil, rock and soil. The straw was the oil derrick that dug or drilled for the oil. We then sucked on our straws and saw the chocolate pudding, or "oil" coming from under the "rock". The children loved it! Even the next day they were talking about where oil comes fm. For some math coverage (or Saxon math) the children were to find missing numbers in a 100 chart. So, I had the children write down a number from 1 -100 and then hide it so no one would see. I then went through each child and described where the number was and everyone had to find it on their own based on my directions. For example, I asked to see Amanda's number (7). I said, "Amanda decided she wanted to drill for oil and when she did she got 5 above 57. She got this many barrels of oil." the children numbered their papers and we went through the whole class finding the number of barrels each child "drilled for".

The children became very involved in this activity and were very interested. I feel the children got a good concept of where oil comes from and how it is measured (by barrels). The children had to listen for details for the barrels of oil each child drilled. They also had to follow directions to layer their pudding..

# Appendix E

## Liz

**Autobiographical Paper:**

When I was in elementary school, I had to work extremely hard on all of my school work. My did would help me learn my spelling words, check the answers to my math problems, or help me make a science project. When my parents divorced, my grades in school were not very good. I was lost without him to check my work for any errors. It took a while for me to learn to check all of my school work on my own, and I got my grades back up.

The first through third grade I attended a little school called S. Elementary. The school probably had about three hundred students. Then, we moved and I attended P. Elementary. The population in this school was around six hundred and it was kindergarten through sixth grade. When I attended S., my grades were about average in the class. But, when I went to school at P. my grades went down hill. P. was so much more advanced in the school work. I was probably almost a year behind what the other students had already learned. My fourth grade teacher was the meanest teacher I have ever had. Each week on our spelling test, I would not pass the test. My parents would look at each word and the words would be spelled correctly. so, my parents came up to the school to talk to the principal and my teacher about why she (was) failing me each week on my spelling test. During the meeting, my teacher told my parents that the reason she was failing me was because my penmanship was not legible enough. After the meeting, my teacher would pass me on the spelling tests. My whole fourth grade year was the most miserable year of my school career.

My favorite teacher was my fifth grade science teacher. Her name was Mrs. J and year that I had her for a science teacher, she won teacher of the year. Each project that we were assigned was hands-on and integrated in some shape or form. Mrs. J was a teacher who really built self-confidence in her students. My least favorite teacher was my fourth grade teacher, Mrs. C. Mrs. C was very rude and sarcastic towards her students and even the other teachers. I remembrance, when a friend and I were talking and Mrs. C pulled my friend's hair and told us to be quiet. My fourth grade experience was not a positive experience.

I made the decision to become a teacher when I was a senior in high school. I was one of the editors of the school's year book. I was able to take pictures over at the elementary school quite often. Seeing the kindergarten, first, second and third grade teachers with their students just made me want to get to have that experience with those ages of children. When I see those teachers, they offer ideas or tell if I need any materials that I am welcome to borrow some of their ideas or tell if I need any materials that I am welcome to borrow some of their materials. Seeing how those teacher taught their students influenced me in the manner that I want to teach in my classroom I want to have a hands-on approach with a lot of integration mixed in.

**First Interview**
**October 19, 1999**

Sara: What's the most important thing teacher's do?

Liz: Oh my goodness! Well...they influence the children...how they present things is a big influence on children. I mean, I don't... say... the teacher, how she is shapes the environment. If she's grouchy it's not going to be a good positive learning environment. The teacher sets the tone for the day, week, year.

Sara: How did you learn best when you were a child?

Liz: Oh, to be truthful I don't remember grade school at all...my parents were going through a divorce and I blocked a lot of what was...I was very auditory, like when I heard someone say it, if I can listen, I'm ok. I think...I didn't like to read when I was younger and still don't. That's probably important to the way I learn.

Sara: How will not liking to read effect your teaching?

Liz: I like children's books, I collect them and I like to read to them, but as far as checking out books from the library for me to read, I don't...I don't read newspapers, magazines. I don't feel like I have enough time to read for enjoyment. I read really slow and that bothers me.

Sara: What bothers you about it?

Liz: It takes me a long time - it's boring and I start thinking about all this other stuff I need to be doing. It's frustrating. When we had to go to the library - we didn't have- you checked out a book - reading was not really enforced. I always read a book that had a video. When I was in high school I did the same book report 3 years in a row. My English teacher never knew, she was smart, but no common sense.

Sara: What are you going to do about children who feel the way you do about reading?

Liz: If I know (they don't like to read) I'll talk to them and maybe we can work on it together. I know reward systems are negative, but building the self concept about reading, you know, because AR (accelerated reader) give a prize, some sort of treat to encourage reading and it seems to work. I'll read to them, and tell them maybe I'll like to read. I enjoy reading their books and collecting them, and we'll talk about the things we like, find more interesting. Last year, I found western books-I really thought I liked the author and I read 2, but didn't like the 3rd. My Dad loves to read, my mother doesn't like to read, but she'd read to me if I wanted her to.

Sara: Did you ever take a reading, like speed reading class?

Liz: I was scared to take a speed reading class - if you, I would watch the kids who zip through reading and it's pretty discouraging.

Sara:Did your Mom keep your work from grade school?

Liz: She has everything I've done!

Sara: Have you ever looked at it?

Liz: I look through it all the time - art and stuff I drew. Papers, work you do - art stuff. She has it all.

Sara: What about report cards?

Liz: When my parents divorced, there's a lot of stuff we didn't get.

Sara: What were your assessments like? Did you think they were fair?

Liz: I always did ok in school. I had a 4th grade teacher, she would make you cringe! My penmanship was really bad and I wasn't passing spelling tests - she counted the words wrong because she didn't think my penmanship was up to her standards. I knew how to spell the words! We had to take it up with the principal. I was scared to death, I was just a little 4th grader and she would flunk me for my writing! I still have to be careful.

Sara: How will that experience effect your teaching?

Liz: Not every child develops skills at the same time, I'd never treat a child like that! I'll have them spell it for me and it some people just don't have good penmanship-I'm not going to fail them! I'm not going to count it wrong. I'll be very open. Yesterday a little girl (in her student teaching classroom) fell and busted her elbow and she couldn't lay her arm on her desk to write so I wrote what she told me, I would do that to help. She (4th grade teacher) didn't care- it was no skin off her back. I think you should want all your students to do their best and pass class.

**Second Interview**
**November 14, 1999**

Sara: How do children learn best?

Liz: Hands on experiences and I think they learn from others ...what they see, you know, if you can show them, something clicks. If they can manipulate (things)...if they are visual learners I think it's easier to learn better than just telling them about something. Especially in math, but in any subject area they can look at - I mean, so far ...works best. I 'm teaching fractions and we cut out circles and that's helping them. You'll ask them...they can see it, but they don't know how to tell you. They can show you with the circle fractions.

Sara: What did you bring to talk about?

Liz: I brought 2 cinquain poems. They were really fun. We're writing poetry and I brought 2 of these...this is 1 of my examples about owls. You have the title and 2 words to describe and then verbs and the title again. I like these poems because they have to think about bats and what they did, their habitat, diet. We had one - I read a book - I had one that had "nursing" on his poem! You know we had read about bats being mammals! I had two - I thought they were good - some have invented spelling. She has good handwriting and well written - she always does a good job. (in reference to a neat paper.) And then we had journal entries about leaves - some of them you have to look carefully, but you can figure out what they are spelling. We had them illustrate...you can tell exactly what she's saying, even with invented spelling. (Another entry) She has one big sentence. This journal has the most invented spelling, but you can try to tell what they are saying...when you read the journals, it shows their personal, everyday (experiences). This little boy...he wears camouflage all the time...every time he draws camouflage...his sentences were invented spelling. Some will ask how to spell - I don't know if it's pride or they don't care (when they use invented spelling). (How do you handle it?) I don't know what to say. They'll try to spell a word - I try to sound out a word - like this one - he tries to get his work done really fast - I have another one...it really shows how she hears the letters - I don't know how she...I looked at it a long time and I figured out that this is how she's hearing the sounds.

Sara: How do you use this information?

Liz: I try to teach complete sentences - the more they write the better they spell and read. They can see how the word looks in print, like that's (referring to paper) pretty close to (the word) Halloween. Did you see me doing the word lesson the other day when you were here? I 'd say, "can you read my mind" - they had to really listen for the sounds in the words and they have to use the word wall (to guess what the word is after receiving hints). They learn how to spell because they see it on the wall...they'll get better at it (spelling correctly) and not know it.

Sara: Do you consider individual children's responses to a specific activity?

Liz: I try to gear it so they can all do an activity - every class has some areas they are weak in so I try to plan to cover everyone's abilities. The ones that have a short attention span - you have to hover over them - reexplain or read it again and again.

Sara: Does your cooperating teacher document their work very much?

Liz: We have a portfolio that shows growth.

Sara: What kinds of things go in it to show growth?

Liz: We have a Make-A-Book...if they edit the sentences right - the whole journal will go home and you can look through the whole journal and see if their handwriting has improved. I don't know if art goes into it - different math things we do you can stick in there.

Sara: Would you keep portfolios?

Liz: Yes - I like to show the work to the parents - so they can see what we've done.

Sara: If you were getting a child from another school would you rather have a report card or a portfolio?

Liz: A portfolio! If you look at a report card...that's just a letter grade and portfolios would tell you more.

**Journal**

10-11
The high point of my week was when my teacher told the children that I would be in their classroom for seven weeks. The children acted so excited that I would be coming everyday. Hearing and seeing the children show so much excitement made me so comfortable. I felt my self-confidence shoot through the roof. When I was reading what my low point of my week was, nothing came to mind. all week I had nothing but positive experiences. I got to experience lunch room duty and it wasn't bad at all. I am really enjoying (this placement). I taught meeting board, spelling, grammar practice, language handbook, guided reading, book club and math. I have a got a chance at everything except for the end of the day. Next week I would like to focus on teaching guided reading and book club at the same time. I would like to become very familiar with this so when I take over full time, I won't be confronted with something I am not expecting. My teacher does all of the planning for the activities, but I teach the majority of them.

10-25
This week was a challenge! I got to experience what it is like on the day that there is a party. My class was really full of energy and talked all morning long. This week I did guided reading and book club at the same time by myself! The children acted wonderful for me. Friday was parent-teacher conferences. I had planned on working on my unit all day but instead H. and I set up the "Pop Toss" for the fall carnival. I was irritated that I spent all day setting up a booth. I did learn a lot about some of the students in my classroom. There was some explanations for some of the behaviors that are exhibited. Some of the info is really heart breaking.

11-5
I can't believe how fast this semester is going by. This week was not a very good week. I was gone half of the day on Monday because I had a meeting at the university.

I was sort of nervous when my supervisor came to watch me. It went pretty well. Two of my students acted ugly during math meeting board. Mrs. R. was soo mad at those students for acting that way to me. I guess sometimes that just happens.

11-12
Everything is going really well. I can't wait until I get my own classroom. I love teaching this age. Mrs. R. has a wonderful classroom for me to get a wonderful teaching experience. I don't really care for writing a weekly journal entry.

# Appendix F

## Meg

**Autobiographical Paper:**

I went to school in a very small town called, C. the elementary, junior high and high schools were located together in the middle of town. There were about 300 students total in elementary, junior high and high school.

One of the most unpleasant memories that I have about elementary school happened in the third grade. our class was being introduced to the 'greater than' and 'less than' signs in math. Everyone else in the class seemed to grasp the concept with ease, but for some reason, I could not seem to understand this no matter how hard I tried. I just remember feeling very frustrated and embarrassed because I did not understand it.

My school was very small, so I got to know everyone very well. One of the most pleasant things about school was my friends. I also enjoyed anytime we got to make something in class and be creative. In second grade we got to draw a picture that we transferred onto a t-shirt. I took a lot of time and effort to make my picture and I was very proud of it, I still have the t-shirt today.

One of my favorite teacher s was probably my third grade teacher, Mrs. S. Mrs. S was very positive and nice. She loved all of us and she let us know when she was proud of something that we did. She was always willing to help us if we needed it, and she had a way of making you feel good about yourself.

My least favorite teacher was probably my sixth grade teacher, Mrs. M. She had definite favorites in the class and it was very obvious who they were. She was condescending to those she did not like (including me) and she made you feel very stupid at times with her sarcasm.

Both of these teachers had lasting effects on me. I always remember Mrs. S with her bright smile. Whenever I run into her at home, I enjoy talking to her and she is someone that I feel like I could turn to if I needed her. She makes being a teacher look like a great career. Mrs. M has also make a lasting effect on me, but not as positive. Whenever I see her at home, it still brings back negative feelings and I do not enjoy talking to her at all. I think she really was bad for my self-esteem and especially when a child is in sixth grade, that is a time when they really need to work positively on their self-esteem.

One of the contributing factors in deciding to become a teacher was because my school was so lacking in good teachers. I think about some people in my class how they are now, and maybe the difference a few good teacher might have made. There are a few people that if they would have only had some positive attention and expectations set a little higher, maybe they would have continued their education and things would have turned out a little better for them.

One experience I had in high school helped encourage me to become a teacher. I had a biology teacher, Mrs. D, she always had us do fun experiments and always seemed to be 'on our side'. Probably the biggest thing that made me decide to become a teacher was the boy that I dated my senior year. He was two years younger than I and he had a learning disability. He had flunked two grades. He could barely read, do math or comprehend what was being taught. He was very able to learn, but no one had ever taken the time to seek out the extra help that he needed.

S. never got any extra help so he never advanced past the stage he was at and will probably always continue to stay at. He graduated from high school barely knowing how to read. After dating him, I realized I wanted to be a teacher and be aware of these learning disabilities and try to help or find help for those children who need it, before they get so far along in school that it is almost too late.

**First Interview**
**October 19, 1999**

Sara: What's the most important thing teachers do?

Meg: Give a basis for learning - showing children to to learn. Giving guidance as to , sounds corny, but a thirst for knowledge. Teaching them how to learn.

Sara: How did you learn best?

Meg: Oh gosh, I don't know - probably, by either doing something myself or seeing it done. The person had to be patient 'cause I'd get upset. My Dad had to be different with my brother - if he'd raise an eyebrow with me! I'd start crying. He (Dad) said, "you have to raise children different 'cause they're different!" But I'm not sure about teaching, I might get my Masters.

Sara: What do you think you'll do a Masters in?

Meg: School counseling, I always thought I'd like to come in a classroom and give talks, help teachers come up with ways to help kids in their classrooms. Like this girl who needs counseling for ADHD.

Sara: What is your most vivid, earliest memory in school?

Meg: Probably in 3rd. The greater and lesser thing - for some reason I could NOT understand, everybody understood greater than and less than but me - I could not understand it. I'd never had trouble before, but my teacher was patient and now I understand it.

Sara: Why did you think everybody else understood?

Meg: They acted like they did, maybe...everybody was asking questions but me.

Sara: What do you think you'll do with children when they don't understand?

Meg: When a kid has a hard time, maybe it's something that's really hard for them and it does not work...you stop and think about how they're feeling.

Sara: Did your brother have similar experiences in school?

Meg: My middle brother is good in school, my younger brother could be, but didn't make the effort, he was the class clown.

Sara: Has your Mom kept work you all did in school?

Meg: Our Xmas tree has paper ornaments on it which we made growing up. It's just covered. Most I remember making, there's a few I don't. I was in Brownies - we have all that stuff too. She kept everything my brothers made too.

Sara: Do you think about what Mom's might keep when you are planning activities?

Meg: I don't think of it as much as I should - My Mom would have kept all that. I assume Moms will keep most of what they (children) make.

Sara: What do you think has the most meaning for Mom's?

Meg: Things that show what they (children) can do...information about who they are, drawings where they weren't told what to draw...journals about feelings.

Sara: How was your work assessed?

Meg: By my teachers? Most were just worksheets, on a right or wrong basis with letter grades. Our art work...I remember coloring a bear purple instead of brown and the teacher said something about bears being brown. They wanted things to look the way they thought they were supposed to look.

Sara: Do you think about that? How children change lessons?

Meg: I have to remember that things will turn out how I intended. Kids may do their own little creative things.

Sara: How did you feel about report cards?

Meg: I wasn't excited or upset. Except for one time...it was when...it was a semester when I got a D in division...I had a hard time taking that one home!

Sara: How do you feel about using report cards?

Meg: I don't know...you definitely need something to show parents...I wish there were another way far as ABCDF- all teachers write comments...maybe have different columns, how well they do different things. I know something needs to change, but what's the best way?

**Second Interview**
**November 30, 1999**

Sara: What did you bring to talk about?

Meg: I brought some of...some spelling, journals...his is really good. this was their spelling, you know, the...

Sara: Building Words?

Meg: Yeah, it's the Rebecca Sitton, uh, they write the five sentences with their priority words. I tell them that this is what they get graded on and that I will grade on capitals at the first of the word, periods at the end. I look at the sentences and you can see if they understand what the words mean - you know, some will make sense, but others...(indicates specific paper) she would make sense...she didn't have a clue...
These are their journals...we're having them put entries in everyday during our unit so they get used to writing about what we are talking about...we did this little activity yesterday...they wrote about being a pilgrim on the Mayflower. We told them we were grading on handwriting...she (indicating child's journal) used punctuation, even though I didn't say anything about grading their punctuation. I can tell she understands what she was writing about and she knows how to put sentences together. This one...her sentences don't made sense, there's no punctuation and I can tell she doesn't pay any attention to the punctuation, capitals...but I can tell she knows what, uh...

Sara: So she understands the context?

Meg: Yeah, she understands what we've been reading in class about the Pilgrims and the Mayflower. This one (indicating a new paper) - E., she was probably not paying attention (it has already been discussed that the student teacher is aware of this child's need for attention and control in the classroom)

She is able to understand, she wrote about being seasick. A lot of them wrote about that. I know she knows punctuation. But, I can tell she knows what she wanted to say...

Sara: And what did you do yesterday?

Meg: We brain stormed colony names - we just started this unit - we gave them their journals and they worked in groups to decorate the fronts and write their names on them. Like today - this afternoon we're going to "build" our settlement houses. We're trying to have them journal a lot. I felt with this unit they would understand more about the Pilgrims and the journey and all of that...you know, that it wasn't just this fun trip for the Pilgrims....and at first when we started talking about doing this unit I thought - how in the world are we going to do this?! But it's turned out different from what I thought it would...but, you know, I thought how in the world because the only thing you see is Pilgrim cutsey.

Sara: Was anything more helpful to you that got you from that initial planning to this?

Meg: I can't think of anything...my (cooperating) teacher probably...we talked about it and she had materials over Pilgrims. She had some really neat books with the stories all broken up into parts, kind of a step by step process through each phase or whatever...See, I didn't have the whole story about them coming over.
Sara: Do you remember doing much with...learning much about Pilgrims when you were in school?

Meg: People say to think and remember back to first grade or whatever and I don't remember much from then...I guess I blocked it out or something. I remember doing stuff with my friends. Oh...I remember in second grade...I still have this...we colored pictures and the teacher ironed it on tee shirts and we made angel ornaments for our Christmas tree...but...no real learning.

Sara: Real learning?

Meg: Well, academic.

Sara: When you were planning your activities did you think about what these kids might remember?

Meg: Oh...they might remember the game in our little boats, we had them stand on the paper areas for their boats. They didn't want to fall off, we wanted them to get an idea of the amount of room the Pilgrims felt, room they had. I do remember making these cornucopias in third or fourth grade out of aluminum foil. We colored them with markers, everyone's had to look the same...

Sara: Coloring with markers on aluminum foil and they all had to look the same?

Meg: (Laughs) Yeah, but mostly I remember doing the arts and crafts stuff.

Sara: Do you think that is one of the reasons you chose to go into early childhood education, the arts and crafts stuff?

Meg: No, I don't think so...I did a lot of stuff with younger kids when I was growing up...

Sara: You worked with kids?

Meg: I babysat through junior high school and high school...this one little boy from the time he was 6 months old until he was 3 years old and another boy until he was in the third or fourth grade...he's big now!

Sara: Looking back at the spelling papers...what are you doing when they are writing their spelling sentences?

Meg: When I do this lesson, I write the words they are supposed to have...the ones that are confusing, I write on the board - like than/then, they always mix those up. I tell them when they are writing...I grade the way she (cooperating teacher ) does, she takes 18 points off of these words, because they are on the wall!

Sara: Their priority words?

Meg: Yeah, I remind them to spell correctly, use end marks. I walk around and help...remind them about punctuation. I can tell (indicates sentences) that she didn't understand this word. I probably would have read this sentence and asked her what this means (Been instead of Ben)...I would have talked to her about this being the name of a person...a homonym? yeah, a homonym..

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Sara: Do they like doing this?...writing sentences?

Meg: Some do, some don't...they just flat out don't like to write anything much...when they have to think up sentences, they may just write one sentence and that's good enough! This (spelling sentences) is easier because they do it a lot. (Part of the classroom routine) I don't know if they don't like to write...they say a lot, "I don't know what to write, I don't know what to write...there's a few that do.

**Journal:**

First Week
The high point of my week was when I started feeling comfortable teaching the spelling on Thursday. I felt like I had the student's attention and I felt confident in what I was doing.
The low point was when I had the class to myself the whole morning. I did the math meeting board, spelling and their language exercise. The teacher had left the room and usually we do reading at 10:30. She did not tell me what to have them do and I can't do reading without her. She didn't return until lunchtime -it was crazy.
Classroom management and transitions. I learned that you have to use different techniques to get their attention and I learned that things go much smoother with smooth transitions, but I'm still working on this.
Transitions and class management and getting the students more involved. The only thing I planned was the extension for the story time. I did a flannel board. Next time I would let the students put the pieces up, but I would make enough pieces for everyone.
Questions about classroom management and how much I should help the student's with their work.

Nov. 1 - Nov. 5
This the students seemed very hard to control. My low point was on Wednesday when I had trouble getting the students to focus their attention on me. I felt like they were paying less attention to me this week than they had in weeks before. I talked to my cooperating teacher one day. I told her that was very frustrated and I felt like I was doing something wrong because the students were not focusing at all. Mrs. Brown said it was not my fault, that they do that to her sometimes. Mrs. Brown gave me a suggestion for when the students start getting really loud.

She said that instead of trying to talk over them I should just stop talking and wait until they all stopped talking.
Thursday I tried this strategy. When they started getting loud before English, I told them I would just wait until after they were ready to listen and that we would do our English now or they could talk now and do their English during center time (they love center time). This worked pretty well, they quieted down to listen.

Nov. 8 - Nov. 12
This week I really felt good about most everything. I'm starting to feel a lot more confident about teaching. I feel like I am starting to gain a few more strategies to keep the children focused. Although, I still get really frustrated, I think what frustrates me the most is that there are two children that I have to spend most of my time with. One child is Spanish and she needs help with everything. The other student is a boy who was new about 3 or 4 weeks ago. He always acts tired and he just sits there and will not do his work. He does have a lot of trouble reading, but he won't do his work and stay on task unless you are right there to help him. I know he can do it on his own, because there are 1 or 2 days he has worked very well on his own. But other days he just seems very "out of it". I feel like I really have to give the other children a lot less attention.

Nov. 15 - Nov. 19
This entire week we did whole group reading instead of two groups. I like working with the smaller group better, but sometimes book club can be a little loud if there is no teacher back there. My cooperating teacher and I had lunch room duty on Friday. There was a boy out of our class sitting by himself. My cooperating teacher talked to him and found out that he was sitting by himself because another boy from the other second grade class told him he couldn't sit by him. The little boy was about to cry. My cooperating teacher had him move over by another little boy who was still eating. This made me realize how important it is to talk to children and find out why they're by themselves and try to help them out with it.

Documentation - When I look at my student's papers, I can read what they write and use this to make various judgments about their level of understanding. By looking at their paper, I can tell if they are using capital letters, end marks and spelling word wall words correctly. I can also tell if they understand what is being studied by the content of what they write.

CONSENT FORM

"I,_____, hereby authorize or direct Sara Davis_____, to perform the following research project:"

Procedure: Participating student teachers will engage in conversational interviews for the purpose of providing the study with information about the use of reflection when documenting children's work. Scheduled interviews will take place during the supervisory visits of participating student teachers. Interviews will be recorded through written notes. The participants will be asked to write a journal entry specific to reflection on documentation of children's work. Participants will be asked to plan an activity, document children's work related to the activity and then reflect on that documentation. Participants will have an opportunity to review interview notes for added comments and/or deleted comments will be negotiated. Participation in the study will have no bearing on any assigned grades.

Duration of Participation: Participants will not be asked for any time outside of their regular university program. Time involved in the study will be no longer than 3 months, 2 weeks (University classes meet for this time period).

Confidentiality: The ethics outlined by the American Psychological Association (APA) will guide this study. This code of ethics instructs researchers to protect their subjects from mental and physical harm and that the best interests of the subjects must be kept foremost in the researcher's mind. No names will be used in the written text of this study. Field notes will be kept in a locked file cabinet for the duration of the study. Upon completion of the study and approval of the dissertation the transcripts of interviews will be destroyed.

Benefits for Participant: Possible benefits for the student teacher participants of this study come from the act of reflection through discussion of their practice. Documentation of children's work is part of the student teaching experience and the emphasis created by this study will support a greater understanding by the student teachers for this teacher activity. By reflecting on their practice through documenting children's work, the student teachers will be able to practice the process required for various certification programs.

This is done as part of an investigation entitled Reflective Practice of Early Childhood Student Teachers In the Documentation of Children's Work.

The purpose of the procedure is to investigate the use of reflection by early childhood student teachers through the documentation of children's work. "I understand that participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty after notifying the project director."

I may contact Sara Davis at (405) 721-8865 or Dr. Kathryn Castle at (405) 744-7125 or FayeAnn Presnal at (405) 744-9519. I may also contact Sharon Bacher, IRB Executive Secretary, 203 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078; telephone number: (405) 744-5700.

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: _____ Time: _____(a.m./pm.)

Signed: _____
Signature of Subject

Witness: _____

"I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject before requesting the subject to sign it."

Signed:

_____

Project Director

**OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY**
**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Date: | August 3, 1999 | IRB #: | ED-00-138 |

Proposal Title: "REFLECTIVE PRACTICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDENT TEACHERS IN THE DOCUMENTATION OF CHILDREN'S WORK"

Principal Investigator(s): Kathryn Castle
Sara Davis
Faye Ann Presnal

Reviewed and Processed as: Expedited

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

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Signature:

Carol Olson

Carol Olson, Director of University Research Compliance

August 3, 1999
Date

Approvals are valid for one calendar year, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modification to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited and exempt projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.

VITA

Sara McCormick Davis

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: Reflective Practice of Early Childhood Student Teachers Through Children's Work

Major Field: Curriculum and Instruction

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, May 10, 1953, the daughter of Albert G. McCormick and Betty J.Hugo McCormick.

Education: Graduated from Edmond High School, Edmond, Oklahoma, May, 1971; received Bachelor of Science degree in Family Relations and Child Development from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 1975; received a Master of Science degree in Early Childhood Education from the University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, Oklahoma in May, 1982; Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University in May,2000.

Professional Experience: Taught private and public school preschool through elementary grades in Edmond,Oklahoma City, and Putnam City, Oklahoma, 1975 through 1998; Adjunct Instructor, University of Central Oklahoma, 1995 and 1996;employed by Oklahoma State University as a graduate assistant in the Department of Family Relations and Child Development, 1998 to the present.

Professional Memberships: Delta Kappa Gamma, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Association for Childhood Education International, National Association for Early Childhood Teacher Educators, Oklahoma Early Childhood Teachers Association