

**EXPRESSED CONCERNS OF BEGINNING  
TEACHERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION**

By

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*Journeys were not meant to be solitary endeavors, they should be looked upon as adventures enriched by all those you meet along the way.*

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

“A beginning teacher is like a plant grown from seed in a greenhouse. The seed sprouts and flourishes under the scrutiny of a master gardener, who knows exactly what is needed for the seedling to grow to the next stage of development. The young seedling becomes acclimated to this idyllic situation where the temperature and amount of light and water are regulated to provide optimal growth. Even the pests and diseases are kept at bay during this nurturing process. Before too long, though, the young plant has outgrown its physical space and is moved to another location where circumstances are not quite as pleasant. Life, for the plant has taken a dramatic turn and it is forced to either adapt or concede to the new set of circumstances. The plants that survive have faced adversity and become stronger, healthier and much more productive. Those plants that cease to live are rooted up to make room for other new seedlings” (Ganser, 1997).

This narrative metaphorically portrays how beginning teachers develop and mature. Teacher candidates are provided a nurturing and protective environment within the institutions of higher learning for a number of years. Once graduated they very quickly face a situation far less familiar and predictable. The beginning teacher is quickly filled with moments of vacillating intense feelings as questions and concerns begin to surface. From the very first day in the classroom conditions can quickly deteriorate from pleasant to disturbing. What support is available for them and where they go for support, during this change of roles, are very critical aspects of their continued growth and development as a teacher.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Beginning teachers come quickly to the realization that the dreams and ideals they had about the teacher they would become, will not be enough to help them survive. "Idealism gives way to pragmatism" (Ryan, 1970, p. 170) as they frantically and earnestly search for answers to their pressing questions and concerns.

Sadly, research reports many beginning teachers across our nation have conceded to the mounting pressures of beginning teaching and left their classrooms. It has been estimated that up to 40% of U.S. teachers will not be teaching until retirement (Terry, 1997). The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF), (1996) reports that nearly one third of all newly hired teachers throughout our nation leave the classroom during their first three years of teaching.

The majority of these talented and dedicated beginning teachers are leaving because they discover they are unable to handle the concerns associated with the profession and have become disenchanted due to a stifling of their enthusiastic goals (Terry, 1997). The disequilibrium that is a necessity for transformation from student to teacher, presents a real threat to these teachers just beginning their journey, and should be critically addressed if we are to check their exodus from the profession and assist in their growth (Britzman, 1986).

Even though there is a strong realization that teachers are critical agents in our nations' classrooms many lack the support of mentors and administrators who are aware or able to perceive their needs and provide assistance and resources to help them find their way. Beginning teachers of young children are learning to establish a professional identity and need informed guidance from supporters who are knowledgeable about the



concerns prevalent during their induction to teaching, and are willing and able to assist them in their effort.

Carothers (as cited in Ayers, 1995) has found from her own personal experiences "a student's success is strongly linked with good teaching-teaching that is engaging, innovative, respectful of differences, and challenging" (p. 27). Kamii (1981) believes that teachers can, through their interactions with children, either foster or hinder children's development. The "moment-by-moment moves" (Kilbourn, 1991, p.725) a teacher makes over time are as critical to teaching as they are consequential to the learner. "Actively fostering the professional development and competence of these new teachers will contribute to their personal and program enhancement" (Gratz & Boulton, 1996, p. 77) throughout their teaching careers.

It is critical that efforts be focused toward understanding the concerns of individual beginning early childhood teachers because of their level of effectiveness and their attitudes toward children. Fuller and Bown (1975) state that teaching effectiveness is at its highest stage during the early years of a teacher's career and it is also the most opportune time to improve their teaching, more so than later in their career. Ryan (1970) quotes "studies of teachers' attitudes toward children, based on the widely used Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory, show a sharp decline in positive attitudes toward children during the first year of teaching" (p. 175). In order for others to be supportive and nurturing of beginning teachers, as they move through this particular phase of career development, we need to begin to ask ourselves, "What is it like to be a beginning teacher of young children?" This chapter sets the context for such an investigation into the lives

of a select group of beginning teachers seeking to recover the themes of concern they have encountered on their journey of learning what it is to teach young children.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

If teachers are indeed the agents who are most likely to effect change in the classroom, albeit a hybrid theoretical change, then it seems apparent that attention must be given to the ways in which they think about their work and contemplate instructional choices (Danielson, 1991, p.70).

Even in the best of circumstances, teaching can prove hectic at times and for the first-year teacher it may even well border on frantic. The tasks for novice and experienced teacher are much the same, yet with experience a teacher learns how to more effectively handle circumstances. The beginning teacher struggles to learn to use time effectively, discriminate between important and unimportant tasks, deal with parents, and cover expected material (Bullough, 1989). The skills and understanding that are needed to complete the tasks in teaching successfully means teachers must receive a lot of quality support. Study of the characteristics of beginning teachers in their first years of teaching and also examination of the social settings in which they work will enable others in understanding how much help, support, and training these teachers require (Veenman, 1984).

Currently, 40 percent of teachers leave the teaching profession within their first five years due to disillusionment often involving stress (Wilkins-Canter, 2000).

Knowledge of the problems and concerns the beginning teacher faces in their entry into

the classroom may provide strategic information for the improvement and redesigning of preservice and inservice programs (Veenman, 1984).

It is critical to help novice teachers during their induction years handle both their academic and psychological needs so they may experience a greater amount of satisfaction, increased productivity, thereby assisting our schools in lowering attrition rates among new teachers (Wilkins-Canter, 2000). The challenges facing education place certain demands on the classroom teacher. One of those demands is for the teacher to be a competent scholar (Darling-Hammond, 2001). Teachers must keep current with curriculum, school organizational structure, methods and materials of instruction, and research about learning and child growth and development. The difficulty for most new teachers lies in the fact that the areas in which they must keep current are constantly expanding. Teachers in the lower grades, have a wider variety of curriculum areas in which to be knowledgeable. Fosnot (1989) expands on this thought by stating that the beginning elementary teachers are expected to be equally informed in up-to-date information in the areas of science, social studies, mathematics and language arts. Because teachers at this level do not major in anything specific and miss out on the intensive study associated with certain disciplines they often fail to learn anything in substantial depth. The beginning teachers many times are left feeling overwhelmed and incompetent to teach in some of the areas designated to them (Fosnot, 1989).

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this study will be to recover themes of concern beginning early childhood teachers have in teaching young children. The research questions that will guide this study will be:

How do beginning early childhood teachers define concern in relation to teaching?

What are the concerns about teaching that can be retrieved through a personal dialogue with beginning early childhood teachers who have taught one year, two years, or three years that has influenced who they are today?

How is the context of each teacher's life space reflected in the types of concerns they express during the interviews?

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Taking time and effort to understand the lived experiences of beginning teachers is a complex process of captivating every aspect of their thoughts and actions during their first years, in other words coming to understand their life space. This study is not intended to simply depict a pictorial account of concern in the lives of six beginning early childhood teachers. The attempt is to explore the depth of what it is to be a teacher and how they have dealt with the struggles they have had in coming to know what it is to be a beginning teacher, a glimpse of the journey on which they have embarked. It is through the experience I become a sojourner into my own learning and knowing about the part of my world I hold most dear, what it means to teach and what it takes to care for students.

The purpose of this study will be to interview early childhood teachers in their first three years of teaching in an attempt to understand more fully what van Manen (1990) defines as their “lifeworld” (pg. 7) and deepen our understanding of concerns of beginning early childhood teachers. A “lifeworld” is “the world of the natural attitude of everyday life, which Husserl described as the original, pre-reflective, pre-theoretical attitude” (pg. 7). Boccia (1991) states that although many studies about beginning teachers’ concerns focus primarily on the first year other research studies have been conducted which highlight the importance of studying a much longer teacher induction period. In her study of beginning elementary teachers, Boccia (1991) found a change in their emerging competence and concerns transpired over their first three years in the classroom by using a breakdown of the teachers’ concerns and successes. It was also stated that this type of information further validated a closer examination of teacher responses in the context of variables in their school environment. In addition the study should take place over a three-year period rather than simply the first year.

In the past much of what has been published about teacher concerns has been in a questionnaire format. Using questionnaires is effective if the objective is to simply enumerate teachers’ concerns and gather data about the frequency and intensity of those concerns. It is probable a teachers’ concerns may vary according to the specific job related tasks and individual personality characteristics of the teacher from day to day and year to year (Schipull, Reeves & Kazelskis, 1995). An examination of the expressed concerns and narrative about beginning teachers’ experiences from a “person-specific and situation-specific” perspective is imperative (Veenman, 1984, p.168).

This study will attempt to gather information from six individual early childhood teachers in order to gain first-hand knowledge of what the expressed concerns are in being a beginning teacher. Information about early childhood teachers' concerns is not prolific as is the concerns about elementary, and secondary teachers. Katz' (1972) study discusses the stages of development early childhood teachers move through with special attention given to the specific needs they have for professional development during each stage. The study does not, however, include how the information was gathered nor what the level of experience was for the teachers she studied. Studies conducted with early childhood teachers and their specific concerns is lacking in published studies and in addition in-depth interviewing has not been a consideration in studying this population of the teaching force. A deeper understanding of what teachers' are concerned about within each phase of their beginning teaching experience is a prerequisite to development of procedures and strategies to plan and implement effective professional development and increase teacher effectiveness (Sanacore, 1995).

## BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Teaching is not simplistic but can be characterized as an uncertain, unpredictable and complex endeavor (Shulman, 1996) and further complicated because of each teacher's individual teaching context and personal characteristics. Schon (as cited in Bowman, 1995) states, "The practice of teaching is an art that eludes technical description, analysis, and systematization" (p.34). "All who teach are expected to possess a good measure of such personal, moral, and social qualities as honesty, courage, justice, firmness, persistence, kindness, sense of humor, tact, and the blanket term,

personality” (Davis, 1920, p, 313). The expectations of what a teacher was expected to be in the 1920’s mirrors the high expectations we continue to hold for those persons who teach our children today. In short they must be all things to all people and do it well.

Learning to be a teacher is learning to know oneself, learning to know what works as well as learning what children know and have experienced. All of this cannot be accomplished in the beginning year of a teacher’s life, nor during the first few years. The process of becoming a teacher is never ending and is broached in both past and present literature as a developmental process enriched by the individual’s resolve and personal attributes.

Fuller’s study (1969) with preservice and inservice teachers characterized teaching as a series of developmental sequences. Within each level of teaching experience there were particular needs and concerns which must be addressed and resolved before the teacher could move into the next stage. These were defined as the self, task, and impact stages. A later study by Fuller (as cited in George, 1978) concluded teachers are concerned about at least three basic kinds of concern – concern about self-survival, concern about the task of teaching, and concern about the impact that teaching has on students’ learning. Differences in the perceptions of concerns expressed by the teachers surfaced in differing degrees within each of the developmental stages identified.

Katz (1972) describes development and professional growth of preschool teachers as composed of four stages, the survival stage, consolidation stage, renewal stage, and maturity stage. Within each of the stages she details the differing needs as well as types of training preschool teachers should be receiving during each developmental phase of their careers. A rationale for obtaining this information from her study was not provided

although it is understood that her descriptions are specifically geared to the early childhood teachers who are working with very young children.

Steffy, Wolf, Pasch, and Enz (2000) not only describe a teacher's career in developmental phases, but also present them in a prescriptive fashion that can enhance their teaching performance and enrich the teaching profession. These authors advocate a more unique perspective on the development of teachers by promoting a plan whereby they can maintain excellence throughout their lifetime.

Concerns are a normal dimension of the teachers' growth process, one variable in the developmental process, howbeit, a very important one and should not be viewed in a negative light (Boccia, 1989). The manner in which beginning teachers, or any teacher addresses their concerns will in turn determine if those concerns have a positive or negative impact on their professional decisions and growth throughout their teaching careers as well as upon their students (Kamii, 1981). Identification of a beginning teachers' concerns will assist in intervention and adopting support procedures in addressing the teacher's concerns before they lead to stress and burnout (Schipull, et al., 1995).

Teaching is a human venture built from an understanding of individual experiences a person accrues during their own years of schooling. "Beliefs about classroom pedagogy often are derived from experiences in place before teachers begin undergraduate courses." (Vartuli, 1999, p. 3). People choose to teach for a number of reasons and fulfill a variance of "conscious and unconscious needs" (Ryan, 1970, p. 164). What the beginning teacher has seen, felt and heard up until the time they enter their teacher education program will guide the ways in which they will continue to perceive



and react to any future teaching experiences they will encounter in teaching (Fosnot, 1996). Beson and Berault (as cited in Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch, and Enz, 2000) use the phrase “interpretive lens” (p.36) to describe the role their past plays in scrutinizing future situations they experience in their teaching. Bullough (1989) interjects that the personal characteristics of the beginning teacher, such as their “attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions – are important factors influencing how an individual teacher responds to a given teaching context” (pg. 2).

A teacher’s influence on students they teach can be perceived in a variety of ways. “In virtually every instance in which researchers have examined the factors that account for student performance, teachers prove to have a greater impact than the program” (Darling-Hammond, 1999, p. 128). Growing and developing is essential if educators desire to build a better understanding of who they are and what teaching is all about in order to affect student learning in a positive manner and it can’t be expected to happen immediately. Professional growth is a consistent gradual process of accommodating the past with the present in order to develop more effectual teaching practices (Fosnot, 1996). The concerns teachers face each and every year should be looked upon as motivation to improve in all aspects as a professional.

Educators need to be viewed and view themselves as professionals who know what they need to develop and are able to seek those opportunities which will best benefit them (Glickman, 2002). If professional development opportunities for beginning teachers are to be effective and sustainable long-range, it is important that the design be tailored to these teachers’ specific needs and enhance their competencies so teachers are able to build on their personal strengths and address professional needs (Seng, 1998). Teachers

of both primary and secondary education reported highest rates of satisfaction with teaching when the school in which they taught “provided conditions which encouraged their full professional development”(Veenman, 1987, p. 9).

Decisions teachers make must be based on more than intuitive thought (Kamii, 1981). A teacher will have to understand that the actions they take will be observed by parents, administrators and colleagues and will be of more value and supportable if they have roots in sound theory (Sanacore, 1995). Teachers should understand what they do and why they are engaging in certain practices based on what research tells us about best practice. In being able to substantiate their methods and philosophy of teaching with research they can refrain from backing down to pressure from parents, administrators, and the general educational community when a new fad appears or the “pendulum swings” (p. 7) in another direction (Kamii, 1981).

Brooks and Brooks (1993), state that professional development needs to extend beyond current inservice practices. “Although a good deal of money is spent on staff development in the United States, most is spent on sessions and workshops that are often intellectually superficial, disconnected from deep issues of curriculum and learning, fragmented and noncumulative” (Darling-Hammond, 1999, p. 4). For early childhood teachers, professional development ought to include ample opportunities for them to reflect, synthesize and collaborate with other professionals. Without incorporating reflection, synthesizing, and collaboration activities, teachers' practice can become repetitive, routine, less creative and satisfying (Wolfe, 2000). The greatest opportunities for effective growth are derived from teachers who perform a “systematic inquiry into his, or her, own teaching and learning” (Stallworth, 1998, p. 77).

Studies have found that children's performance is critically tied to the attitudes and level of skills of early childhood teachers (Rust, 1993). Child development research further substantiates that when the teachers of young children are able to apply skills and beliefs to their practice that are based on current and appropriate research, there are positive effects on children's learning (Seng, 1998). If teachers fail to take advantage of growth opportunities they become less responsive to the needs of children with whom they interact and less prepared to deal with classroom situations they confront on a daily basis (Jewett, 1998).

Implications from the investigation of beginning early childhood teachers' concerns may present a more conclusive picture in providing assistance in helping them survive their first years of teaching. Information gathered from this type of study can more specifically be used by institutions of higher learning in designing programs for early childhood teachers, by school administrators where beginning teachers practice, and by the various support systems that work with beginning early childhood teachers.

Teachers need to be reminded that their dedication to the children they teach is affected by their dedication to their professional growth no matter what stage of teaching they are in (Hill & Beers, 1993).

#### DEFINITION OF TERMS

Autonomy – For this study autonomy will refer to Piaget's theory in which he defines autonomy as "the ability of an individual to be self-governing – in the moral realm as well as in the intellectual realm. Autonomy is the ability to think for oneself and to decide between right and wrong in the moral realm and between truth and untruth in the

intellectual realm by taking all relevant factors into account, independently of rewards or punishments” (Kamii, 1994, p. 673).

Beginning teacher – For the purpose of this study-beginning teacher, residency teacher, apprentice teacher, novice teacher and entry-level teacher will all describe the teacher who is planning, delivering, and assessing all lessons. This particular phase of teaching begins when the teacher candidate receives his or her first responsibilities in planning and preparing for their own class. Typically this stage or phase of the teacher’s development includes the induction period and extends into the second or third year of teaching (Veenman, 1984).

Burnout – “Burnout is a very complex concept that most educational investigators generally agree, “is a negative psychological phenomenon which occurs in an individual. It can be categorized into three areas: emotional exhaustion; depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment” (Hewitt, 1993, p.2). Burnout is “the syndrome resulting from prolonged teacher stress” (Schipull, et al., 1995, pg. 27).

Constructivism - "is a theory about knowledge and learning; it describes both what 'knowing' is and how one 'comes to know.' ... the theory describes knowledge as temporary, developmental, nonobjective, internally constructed, and socially and culturally mediated" (Fosnot, 1996, p. ix).

Constructivist view of teaching - "... suggests an approach to teaching that gives learners the opportunity for concrete, contextually meaningful experiences through which they can search for patterns, raise their own questions, and construct their own models, concepts, and strategies” (Fosnot, 1996, p. ix).

Constructivist education – is based on “a theory that explains learning as a process of construction from within the individual, rather than one of internalization or absorption from the environment” (Kamii, 1982, p.5).

Early childhood education – Early childhood education is most generally recognized as programs that are appropriate for children ages birth through eight-years (Bredekemp & Cople, 1997). Children can be defined in any one of three different perspectives: (1) chronological age, (2) developmental, and (3) by grade level (Guillo, 1992).

Efficacy – The definition of efficacy in this study will mean “the belief that teachers can have a positive effect on student learning. Research indicates that a teachers’ sense of efficacy is an important causal influence on their practice and their students’ learning” (Smith, 1996, p. 388).

High quality professional development – High quality professional development in this study refers to the “rigorous and relevant content, strategies, and organizational support that ensure the preparation and career-long development of teachers and others whose competence, expectations and actions influence the teaching and learning environment” (Education Week on the Web, 1999).

Life-space – Kurt Lewin, a theorist during the 1920’s and 1930’s, viewed the child’s life space as the summation of all the forces influencing a child’s thought processes at the moment the child is making a decision about how to act. In this study the definition will be extended to the beginning early childhood teacher to denote all the forces that influence the teacher’s thought processes at the moment the child is making a decision about how to act. (R. Murray Thomas, 1979).

Lifeworld – “This is the world of the natural attitude of everyday life which Husserl described as the original, pre-reflective, pre-theoretical attitude” (van Manen, 1990, p. 7).

NAEYC – The National Association for the Education of Young Children, the nation’s largest professional organization of early childhood educators and has assumed a leadership role in adopting guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice (Bredekemp & Copple, 1997).

Participants – For the purpose of this study the term “participant” will be used to signify the person(s) being interviewed. Participant reflects an active stance of the person being interviewed as well as a “sense of equity” (p. 8) established in the interviewer-interviewee relationship (Seidman, 1991).

Professional – “Someone who possesses a body of knowledge, skills, and practices that must be continually tested and upgraded with colleagues. A professional field is one that prizes constant dissatisfaction with one’s own practice with current clients as the core to better service to clients in the future” (Glickman, 2002, p.4).

Professional development – In relation to teachers, is defined as activities that promote continued improvement of professional skills and opportunities and allows for acquisition of knowledge and skills they need to remain life-long learners (Dilworth & Imig, 1995). In this study other terms which will be used which are synonymous with professional development are staff development, inservice training, and inservice workshops.

Professional journals – Periodicals published exclusively for the purpose of advancing a particular field or profession. Professional journals contain information and news of interest to its readership: (1) activities of colleagues; (2) current and future organizational

activities/meetings; (3) information on research, inventions, discoveries, new procedures, and new movements. Some of the journals reflect the opinion of the professional organization and some do not. The target audience is largely made up of practicing and prospective professionals. A journal index published specifically for education-related journals is the Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE) and covers approximately 780 major education-related journals (Dejnozka & Kapel, 1982).

Reflection - It is the opportunity for the ideas encountered in educational coursework or practice to be transformed into a meaningful framework through practical application and discussion with peers, teachers, and mentors (Bowman, 1995, p.34).

Resident Teacher Program – This program was implemented as a result of 70 O.S.,§6-195, 1995 (State Department of Education, 1998). The intent of this legislation is to establish qualifications for teachers in the accredited schools of the state through licensing and certification requirements in order to ensure that teachers of demonstrated ability will provide the education for the children of the state. House Bill 1549 requires the licensed teacher to participate in the Residency Program during the initial year of teaching in an accredited school under the guidance and assistance of a residency committee in order for the teacher to qualify for a teaching certificate in the state (State Department of Education, p.1).

Stages of teaching or Stages of development in teaching – Katz (1972) refers to teachers themselves having developmental sequences in their professional growth patterns, linked to experience the teacher gains through practice. Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch & Enz, (2000) also consider the stages of development, as a progression of developmental phases teachers experience throughout the life cycle of teaching.

Teacher concerns – Expressions of felt need, which most likely occupy the focus of the teacher and possess the ability to motivate or decrease motivation during each stage of teaching (Clyde, 1990). Fuller is recognized as conceptualizing the concerns of teachers into three categories: concerns about self, concerns about the tasks in teaching, and concerns with impact of teaching on pupils (Parsons & Fuller, 1974). A differentiation between concerns and problems is made by Boccia (1989) by stating that the word “problem” (p. 3) gives a negative connotation and that many concerns cited in literature about beginning teachers were not necessarily problems, but were issues of importance. Veenman (1987) defines problem as “a difficulty that beginning teachers encounter in the performance of their task, which hinders the achievement of intended goals” (p. 5). Hall (1977) defines concern as “the composite representation of the feelings, preoccupation, thought, and consideration given to a particular issue or task” (p.5). The New Webster Dictionary and Thesaurus (1993) defines concern as “a matter of direct interest or importance to one, a share of interest, anxiety or worry” (p. 202).

Teacher Stress – is defined by Kyriacou (as cited in Schipull, et al., 1995) as “the experience of unpleasant emotions resulting from aspects of work as a teacher” (p. 27).



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### INTRODUCTION

A person choosing to become a teacher has spent possibly sixteen to eighteen years in preparation for the task of having his or her own classroom. The majority of this time has been spent as an onlooker, observer of the actions of others already in the role of teacher. They have garnered information from many different sources about what teaching is like, what a teacher should be and what a classroom should consist of. The beginning teachers' philosophy has been established, up to the point of entry into their own classroom, from an idealistic point of view. Upon entering the classroom arena their perspective on teaching will quickly be challenged in varying degrees. Ryan (1986) states this entry into teaching for many beginning teachers is "the major struggle of their lives, the struggle to master their chosen profession" (pg. 7).

Struggling is not a concept unique to teaching. Many other professionals exhibit anxiety as they venture into the job market. There are moments of intense frustration whether you are a beginning accountant, lawyer, or sales clerk. The biggest difference in the frustrations of a beginning teacher and many other professionals, beginning a career they have been trained to do, is the effect on the people with whom they will work. Teachers will be engaged in working with children whose minds, attitudes, and futures will be shaped by what they do in the classroom.

The media is quick to remind the public of the influence teachers have on their students. They are the first to land the crippling blow on public school educators when

they focus the blame for truancy, discipline problems, failing grades, low test scores, drug use, teenage pregnancy, and student violence on teachers (Clayton, 2001, p. 18). New programs are designed to improve teacher training and performance on a regular basis in conjunction with news reports. The public education systems contribute to the frustrations of teaching by requiring teachers to take on a “dizzying array of new challenges such as:

- helping students meet unprecedented academic standards,
- being held accountable for student test scores,
- competing with charter-school and voucher-supported education innovations,
- using new technologies for teaching and professional growth, and
- instructing students in matters of character as well as academics” (Camphire, 2001, pg. 6).

What is really necessary to improve the education process and teachers’ abilities to meet student needs is a stronger support system. When schools fail to support the beginning teacher and foster teachers’ growth throughout their career students’ ability to succeed can be affected (Darling-Hammond, 1999).

Teaching is depicted in research as a developmental process (Fuller, 1969, Katz, 1972, Veenman, 1987, Ryan, 1986, Steffy, et. al., 2000). The stages of teacher development are not all categorized in similar fashion, but each researcher looks upon teaching as developing on “a continuum from novice to expert” (Steffy, et. al., 2000, pg. 4). Within each phase or stage of the teacher’s development each researcher describes particular concerns, needs, and training requirements experienced by the teacher at that particular point in their career. In order for teachers to experience growth, the particular

concerns occupying their thoughts must be addressed and qualified individuals must enact support.

With so many beginning teachers becoming discouraged during their first three years of teaching it is imperative that we examine how they perceive the task of teaching, what they are concerned about, and what can be done to support them through these difficult years.

### STAGES OF TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

“Teachers can generally be counted on to talk about developmental needs and stages when they discuss children. It may be equally meaningful to think of teachers themselves as having developmental sequences in their professional growth patterns” (Katz, 1972, pg. 9).

Veenman (1987) writes that there are three different ways in which to approach the process of studying teacher development. Each approach views the teacher, teaching and their developmental needs from a different vantage point. Thus, allowing those wishing to truly understand what the life of a beginning teacher is like to gain a fuller understanding and appreciation of the process.

The first approach discussed by Veenman (1987) is “the empirically constructed theory of teacher development” (pg. 20). This approach presents components or steps of a teacher’s development for the benefit of teacher educators as well as the learner in setting goals and procedures which will be tailored to the personal needs of the individual learner (Veenman, 1987). The second approach concerning teacher development looks at the teacher as an adult learner. Cognitive development assumes that a person develops as

changes in cognitive structures take place. This cognitive development approach draws from the theories and ideas of several notable individuals such as Piaget, Kohlberg, Loevinger, and Hunt (Veenman, 1987). Viewing beginning teachers' entry into the profession from the perspective of socialization is the last approach Veenman discusses. By examining how teachers socialize into the school setting the focus is turned to the "interplay between individuals' needs, capabilities, beliefs, intentions and institutional constraints" (Veenman, 1987, pg. 23).

Some of the more prominent researchers who have studied teacher development include the late Francis Fuller and Lillian Katz. Fuller and her associates studied preservice and inservice teachers through various inventories and interviews. What they developed was a theory that described three distinguishable phases of development, which they felt were essential to improvement of teacher education. The phases of concern experienced by teachers during the different stages in their careers are described by George (1978), one of Fuller's associates. The first phase, entitled "concern about self" (pg.1), the beginning teachers' focus is mostly on themselves, their adequacies in being able to survive, in controlling a class of students, and being liked by the students. The second phase of Fuller's theory, George describes, is entitled concern about the task of teaching. It is during this phase of a teacher's career that their focus revolves around teaching situation concerns such as methods and materials, and student's mastery of skills. The last stage in Fuller's theory is concern about impact that a teacher's methods have on their student's learning, their social and emotional needs, and helping the students to value learning (George, 1978). Her conceptualization of teacher development,

as it relates to the concerns experienced in different stages of teaching, continues to influence on-going research on teacher development.

Katz' (1972) research focuses on the developmental stages of the preschool teacher and describes specific training needs they require at each point in their development. Each of these developmental stages may vary in length of time depending on the individual teacher. Stage I, the survival stage, can last through the first full year of teaching. The teacher is preoccupied with whether or not he or she can survive. Teachers at this stage require more technical, on-site support. Stage II, the consolidation stage, lasts anywhere from the end of the first year into the third year. Teachers will usually begin to focus on consolidation of the gains they made during their first year of teaching and begin to identify specific tasks and skills they must master next. Additionally, it is during this time that they begin to question and seek answers on how to help individual children overcome problems. Renewal, the Stage III descriptor, is often identified as taking place during a teacher's third or fourth year. Teachers begin to tire of doing things the same way year after year and begin to seek out other professionals at conferences, through professional organization affiliation, visits to demonstration sites, and garner information from professional journals. The last of the four stages, Katz (1972) refers to as the Maturity Stage. Some teachers may reach this stage as early as their third year, others in five or more years. The teacher at this stage has come to understand himself or herself more fully as "teacher" and their perspective is characterized by deeper, more meaningful questions. Reflection by the teacher at the Maturity Stage, turns to questions such as "What is the nature and growth of learning?" and "What are my historical and philosophical roots?" (pg. 11).

Other researchers have continued to be influenced by the writings of Fuller and Katz and expanded on them in different ways. One such group, Steffy, et. al., (2000), also consider the stages of development among teachers in their book, Life Cycle of the Career Teacher. The model they present is what they term “an advocacy model” (pg. 3) based on the premise that all teachers have the ability to become excellent teachers within their first five years of teaching. This model portrays activity and progression not just description of what transpires in the development of a teacher’s career. The objective in creation of this model is to instill in teachers the desire to “strive for, achieve, and maintain a standard of excellence that provides all children with competent, caring, and qualified teachers” (p. 2).

The model proposed by Steffey, et. al., (2000) has been developed through review of pertinent literature and their systematic observations of teachers. The particular unique trait is the focus on how a teacher can continue to grow and become more competent in their practice along a continuum. The phases in this model of teacher development are the Novice, the Apprentice, the Professional, the Expert, the Distinguished, and lastly, the Emeritus. Each of the phases described occur in a developmental sequence and are more influenced by cognitive growth rather than specific time periods. The Novice Phase begins during the preservice training practicum and continues through the student teaching or intern experience. The Apprentice phase, for most teachers starts when they have the responsibility for planning and delivering instructions on their own. This phase includes the induction year and may extend into the second or third year of teaching. A teacher in the Professional phase is growing in their self-confidence as an educator. These are the teachers that form the backbone of our profession and are described as

“competent, solid and dependable” (pg. 7) educators. The Expert phase of teaching symbolically includes those teachers exemplifying the requirements for national board certification, although they may not seek to do so. Teachers described as “expert” in their field hold leadership roles in a variety of professional organizations and desire to remain on the cutting edge of teaching. Distinguished teachers are those who are considered truly gifted in the field of education. These teachers will impact education in a much broader arena than their local school and community. Distinguished teachers will be recognized among recipients of the National State Teachers of the Year and other such honorable titles. The last teacher phase discussed by Steffy, et. al. (2000) is the Emeritus phase. These teachers are the ones that may leave the classroom, but continue to be involved in the profession, enriching the lives of a much broader audience. Not all teachers will achieve to this level of competence in their development and therefore the Emeritus teachers deserve much recognition and praise.

We have looked at three developmental sequences of a teacher. Each view has and will play a significant role in the way we observe teachers, the way we support teachers and the manner in which we emulate their successes. In this study the focus will center on the phases and stages that concern beginning teachers and the role of support and professional development have in their professional growth continuum.

## TEACHER CONCERNS

New teachers, who enter the profession despite low salaries, are overwhelmed with the wide range of challenges they face in and out of the classroom. Teacher education programs often don't prepare them to deal with personal safety issues,

discipline management problems, and school politics.... Feeling alone and desperate, most rookies move on without knowing how often all teachers feel overwhelmed and inadequate (Clayton, p. 18).

The word concern has a certain variance of meaning throughout professional literature. Many of the studies, which focus on beginning teacher concerns, have acknowledged the presence of concerns not as problematic but as issues of importance that permeate an experience. It is therefore important to remind ourselves that there are certain significant issues which conscientious teachers at all levels of the professional spectrum should be contemplating (Boccia, 1989). The concerns about teaching should be regarded with utmost importance as they serve as indicators of a felt need on the part of teachers. These concerns can in turn serve as motivators for additional inquiry into a teacher's practice and be addressed through relevant professional development (Clyde, 1991).

When beginning teachers are faced with concern about their teaching performance, student achievement, or the impact they have upon students they also experience varying levels of stress. Often times the apprentice teacher lacks effective support systems as they become acclimated to teaching and the mounting stress can cause them to assume a survival mode and eventually burnout (George, 1978). Unresolved concerns beginning teachers encounter will ultimately influence that teacher's ability to provide quality instruction and maintain vitality in the classroom and thus interfere with students' learning. Teacher quality is strongly linked to a student's achievement as evidenced in this statement by Kamii (1981) "early childhood teachers have an enormous amount of influence" on children's learning and development (p. 5).



How beginning teachers feel and react to their first experiences in the classroom offer dramatic insights to all who work closely with them and to the teachers themselves. Within a short time these new teachers begin to look upon themselves as the only ones to feel a certain way about their experiences (Ganzer, 1997). Prior studies about the teaching profession characterize it to be a lonely endeavor. A study conducted by Britzman (1986) found the basis of this attitude could be related to cultural myths of teaching garnered from their past experiences as students, as well as from higher education institutions. She describes these cultural myths as providing “a set of ideal images, definitions, justifications and measures for thought and activity, a language for codifying what a culture values” (p.448). The three recurring themes in her study were (1) “everything depends on the teacher;” (2) “the teacher is the expert;” and (3) “teachers are self-made” (p. 448). The philosophical underpinning of such myths is played out in the attitude that a beginning teacher asking for help is a sign of weakness on their part. The beginning teacher has had years of observing the life and practice of many teachers as a student. They are now experiencing things from a totally different perspective. The process of “becoming a teacher” is often marked with self-doubt, instability, and uncertainty and can be a painful experience (Britzman, 1985).

Francis Fuller became interested in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s with the developing concerns of preservice teachers. Fuller had conducted a pilot study using hour-long interviews with 100 education students. The responses gathered from personal interviews revealed significant differences of opinion concerning a particular education course they all had been enrolled in. Three of the students were remarkably enthusiastic about the course while the other 97 students expressed critical remarks about the same

course. Dr. Fuller began to question if it was the experience that made a difference in the attitudes of the participants or other variables such as age or life experiences (Fuller, 1969)

This hypothesis led Fuller to conduct yet another study interviewing small groups of prospective teachers at the beginning of their preservice training and at the end of their training. She coupled her findings with research published elsewhere. What she discovered was a dichotomy of concerns expressed by these fourteen individual prospective teachers. On the one hand there were concerns that could be associated with self, and on the other hand were concerns with pupils. A shift from one type of concern to the other occurred within the time period that the interviews took place. This indicated to her that the concerns about teaching might also change with experience (Fuller, 1969).

Fuller continued to build on her research with yet another study made up of twenty-nine different student teachers, being advised by four different supervisors. In this study subjects were asked to respond to a statement, "What you are concerned about now" in two week intervals over the course of their student teaching. Themes appearing in the student teachers' responses showed that the teachers were all "concerned with self-adequacy and/or class control." None of the participants primary concern centered on what the pupils were learning. This study supported the "posited dichotomy between concern with self and concern with pupils" that Fuller (1969) had noted in her previous studies (p. 214).

Again she turned to studying the current research and asserted that instead of there being two phases of concern, three phases of concern existed in the life of a teacher. The first phase was labeled the "pre-teaching phase," the second was "an early teaching

phase” and the last, “the late teaching phase” (Fuller, 1969, p. 218). One of her concluding comments indicated that “the conceptualization of teacher development ... might eventually contribute to some longer chain” (p. 222), and indeed that has happened as evidenced by the additional studies that have been conducted on the premise to further investigate Fuller’s original thesis.

Adams (1980) tested Fuller’s theory of teacher concerns with 112 student teachers, 72 first year teachers, and 83 third and fifth year teachers. His objectives were to replicate the three-factor solution of the TCQ by George in 1978, and to explore the progression of the teachers concerns across the differing experience levels in order to test the self-task-impact concern theory proposed by Fuller in 1969. The time period for his study included 1977, 1978, and 1979. Adams (1980) identified additional factors in relation to the different experience levels of the participants. The second objective of his study supported the findings of Fuller (1969) and George (1978) that a decrease in self concerns can be noted as the teacher’s level of experience increases.

Boccia (1989) surveyed graduates of the University of Lowell who had completed their teacher certification in secondary education to determine their instructional concerns as beginning teachers; their non-instructional concerns; what help and assistance they wanted; the nature and extent of orientation given to beginning teachers; and the support available to them while they were on the job. An attempt was made with this study to relate the findings to the respondents’ characteristics. A 197-item survey was distributed to 71 secondary certification graduates with 32 of the original sample returning the questionnaires. While the range of concerns was diverse they were still found to be

consistent with other studies about beginning teachers. Implications from this study were aimed at improving a support program for the universities' graduates.

Boccia (1991) conducted a second study to assess the concerns of beginning elementary teachers. The focus of this study was to determine the concerns of beginning elementary teachers; identify their perceived successes; learn the extent of orientation provided to them; ascertain the kinds of professional support they received from their fellow teachers and administration; identify the kinds of professional assistance they needed; and relate the findings from these objectives to such variables as year of teaching, age of respondent, classroom structure, kind of community, and work conditions. Graduates were mailed a 201-item questionnaire, a version of the one developed for her 1989 study. Out of 115 graduates, 68 returned the completed questionnaires, which showed beginning elementary teachers give more weight to concerns of an instructional nature over those that were of an administrative or organizational nature.

A study examining the needs of beginning early childhood teachers in their first year of work in primary schools, kindergartens, or child care centers in Australia was conducted by Clyde and Ebbeck (1991). The 65 teacher participants graduated in either 1988, 1989, or 1990 from the de Lissa Institute of Early Childhood Studies or the School of Early Childhood Studies at the University of Melbourne in Australia. A cohort group from each of the universities agreed to submit to answering a questionnaire piloted and adapted for use in this study as well as Fuller's Teacher Concerns Survey (TCS). The findings reveal these beginning teachers expressed concerns over "finding a tenured or contract job, the need for more knowledge about behavior management (called discipline

by the South Australians), the complexities of administration (not necessarily just filling out forms), the need to try to find support for children with specific needs and pressures imposed by advisors and parents when the subject of readiness for school is the topic” (p. 19).

A study conducted by Serk (1981), with early childhood graduates from a church-related teacher education institution, found the participants expressed a “high degree of concern about meeting the needs of different kinds of students, about diagnosing student learning problems, and about whether each student was getting what he needs” (Serk, p. 104). A second aspect of her study revealed participants had very little concern “about lack of instructional materials, about having too many non-instructional duties, about working with too many students each, or about the routine and inflexibility of the teaching situation” (Serk, p. 105).

What Serk’s (1981) study has highlighted is the need to identify concerns of this special population so other beginning teachers may be informed and approach teaching concerns with an understanding that they are a normal part of the development as a teacher. Knowledge of early childhood teachers’ concerns can provide administrators with an informed base from which to design types of intervention necessary to facilitate the resolution of teachers’ concerns. This same information about early childhood teachers’ concerns can prove beneficial to the institutions from which early childhood teachers’ graduate. An awareness of teacher concerns can assist the universities in designing program goals and also in setting up the support systems with schools where early childhood teachers teach.

Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch, and Enz (2000), propose a different direction and continuum of phases to describe teacher development upon synthesizing a number of things that have influence on a teacher's development. The model they propose contains four phases and is of a descriptive and prescriptive nature by describing the progression of development phases that result when teachers strive for excellence in their profession, and prescribes the results for enrichment of the profession when teachers become active participants in their own professional development. Their second phase, the apprentice phase, describes the beginning teacher, one who "plans, delivers, assess all lessons and assumes full responsibility for managing students' learning and behavior" (p. 48). A teacher in this phase has an infinite number of challenges with specific concerns related to those challenges. They have concerns in relation to both their personal and professional needs, they are faced with the realities of being a full-time classroom teacher, and they have to develop the ability to cope with this reality despite the hindrance of "less-than-ideal teaching conditions" (p. 49).

Numerous other studies have been conducted in assessing teacher concerns. Some of the studies reviewed for this piece of research, compared concerns among different categories of teachers, i.e., preservice and inservice teachers (Tanner, 1982; Karge, Sandin & Young, 1993; Thomas & Kiley, 1994; and Marso & Pigge, 1997). Other studies utilized different criteria for comparison among teachers of a specific level in teaching, i.e., age, years of teaching experience, teaching field, or gender (Pigge & Marso, 1987; Pigge & Marso, 1990; and Serck, 1981). Studies by (Budhendwa, 1996; Adams, 1981; Kazelskis & Reeves, 1987; and Schipull, Reeves & Kazelskis, 1995) focused on validating or refuting previous research findings about teacher concern theories.

Throughout all of the studies examined none portrayed the life of a teacher whether preservice, beginning, or experienced, as being without concern at some level of significance. They did show that the concerns teachers' face differ according to the stage of teaching and other variables.

Concerns are a normal part of any life situation and are a very real aspect of a teacher's life. From their preservice training until retirement, teachers' face concerns that differ in type as well as intensity. For a teacher, the ways in which they deal with the concerns determine the effectiveness of their teaching as well as their length of stay in the profession. Identifying and addressing beginning early childhood teachers' concerns should take precedence over the development of any strategies or procedures for alleviating them, therefore, an accurate determination of beginning teacher concerns is necessary (Schipull, et al., 1995).

## BEGINNING TEACHERS

The "apprentice phase" begins when the teacher candidate receives his or her first responsibilities in planning and preparing for their own class. Typically this phase or stage of teaching includes the induction period and extends into the second or third year of teaching (Veenman, 1984).

Descriptors such as "filled with energy," "enthusiastic," and "eager," classify the demeanor of beginning teachers. Their peers and administrators view them, as "idealistic" and they themselves believe they have what it takes to help all students learn. These new teachers are willing to try many of the strategies they observed during their preservice training. Beginning teachers are passionate about what they want to do and are

at the commencement of a lifetime journey. They have begun what has been described as “perhaps the most complex and intellectual and emotional transition on the continuum of teacher development” (Clement, Enz, and Pawlas, p.48).

Unfortunately, one third of this same group of teachers will leave the profession in their first few years of their teaching experience (Clement, Enz, and Pawlas, p. 50). The major reason given for their departure is not the lack of skill but perceived lack of “efficacy” i.e., “the belief that teachers can have a positive effect on student learning” (Smith, 1996, p. 388).

From the outset of their practice, beginning teachers need effective support from colleagues, mentors, and administration. Without the wisdom, caring, and consistent attention from others during this new experience many of these teachers will begin to withdraw into themselves and close the door to opportunities to grow beyond their present state (Clayton, 2001). Pennington (2001) echoes these sentiments by stating, “frustration, often combines with limited support from administrators and the hectic pace of trying to keep up with everything, can cause teachers to slip into a survival mode ...” (p. 1). The anxiety that accompanies the new situation is not the same for every beginning teacher, but they all need encouragement in order to realize they are not the only ones to have felt this way.

Clement, Enz, and Pawlas (2000), describe three areas of concern-beginning teachers’ face. Their first category of concern deals with personal and professional tasks. The apprentice teacher has the psychological need for acceptance and the desire to be viewed as a competent and caring teacher. The second area that affects a majority of beginning teachers is “reality shock” (p. 49). In the preservice phase of teaching they are



learning to develop their teaching skills in the safety of mentors and professors. The beginning teacher works alone in assuming all the roles and responsibilities that were shared during their preservice experiences. Learning to handle everything is compounded with the reality of amounts of time required to bring tasks to completion. The last shared concern among beginning teachers is the teaching conditions into which they have been thrust. For the majority of new teachers, they are given the classrooms without adequate supplies and students with the “greatest behavior or academic challenges” (Clement, et. al., 2000, p. 49).

### EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Early childhood teachers are categorized in professional literature as service-oriented professionals who spend a good portion of their day directly engaged in meeting the diverse needs of children, parents and administrators (Baptiste, 1994). Teachers, as a whole, have been characterized as ‘altruistic’, meaning they are tending to everyone else’s needs before their own (Jalongo, 1991).

For the early childhood teacher, attending to the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of children often times takes precedence over their own self-development. When teachers fail to analyze and reflect on what they do, think and feel burnout is inevitable. The results may affect both emotional and physical abilities to handle work situations and personal interactions effectively (Baptiste, 1994). A teacher’s attitudes and skills are important considerations in an early childhood program as they can have a direct bearing on a child’s performance (Rust, 1993).

Early childhood education has historically been involved in the study of human development and is typically a core component of early childhood education programs. The skills and knowledge base of a beginning early childhood teacher should reflect an understanding of what young children can and cannot do within certain developmental stages. Considerations of what children are capable of doing, what they can understand and what the role of the teacher should be are taken into account when the early childhood teacher plans a curriculum for young children. Young children deserve having parents and most of all knowledgeable teachers who can assist them through their quest of sense-making (Katz & Chard, 1994).

Without a strong grounding in child development and early childhood pedagogy, teachers of young children will be inept in providing children a strong beginning for future learning. A High/Scope Perry Preschool Study, which began in 1969 and includes data on students through age 23, examined the incidences of emotional problems and felony arrests among young people born in poverty. What they found suggests that if a young child born in poverty attends a preschool program based on “child-initiated learning activities focused broadly on children’s development rather than scripted direct instruction focused specifically on academics” they were less likely to experience problems of an emotional nature and also had fewer felony arrests (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1998, pg. 59).

With a knowledge based upon child development and an understanding of the effects a teacher’s attitude and skills have on a child’s future successes in life, is it any wonder that teachers should remain open and take opportunities to develop further themselves? The theory of Constructivism permeates early childhood curriculum and has

had such a significant impact on so many individuals receiving their early childhood degrees. They come away from their class work with an understanding of what it means for a young child to struggle with a concept until it has come to have meaning to them. “The essential element of Piaget’s theory looks at learning as a process that is individually experienced, constructed, interpreted, and maintained” (Jalongo, 1991, p. 4), but are these beginning early childhood teachers able to apply this same attitude towards their own struggles to learn how to teach?

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Beach (as cited in Shanahan, 1998) states very little time, if any, is built into a teacher’s day for collaboration, reflection and synthesizing, the essential elements for growth of a professional. Doctors, lawyers, and teachers are included in the category of service-oriented professionals, but unlike teachers, have time and ample opportunities for professional development built into their professional practice. The public has come to rely heavily on these two types of professionals to stay current and informed about the latest developments in their field.

Jalongo (1991) states that the societal esteem bestowed on doctors and lawyers is based on four unique dimensions of their profession:

- They have a defined body of specialized knowledge not possessed by the general public;
- They exercise control over licensure, certification, entrance requirements, and standards for responsible practice;

- They possess the autonomy of practitioners to apply that knowledge in diverse situations, to make decisions, and to exercise judgement; and
- They experience high prestige and economic standing (p. 66).

The preceding elements are at the present time absent from education and contribute to what might be termed a “lack of professional identity.” “Americans’ perception of teachers as second-class citizens pervades schools more than ever” (Clayton, 2001, p. 17), but this attitude should by no means become an excuse for dismissing teachers from developing in meaningful ways. Teachers become advocates for changing the public’s perceptions, and also instigating change in the perceptions of those within the education profession, by beginning with themselves. Teachers’ assist in creating a stronger professional identity by becoming informed about the research being published as it relates to best practice, and then implementing it within their classrooms. It is no longer enough to simply know the curriculum; continued importance needs to be placed on the fact that “teaching occurs in particulars—particular students interacting with particular teachers over particular ideas in particular circumstances” (Darling-Hammond, p. 10).

Currently, accepted practices for professional development consist of activities targeted towards the masses and motivated by superficial concerns. As Sykes (1996) states, “conventional professional development is considered sorely inadequate and has had little, if any long term effect on what goes on in schools and the classroom” (p.465). The design of professional development activities should be motivated from the perceived needs of the teacher and include the teacher as active participant in planning them in order for the experience to be meaningful and have long-lasting consequences.

Research on staff development has shown teachers will benefit more from different types of training they receive if they plan for their own self-improvement and learn on their own (Seng, 1998).

Lack of quality opportunities for teachers to collaborate, reflect, and synthesize about their practice has encouraged the exploration of new ways of developing as a professional. Professional organizations such as the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, Association of Teacher Education, Holmes Group, and the National Staff Development Council have stepped forward and offered monetary support for research designed to investigate sound professional development strategies in order to bolster teacher effectiveness (Education Week on the Web, 1999).

Boccia (1989) conducted a study with beginning secondary teachers. Her study revealed that teachers were most "interested in professional assistance specifically targeted to them, particularly in the form of support groups and workshops" (p. 20). Teachers should be encouraged to investigate a variety of avenues for professional development that will address their individual concerns, can be utilized at times appropriate for them, is readily accessible when they need it, and provides sound theory.

Descriptions of professional development permeate the professional literature. Sykes (1996) states "the phrase 'one-shot workshop' has entered educational parlance as shorthand for superficial, faddish inservice education that supports a mini industry of consultants without having much effect on what goes on in schools and classrooms" (p. 465). Professional development has evolved from a "patchwork" of educational coursework and workshops motivated by other's understanding of what teachers need rather than for what teachers know they need (Seng, 1998). Jalongo (1991) describes

professional development as a course of action that doesn't happen instantaneously and shouldn't be considered a "pep talk" (p. 6).

Those most closely involved with professional development will quickly acknowledge that practices over the past fifteen years have been both poorly designed and executed (Burden, 1983). In general the mission of professional development has been focused on preparing and supporting educators in helping all students achieve high standards of learning and developing (Artsedge, 1994). Burden's (1983) concept for effective professional development contains this statement, "... concerns and needs of students must be the ultimate focus of any staff-development program. Students' needs must be recognized and the impact of staff development activities on students must be taken into consideration" (p.2).

These definitions of professional development neglect a very fundamental reason why teachers need to develop professionally; teachers must continue to learn in order to remain life-long learners. The early childhood professional is busy seeing to the "emotional, social, physical and cognitive development of the children they work with" (p.26), and fails to attend to their developmental requirements (Baptiste, 1994). Professional development should heighten our awareness toward children and their needs but must also include a facet to help the teachers who teach them learn how to learn and grow in the profession themselves.

James Britton (as cited in Jalongo, 1991) states, "The word for teaching is learning" (p. 41) and research supports this by stating the best teachers are active learners. Arends (1983) cites in his research that administrators identified competent teachers by the number of hours they devoted to learning activities. A beginning teacher

with 623 hours was considered an avid learner, 295 hours considered an average learner, and those in the reluctant learner category only had 32 hours of active learning for professional development.

A teacher's attitude for and to learning is an influential factor in how students perceive learning. Children learn more from adult's deeds than their words and there is a need for children to see that their teachers have a desire to be learners themselves. Scholarship is taught through example. The least common practice among teachers reported by Birman, et. al., (2000) was the aspect of teachers being active learners. Their conclusion was that in order for schools to provide the highest quality of professional development for their teachers they either needed to spend more money to provide active-learning activities, serve fewer teachers, or invest more resources. These options could present a tough choice for many school districts, however because of substantial amounts of time, and planning required in developing quality professional development programs for teachers. Secondly, the cost can be prohibitive for many school districts. Birman, et. al. (2000) estimated that it costs an average of \$512 to give an individual teacher a high-quality professional development experience. This was currently more than twice what most of the districts surveyed spent for their professional development programs (pg. 32).

Unless there is more emphasis placed on "restructuring and reorganizing" teachers' personal, pedagogical and developmental knowledge they may have the knowledge but lack understanding (Bowman, 1995, p.34). One way this can be accomplished is to insure that the material and information disseminated through professional development opportunities changes-based on what we currently know about how adults learn. Research is providing us with useful information to indicate that

teachers' needs, no matter what stage of development they are in, need to be included in the design of professional development programs. This delivery should consider the stage of development of the teacher and the concerns that are most apparent at that particular point in time of their careers (Burden, 1983). In Life Cycle of the Career Teacher, Steffy, et. al., (2000) delineate not only the concerns associated with each stage of teacher development but also indicate the types and delivery tactics most appropriate for professional development at each stage of the teaching cycle. The potential outcome of such professional development design can be more effective teaching by those involved in such activities (Burden, 1983).

Greene (as cited in Baptiste, 1994, p. 94) "Professional development should value ... opportunities for self-assessment, self-development and self-renewal". Birman, et. al., (2000) felt, as a result of their research, that "professional development should focus on deepening teachers' content knowledge and knowledge of how students learn particular content, on providing opportunities for active learning, and on encouraging coherence in teachers' professional development experiences (p.32). Rogers (as cited in Jalongo, 1991, p. 48) states "The only learning which significantly influences behavior is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning." Opportunities should be built into professional development workshops that will challenge and engage teachers to be active in the construction of their own knowledge. "Teachers need the freedom to develop their own unique styles. They need to develop repertoires and learn to vary their approaches according to the situation. Improvement of instruction implies change and change in teaching behavior requires professional and intellectual stimulation as well as social support" (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1989, p. 129).



Fuller's attitude and research on teacher concerns with preservice teachers was based on the fact that students in the 1960's felt "college course work was worthless" (George, 1978, p. 1). Her hypothesis was that students were possibly not benefiting from the teaching methodology because they were not experientially ready. The instructors were teaching what they themselves thought students should be taught, rather than assessing the needs and experiences of students and building a curriculum based on their student observations (George, 1978). It is critical whether designing professional development opportunities for teachers or curriculum for preservice teachers, the needs and concerns of the audience should be taken into account for effective learning to take place.

Burden (1983) synthesized studies by Bruce Joyce, Gordon Lawrence, Judith Warren Little, and others and came up with the following list of essential elements which characterize effective inservice education: collaboration, participation, planning, assessment, focus, school based, and training components. For example in designing a professional development program model for early childhood educators the focus of a teacher's personal and professional development would include frequent opportunities for discussion and reflection of the key concerns in teaching young children. But, since this is not present in many early childhood programs the early childhood teacher must look elsewhere for opportunities to build the aspects of reflection. Without support these opportunities do not occur therefore collegiality needs to be developed and fostered among the early childhood professional. Teachers should have the opportunity to reflect and dialogue about their classroom experiences in a collegial manner in order to maintain interest in teaching and improve their practice (Baptiste, 1994).

Birman, et. al., (2000) surveyed a nationally representative probability sample of more than 1,000 teachers participating in professional development funded with Eisenhower Professional Development Program, Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1999. What they found through the survey and case studies they carried out was that there was a mix of high- and low-quality programs. Through studying the literature concerning professional development of teachers and analyzing survey data they identified three structural features and three core features that set the context for professional development. The structural features identified were form – examining whether the activity was of reform or traditional structure, duration – the number of hours spent in the activity as well as over what span of time the activity occurred, and participation – what was the consistency of the groups participating in the activity. In addition to these three structural features they identified “three core features” (p. 29) that characterize the processes which occur during professional development experiences. The core features were content focus – the degree to which the activity focused on improving and deepening the teacher’s content knowledge, active learning – a characteristic which spoke to the opportunities the teachers had “to become actively engaged in a meaningful analysis of teaching and learning” (p. 29), and coherence – the feature that took into consideration the teacher’s personal goals as well as state standards and assessments. The findings of their study showed that “the number of teachers who experience professional development with all six characteristics of high quality professional development is very small” (p. 32). This statement applies to the “teachers participating in professional development activities funded in part by the Eisenhower

Professional Development Program. Those not supported by Eisenhower may differ” (p. 31).

“Teachers must learn to recognize the values that underlie what they do and teach ...” We must be prepared, and help prepare others, to think of new and different ways to address the problems of 21<sup>st</sup>-century children and families (Bowman, 1995, p. 32)

### PROFESSIONAL TEACHER SUPPORT

Pertinent, factual and research-based information should be available to the beginning early childhood teacher and should be well publicized so teachers know they have somewhere to turn for answers. Boccia (1991) conducted a study with beginning elementary teachers that revealed once these teachers were in their own classrooms, they needed “induction support which is responsive to their needs, compatible with the school setting in which they work, and consistent with the commitment to best practice which defines most preservice training” (p. 17). “The extent to which teachers feel they are supported regularly and substantially, especially in the first year of teaching, impacts their persistence rate – whether they stay in a profession” (Camphire, 2001, p.4).

The five top concerns mentioned by teachers in Veenman’s study (1987), classroom discipline, motivation of pupils, dealing with individual differences among pupils, assessing pupils’ work, and relations with parents were also the problems administrators perceived beginning teachers exhibit. An administrator could take an active role in identifying and providing an avenue for the beginning teacher to better their practice by providing the needed support. But in truth, no one bothers to tell new teachers

that although a principal wants to see the new teacher succeed with students their primary concern is that they receive the cooperation from the beginning teacher in insuring the school year goes smoothly (Ryan, 1970).

Administrators are not the only people with whom the beginning teacher comes in contact who have definite ideas on what good teaching is all about. Other colleagues, parents, and school staff also have expectations by which they judge the new teachers' performance. "Beginning teachers, confronting the conflicting ideas of what good teachers should be doing and how they should instruct students, are likely to be confused by the contradictions and lack of firm knowledge that leads to clear and unmistakable directions for professional practice" (Stedman, 2000, p. 7). This is an important concept for beginning teachers to understand, because the advice they give to them may not always be in their best interest and therefore becomes an additional source of conflict (Ryan, 1970).

Just as we consider the growth of children being dependent on nourishing food, and their minds and thinking processes not flourishing without stimulation and guidance, so must teachers begin to seek opportunities to further develop their abilities so that teacher and child will benefit (Kessler, 2000).

#### Professional Journals as support

The ideal classroom should have a teacher whose dedication is not only to the children he/she teaches but also to the subjects they teach. If this should be the case then it is the supposition that to be dedicated teachers means "on-going learning through self-study and continued education" (Hill & Beers, 1993, p. 3). Womack & Chandler, 1992;

Wood, Zalud, & Hoag, 1995) state that reading professional journals is an activity that can be cultivated in the preservice arena within institutions of higher learning as well as utilized during inservice by administrators to encourage teacher vitality throughout their teaching practice. Valuable information can be garnered from subject-specific as well as general education professional journals.

Teachers need to implement the practice of journal reading to assist them in staying abreast of current developments within the field of education. Professional journals in the U.S. are not new as virtually every profession has one or more professional journals. What defines a professional journal or periodical? A professional journal is a periodical published exclusively for the purpose of advancing a particular field or profession (Dejnozoka, 1982). Professional journals contain information and news of interest to its readership such as activities of colleagues, current and future organizational activities/meetings, and information on research, inventions, discoveries, new procedures, and new movements (Dejnozoka, 1982). A primary support source of information for members of the medical profession are professional journals and are utilized as an effective means for their professional development. "Journal readings can be a rich source of information for teachers and they offer a convenient, inexpensive and time-saving means for professional development" (Rehorick & Edwards, 1995, p. 632).

Reading professional journals hinges on making a personal self-motivated effort to desire to continue learning (Burke, 2000). Journals are a cost-effective means to obtain information about teaching in a more personally beneficial manner and can be a guiding tool for the beginning teacher. Professional journals provide insightful information about new content, current trends in curriculum organization and methodology and even

provide bibliographic information for further study (Wood, et.al., 1995). Professional reading is not something teachers have done with much frequency in the past but should be encouraged especially with those starting out in the profession (Cogan & Anderson, 1977; Cardarelli, 1992).

Principals can have a direct influence on teachers' professional reading by providing time, materials and awareness of the materials, and take time to discuss the reading of articles in school faculty meetings. Direction needs to be taken by administrators towards providing journals and articles specifically addressing the new teachers' needs. It is suggested by Hill and Beers (1993) that teachers should read current journals and books related to their practice to be considered "literate in their fields" (p. 3).

Many professional journals are published by and often reflect the views of professional organizations. The target audience of such professional journals consists of practicing and prospective professionals. Professional journals, whose mission is directed toward early childhood teachers, can provide them with an avenue to research what others are saying and doing about similar situations they are facing. For an educator there is an index that they can utilize in their quest for particular professional journals, the Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE). The CIJE covers approximately 780 major education-related journals and is published on a monthly basis (Dejnozoka, 1982).

"Professional journals can provide principals and teachers with up to-date coverage of expanding knowledge bases in various content areas. Current trends, teaching methodologies, and the latest research findings are regular features of many of the leading journals in education." Regular reading of professional journals can provide

principals and teachers with the framework necessary to assist them in making decisions as to how to assess and direct the on going changes within their programs." (Wood, et. al., p. 51).

George and Ray (1979) state that a teachers' personal professional growth can be assisted through professional reading, although it is not a favored pastime of teachers as research suggests. George and Ray (1979) conducted a study for the purpose of learning why teachers fail to use professional reading to improve their skills and focused on professional journals. They explored responses from a survey to show the relationship between teachers' professional reading and a variety of variables. Subjects ranged from K-12 teachers at randomly selected public schools throughout Tennessee (2,423 teachers) (741 responded - 30.5%).

The areas considered in George and Ray's (1979) study were:

Time spent in professional reading – time spent in reading was related significantly to teaching experience. Relationship between professional reading and respondents' highest degree were not found to be statistically significant.

- 1) The principal's influence – respondents showed to be significantly influenced by their principals' encouragement or lack of encouragement. The teachers reading more had principals that encouraged reading.
- 2) Discussion of readings during faculty meetings – Reading of professional journals was significantly influenced by discussion of readings during school faculty meetings.
- 3) Perceived availability of reading material – three types of settings were analyzed, those from urban, suburban, or rural school settings and yielded similar findings.

There was a significant difference in the perceived availability of professional reading material and it was different for men and women. Significantly fewer men reported reading materials were available. Degree level had an impact on perceived awareness of reading material. Those with more advanced degrees showed increases in awareness.

- 4) Reading at home-reading at school – More experienced teachers read at home while less experienced teachers read at school (George & Ray, 1979).

Educators must use all available resources within their field to become excellent teachers. "Self-improvement through professional reading, though currently underused, would appear to meet the criterion for cost effectiveness" (p.33). Whether the reading of professional journals can be directly tied to quality education is still unknown and requires a concerted effort on the part of all involved in education to stimulate professional reading.

#### Professional Support from Other Professionals

The new teachers entering our classrooms are the hope for a better future. It is imperative that these new teachers be sheltered from the apathy and inertia that seem to characterize most public school systems today. The beginning early childhood teacher must be extended a hand of support from actively engaged educators residing in close proximity to them (Shanahan, 1998).

The most reasonable choice would be the mentor who is responsible to tutor the beginning teacher. Veenman (1987) cites a training program devised by Thies-Sprinthal for supervising teachers working with preservice teachers as well as mentors working



with beginning teachers. Their program is based on cognitive developmental theory and suggests five aspects that should be followed in the training of mentors and teachers in supervisory positions. The participants in this type of program need to be placed in qualitatively significant role-taking experiences, need opportunities for careful and continuous reflection with feedback and should have cycles of experiential application and intellectual analysis. The instruction they receive should provide for personal support and challenge, and the programs they participate in should be continuous, at least a six-month period to one year with meetings scheduled at regular intervals.

Results reported on Thies-Sprinthall's training program design showed "modest and positive gains in conceptual development of supervising teachers, and increased self-knowledge" (Veenman, 1987, pg. 23). The mentor teachers felt they were more effective in their own classrooms and better able to analyze themselves and supervision techniques from different perspectives. The beginning teachers viewed the trained mentors in a positive light and felt the mentor was helpful with their personal concerns. The beginning teachers also felt that the classroom management, organizational issues, and the understanding of the induction sequence were equally helpful. In almost every instance, the mentor teacher was viewed as a "positive resource" (Veenman, 1987, pg. 23) by the beginning teachers, who had trained mentors.

Colleagues can provide substantial relationship support during the beginning years for a teacher. "Through relationships all of us learn to understand others, to appreciate and share their points of view. It is through relationships that empathy is learned, which in turn, leads to understanding, which can tolerate uncertainty and frustration (Bowman, 1995).

One way teachers can reach out to support each other is through a book club or reading group. Goldberg (2000) explains one such type of research design, the Teacher's Book Club (TCB). The design of the TBC allows teachers to explore what they do as readers, what they do when they have questions about the meaning of a text or passage, how they can be stimulated to read more often, how they keep track of insights they have during reading activity.

The participants in the TBC felt that having blocks of uninterrupted time for reading, journaling, and discussing contributed to "a positive impact on their attitudes"(Goldberg, 2000, p.40). A positive motivational factor of the TBC is that teachers are not constrained by learning what others feel are the most important things to focus on. They are able to make autonomous decisions about their learning. Additionally, the teachers participating in the TBC felt that it was a "positive way to balance personal reading, professional development, and social activity"(p.41).

Sanacore (1995) mentions six criteria for effective use of professional literature in sessions developed for and with teachers:

- The readability of the articles as well as an understanding of the intended audience for whom the article has been written should be the first consideration.
- Another aspect to take into account in planning use of professional literature is the treatment the article's author gives the topic.
- Are there special features that may deter the teachers from a sound understanding of what the author is trying to say, such as graphs, diagrams, tables or research terminology?

- Is the scope of the article adequate to discuss the topic at hand, does it leave out pertinent information or say too much?
- What kind of bibliographic information is provided about the author? Does it give any indication about the author's expertise and ability to speak to the subject?
- What amount of accuracy is the article or journal exhibiting? Are there certain biases or emotional connotations present that may inhibit true treatment of the topic?

After the workshop has taken place a summative evaluation should be conducted and should be based on initial goals for having the workshop. The evaluation can be in the form of journal entries, developing lesson plans, small group discussions or research projects. All of these efforts serve to solidify the concepts into meaningful learning opportunities for the teachers involved (Sanacore, 1995).

Coaching is another method of support that can be implemented within a school district and more particularly in a single school. Veenman (1987) describes coaching as a method of helping teachers in implementing newly acquired skills or strategies within their own classrooms, and learning how to more effectively develop control with the skills. There are four major functions of coaching. The first is to provide companionship for the beginning teacher. The second function of coaching is to provide technical feedback. Assisting beginning teachers in analyzing particular applications of skills learned is described as the third function of coaching. The fourth and last function of coaching that Veenman (1987) discusses is to assist the beginning teacher in adapting their newly acquired skills to the students they teach.

The types of coaching that have proven to be most effective, according to Showers (1985) and Sparks (1986) are when it is "performed by teams of teachers

working together to study new approaches to teaching,” (pg. 13) or through the use of peer observation. The peer observation and coaching helped to create a strong sense of trust and esteem among the group’s members.

The relationships formed through the examples of encounters teachers can have with one another within their immediate environment, described above, have been compared to “finding a fellow traveler on a challenging journey, a companion worthy of trust who has visited similar destinations” (Bowman, 1995).

### SUMMARY

Teaching is a venture full of complexities and yet without all of the intricacies would possibly render it a vocation without meaning. The teacher is ultimately the agent upon whom so much of the success of students’ rests and who also orchestrates the quality of the profession. The literature presented in this chapter has only tipped the iceberg of teaching by describing the stages or phases of a teacher’s professional development, the concerns and felt needs which accompany such a feat, and the probable methods able to enhance the growth of a teacher.

Considering the uniqueness of each and every person subscribing to the role of teacher they will not all conform to what has been published about their existence in the same way or at the same time. But the fact remains that growth is inevitable if a teacher chooses to seek support, pursue opportunities, which take them beyond their everyday expectations, and engage in reflection about their practice.

Early childhood teachers are the foundational supports of our educational system. It is this particular group of teachers who will be the first to assist children in building

understanding of the world around them and exposes them to the wonders of life.

Teachers in early childhood will have the most profound affect on whether a child continues to succeed in their educational ventures and therefore their concerns must be acknowledged and acted upon.

A beginner in this profession requires nurturing and sensitivity from all those within the school community. The manner in which society looks upon the beginning early childhood teacher will in turn affect how we listen to them, provide for them, support them and continue to study their lives.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

#### INTRODUCTION

During the past half-century a multitude of research studies have been conducted to report concerns and problems of beginning teachers. A successive cadre of instruments has been developed to identify and measure teacher concerns from every curriculum area of education on all levels of teaching (Fuller, 1969, George, 1978, Hall, 1985). A few of those studies have been designed to unveil the concerns beginning early childhood teachers' have. The premise of Katz' study (1972) was to outline the tasks and training needs of the developmental stages of early childhood teachers for the purpose of designing professional development activities. Serk (1981) determined the concerns of a specific group of beginning early childhood teachers in her study who graduated from a private university to investigate if there was a relationship between concerns about teaching and selected teacher variables. Her study was conducted using two of Fuller's teacher concern surveys. Clyde and Ebbeck (1991) conducted the last study emphasizing early childhood teachers with a group of beginning early childhood teacher graduates of two universities in Australia in order to develop a more suitable mentoring support system for these teachers. Two of these studies, Serk (1981) and Clyde and Ebbeck (1991), used surveys to obtain information from the early childhood teachers. Katz' (1972) methodology for arriving at her information was not explained.

This chapter details the aspects of qualitative research methodology used in conducting this study on the essence of concern in the lives of beginning early childhood

teachers. Components of the study include a general description and rationale for using in-depth conversational interviewing, procedures for choosing the teachers and describing their individual school and classroom settings, procedures for setting up, conducting, and collecting information during each of the three interviews, questions used during the course of interviewing, treatment and analysis of audio transcriptions, and discussion of the limitations and weaknesses of the study.

Care was used throughout the study to allow these teachers to reflect on those experiences that they feel most poignant in presenting a picture of their lives as beginning teachers of young children.

## DESIGN OF THE STUDY

### Qualitative Methodology Rationale

Phenomenological research is a method of questioning the way others or we experience a particular phenomena in our existence as human beings. This type of inquiry for any educator needs to be fully grounded in pedagogical understanding spurred by a deeper desire to understand the world in which we live in our humanness. Qualitative interviewing is a way to “see” what has possibly been before us and at the same time “see” something that we hadn’t expected to “see” (Seidman, 1991). It is an opportunity to learn, observe and interact with teachers and their worlds and find out what is going on, why they do what they do, and how to better understand the concerns that they encounter in teaching their first years in the classroom.

The purpose of recovering information from beginning early childhood teachers about concerns they experience during the different stages of their induction process is to

further understand the totality of their lived experiences as they reflect on their first year(s) in the classroom. It is furthermore, an attempt to construct an interpretation of this human experience so teacher educators may become more experienced themselves (van Manen, 1990). Additionally, communities that support these teachers need to discern the essential nature of what it is like to be a beginning teacher if they in turn hope to improve their response to and support of novice teachers.

Teachers are living human beings with unique cultural backgrounds that continue to shape their perceptions and actions once they reside in a classroom on their own. It is not enough to know teachers have concerns, an exorbitant amount of literature can attest to this fact. More importantly, it is imperative that we examine what concerns beginning teachers' experience from a personal perspective and how these concerns shape their resolve to continue teaching and deepen their understanding of what it means, "to teach". Considering the enormous amount of influence a teacher has on a child's development (Kamii, 1981), makes investigating beginning early childhood teachers' lives and the role concerns have upon their decisions and actions even more meaningful.

### Interview Design

The model of in-depth phenomenological interviewing I used involved a series of three separate audio taped interviewing sessions with each of the individual teachers. The design was developed by Dolbere and Schuman (as cited in Seidman, 1991) and gave me the opportunity to delve deeper into the context of the six teachers' experiences and in turn gave them a more adequate amount of time in which to share their teaching concerns with me. Conducting interviews serves one of two specific purposes in this type of



human science study: (1) to explore and gather narrative material to assist in gaining a richer and deeper understanding of what a beginning teacher identifies as a concern, and (2) to uncover a fuller more personal meaning of the experience of being a beginning teacher (vanManen, 1990).

With this interview design each of the three interviews had a focus or structure and lasted approximately 90 minutes. It is explained by Seidman (1991) that the standard unit of time, one hour, may make the participants more “clock” (p. 13) conscious and two hours is definitely too long a stretch.

Spacing of the interviews was another consideration in the overall design of this study. By allowing 3 days to a week between interviews I was able to keep the process on course, giving enough time to participants and me to reflect on what was said, and enable me to conduct the interviews within a four-week period.

Participants’ anonymity has been preserved through the use of fictitious names. Tapes and any working notes will be destroyed once the study is completed and accepted in its final form. The teacher participants will also be provided copies of the final study and any transcripts of the interviews upon completion of the study, if requested.

### Participants

The participants selected for this study were chosen from graduates of an early childhood program at a Midwestern Regional State University, who participated in the state Residency Teaching Program in 1998, 1999, or are currently participating in the program in 2000. Since research signifies the first three years of teaching are considered to represent the term beginning teacher or novice teacher (Veenman, 1984) six teachers,

two from each year were chosen from the particular lists of teachers. Two teachers from each of the three residency years, targeted for this study, were chosen and allowed me to explore concerns and perceptions about teaching from multiple-year perspectives. Rubin and Rubin (1995) feel all interviewees should satisfy three criteria. They feel the interviewee "should be knowledgeable about the cultural arena of the situation or experience being studied, they should be willing to talk, and when people in the arena have different perspectives, the interviewees should represent the range of points of view" (p. 66). Interviewing participants from "many different domains" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 17) broadens one's perspective on the issues being studied and satisfies the last of the three criteria. Choosing participants for my study was guided by these three criteria.

Information provided by the Office of Grants and Contracts states the university has a current enrollment of 8,400 students and provides undergraduate and graduate education leading to 59 bachelors' degrees, 13 masters in selected areas, and a doctoral degree in Optometry. The university hosts a main campus with three satellite campuses located in a 30 to 50 mile radius. This regional state institution graduates one of the largest groups of students in early childhood education and prepares more teachers than any other university in its state (State Regent's Office, 2000).

I contacted the Coordinator for the Resident Teacher Program, at the University that was selected, and requested the lists of teachers participating in the Resident Teaching Program for the years 1998, 1999, and 2000.

I examined the lists and identified all those teachers who had majored in early childhood and been supervised by the regional state university chosen for this study. I

chose two candidates from each resident teacher list to total six teachers who had earned their degree the year prior to their resident teaching experience. Two of the six teachers are in their first year, two had completed their first and were currently teaching their second year and the last two had completed two years and were involved in their third year of teaching.

With the initial selection of the six teachers, I also choose six alternate teachers with the same characteristics to alleviate having to go through the process again if any of the participants wanted to decline being surveyed.

Because the initial contact can have an effect on the manner in which the interview relationship progresses, I went through a “gatekeeper” (Seidman, 1991, p. 34) (i.e., principal or superintendent). Since the teachers chosen needed to be contacted by phone at their school and asked about their interest to participate in this study, the principal and/or superintendent was consulted. I felt that it was necessary to make an inquiry with the principal and/or superintendent because some teachers as well as school administrations prefer matters such as these be handled outside of their school time and setting. Six teachers expressed an interest in being interviewed and I had planned to mail a letter to each beginning teacher agreeing to be involved (Appendix A). The letter outlined more specifically the purpose of the study and asked for their serious consideration in being interviewed. All of my teachers did not wish to have a letter, but agreed at the time of the phone call to set up their first interview at that time. I had to resort to using alternates for the first-year teachers I had originally planned to contact. The reason for having to use alternates with this particular group of teachers emphasizes

the lack of time and energy the teachers at this stage of their career have to give to any outside requests.

## DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The data for my study was comprised of the audio-tapped interviews and field notes taken during each interview session. No other pieces of information were required from the participants.

### Interview I

According to Dolbeare and Schuman (as cited in Seidman, 1991), the goal of the first interview should be to “establish the context of the participants’ experience” (p. 11). A tape recorder was used with all three of the sessions with each teacher accompanied with field notes.

I reviewed the contents of the letter originally intended to be sent to the them explaining the purpose of my study, conducting interviews with beginning early childhood teachers’ about their concerns, and explained the procedures for the three interviews. This was also the time that I shared my expectations with the teachers and they were given the opportunity to raise any questions or concerns they had at that time.

Each participating teacher was asked to sign a consent form (Appendix B) in duplicate during the first interview. The Institutional Review Board of the doctoral granting institution requires the consent form for this type of study. The consent form briefly describes the study, its purpose, a time-line of proposed dates and purposes for future meetings, and explanation of their anonymity for the study. Contact information

was provided on the form and each teacher was given one copy of the form they signed. Once the teachers agreed to participate it was explained that it was strongly desired they complete the process of the three interviews. As with any life situation, exceptions always occur and were anticipated that they would not have a negative effect on the process.

At the beginning of the first interview session, each teacher was asked to share some biographical information about themselves and their school environment. They were also asked to share as much as they could about themselves with consideration to the topic of the study, beginning early childhood teachers' concerns. The teacher participants were asked to respond to the statement, "How they came to be a teacher of young children." By asking the teachers to respond to how instead of why, I hoped they would give some insight into events that had a bearing on their decision to teach and to teach young children. Experiences people have had with family, in school, and with friends are an integral part of a person's course of action and affect decisions they will make throughout their life, teachers are no exception (Britzman, 1985). The teachers were also asked during our first session to provide an analogy of what it was like being a beginning teacher.

### Interview II

The audio taped transcripts and field notes from the first interview session were transcribed and mailed to each teacher before the second session. Participants were asked to look it over before the second interview in order to make any additions or corrections

they felt necessary. These additions or corrections were recorded by tape during the second interview and also documented on my interview copy.

A set of questions were asked in the second interview session that helped the beginning teachers focus more fully on defining a concern, what experiences have caused them concern, and what types of support they do or did not encounter during their beginning year(s) in the classroom. During the second interview session they were asked to share scenarios that stood out in their minds that elicited strong feelings of concern. Putting their reflections into words through an interview format can assist in the analysis of what these teachers are concerned about and the significance concern plays in their lives as beginning early childhood teachers. It is also, as van Manen (1990) states, “to try to grasp the essential meaning of something” (p. 77).

With the completion of the second interview, transcriptions were once again performed on the audiotapes and duplicate copies were made. Copies of each individual teacher’s interview were mailed to them before the third interview session to allow them to reflect on what was shared and to give them time to note any corrections or additions they needed to make before the third interview. The teachers were reminded at this time if any questions occur about what transpires in the interviews to contact me either by phone or email. It was important that they felt welcome in sharing additional thoughts even if it is outside the allotted times.

### Interview III

Returning for the third session, teachers were asked to make any additions or corrections to the transcripts mailed to them from the second session’s interviews. Audio

recordings as well as field notes were once again used to verify any changes noted by the teachers. The third session's focus was to further probe into the meanings of events and circumstances that the teachers shared in the first two interviews and also the time when the teachers took the context of the first two interviews and engaged in "meaning-making" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 12). Upon completion of the transcribing of the third interview a complete copy of all three of the teacher's interviews were mailed to them with instructions to note any corrections or additions they wish to make. As with any interview situation, and the analysis involved, it was anticipated that further questions may have to be raised to clarify the understanding of the interviewer (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The teachers were contacted by phone after they had time to read over the transcripts mailed from their interviews. Arranging additional time for them to provide any feedback, or corrections and modifications was not necessary with any of the teacher participants and the transcripts were prepared for the next step, which was analysis for themes.

## QUESTIONS INVESTIGATED

What are the concerns expressed by beginning teachers in early childhood education was the guiding question for my study. Consideration of support they encountered or made use of during their beginning years was explored as well as inquiry into the types of support they felt they would have benefited from during their beginning years. Each of the interviews focused on a different view of teaching concerns which Dolbeare and Schuman (as cited in Seidman, 1998) explain "allows the interviewer and participant to plumb the experience and to place it in context" (p.11).

The foundation for the study of beginning early childhood teachers' concerns was set during the first interview and built upon with each successive interview. The focus of the first interview was to establish the context of the participants' experience as a beginning teacher. The second interview allowed the participants to reconstruct details of their beginning teacher experiences. And the third interview session focused on encouraging the participants to reflect on the meaning their beginning teaching experience held for them (Seidman, 1998).

A process of sequenced steps was adhered to so both the participant and interviewer were able to maintain a sense of focus for the study. Seidman (1990) states that a "delicate balance between providing enough openness for the participants to tell their stories and enough focus to allow the interview structure to work" (p. 13) should be the goal in conducting the three in-depth interviews.

The following list of questions comprised the main thrust of each interview session accompanied with follow up questions when the participants' responses lacked sufficient detail, depth, or clarity.

#### Interview I Questions

The focus of Interview I was to set the stage of why they are a teacher, what it is like being a beginning early childhood teacher and reflections on their beginning year.

How did you decide on teaching as a career?

Describe your experience(s) entering the classroom for the first time as a teacher.

What thoughts entered your mind?



What is it like being a beginning teacher in early childhood? (With this question the teachers were asked to supply an analogy.)

### Interview II Questions

The focus of Interview II was to determine how each particular teacher in the study defined concern, what particular concerns they have or had experienced in their beginning year and in what particular situations concern was evident.

How do you, as a beginning teacher, define concern? What do you feel strongly about?

How would you describe teaching concerns as a beginning early childhood teacher? (For the participants that have had more than one full year's teaching experience they will be asked if they have found any difference in what they feel concern about now.)

Describe for me a situation that involved a particular concern you experienced.

What were your thoughts, as best as you can remember?

### Interview III Questions

The questions for Interview III were designed to help the participants focus on what it meant to be a teacher based on experiences they have encountered in either the one, two or three years they have been teaching. They are also questions that allowed me to gain a glimpse of the support structure they utilized because of concerns associated with teaching. The last interview session aimed at closure, bringing the experience of

being a beginning early childhood teacher to the present and gaining a sense of direction of what they plan to do with what they learned.

Can you describe a special moment during your first year as a teacher when you more fully understood what it means to be a teacher?

Where have you gone to seek advice or help? (This question aimed at understanding how to support these teachers. I also wanted to probe to see what role the profession has played either through membership, journal reading, meetings, etc.)

What would you tell a beginning early childhood teacher about your experiences as a beginning teacher? An administrator? An instructor at the university? A parent?

What have been some of the most important things you have learned about yourself and what areas have you seen the most growth as a professional?

In the process of using in-depth interviewing with these beginning early childhood teachers, the goal was not to determine a direction in which these teachers shared their experiences. The overall purpose of the interviews were to allow the teachers time and space to reflect on their beginning year(s). Not all of these questions were necessary to initiate conversation but many were used in exploring the lived experiences of a beginning early childhood teacher.

## DATA ORGANIZATION AND INTERPRETATION

Collecting information from beginning early childhood teachers through interviews is only a piece of the story. In order for others to come to a better

understanding of what it means to have concerns as a beginning early childhood teacher, and acknowledge the types of support they sought or received, requires an in-depth analysis of the experiences shared throughout the interview sessions. I chose a combination of theme analysis methodologies suggested by van Manen (1990) in Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy and Seidman (1991) in Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and Social Sciences.

Theme analysis “refers to the process of recovering the theme (a motif, formula or device which occurs frequently in the text) or themes that are embodied and dramatized in the evolving meanings and imagery of the work” (van Manen, 1990, p.78). I want to portray through my analysis the “experiential structures” (p. 79) of beginning early childhood teachers’ concerns. van Manen mentions three basic thematic analysis procedures to implement when conducting in-depth interviews, “the [w]holistic or sententious approach, the selective or highlighting approach, and the detailed or line-by-line approach” (p. 92, 93). Seidman suggests a more conventional way to initially analyze and present interview data and that is by organizing the transcripts into categories. The categories are not predetermined but arise out of the passages marked as interesting by the interviewer. The process of highlighting what is of interest, assigning those sections with labels and putting them into a categorical order is what some sources call coding the data thereby laying a foundation for interpretation.

The transcripts were initially analyzed [w]holistically to determine the fundamental meaning of the conversations shared. The themes that surfaced in the first analysis were documented for later use in crafting a profile of the teacher participant. The

second reading focused on uncovering the essential themes, those that appeared common to most of the teachers and which related to the questions posed during the interviews. Putting the transcripts through this analysis, I asked, “What statement(s) or phrase(s) seem particularly essential or revealing” (van Manen, 1990, p.93) about each of the beginning early childhood teachers’ shared experiences?

The last analysis of the transcripts was much more detailed, as I looked at individual sentences or phrases repeatedly used by the teachers to describe their experiences being a beginning teacher. The reason for this more intense analysis was to assure that I retrieved the full essence of each individual teacher’s experience in relation to the questions that were asked in the interviews rather than just the group as a whole.

Upon completion of each interview session, the audiotapes were transcribed as quickly as possible to retain what was said and how it was shared in relation to the meaning of the experience. The more time that passes between the time the interview takes place and the transcribing, the more easily important concepts can be forgotten or misconstrued. The compilation of interview material, submitted to the three analyses are presented in final narrative in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

As an early childhood teacher and educator I am sensitive to many of the issues prevalent in the professional literature as well as what is happening within the schools. In one sense this may be considered a bias because I may not “hear” what the teachers are actually saying, but from another perspective my experience and insight can be a source of enrichment to the study. Because the participants will constitute only beginning early childhood teachers it may be that the themes, which appear as a result of the interviewing process, may not be applicable to other divisions within the educational structure. It may

also be found in future studies that beginning early childhood teachers' concerns are very similar in content to beginning teachers in other disciplines or levels of teaching.

The purpose of this study, however, is not to simply report or reveal concerns early childhood teachers have over the issues that they face during their first three years in the classroom. The rationale for talking with beginning early childhood teachers is to raise awareness among other educators in order to be better prepared to support and assist them in their professional growth.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

It has been stated that nationwide approximately one-third to one half of new teachers quit teaching before completing their fifth year (Pennington, 2001). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 1993-1994 Schools and Staffing Surveys out of 42,000 public school teachers in the state where these teachers teach, 3.4 percent (1,512) left the teaching profession. Of those 1,512 teachers 79.2 percent (1,198) left the teaching ranks due to dissatisfaction, salary or career change (Henke, Robin R. et al., 1997; Hussar, 1999).

“To be a teacher today is both stimulating and exciting, but it embraces a huge responsibility” (Stedman, C., 2000, p. 4). Is it any wonder that beginning teachers feel overwhelmed and perhaps significantly inadequate in carrying out their vocational endeavors? Teaching is a most difficult job and by its intrinsic nature is not apt to change to any great extent in the imminent future.

The purpose of this study was to come to a clearer understanding of what van Manen (1990) defines as the “lifeworld” (p. 7) of early childhood teachers in their first three years of teaching and recover themes of concern they have experienced in their teaching. The six teacher participants for this study were selected from graduates of an early childhood program at a Midwestern Regional State University, who participated in the state Residency Teaching Program in 1998, 1999, or were participating in the program in 2000. Two of the beginning teachers were completing their first year, two were completing their second year and two were completing their third year of teaching.

The teachers were employed in rural, metropolitan, or urban schools and therefore were teaching diverse socioeconomic and ethnic populations of students. Each teacher was interviewed on three separate occasions between April 11, 2001 and May 24, 2001, using the model of in-depth phenomenological interviewing. "In-depth interviewing research is perhaps even more capable of reconstructing and finding the compelling in the experiences of everyday life" (Seidman, 1998, p. 105). Each of the interview sessions built upon and explored the participants' responses to three basic questions with a goal of having them reconstruct their experience within the topic of teacher concerns.

After the interviews were completed and transcribed the set of each teacher's transcripts were read and studied. The process began with highlighting what was of interest in each teacher's transcript in order to reduce and shape the context of the interviews into a form that could be more easily shared in this study. This step in the research meant that I had to focus on what my overall question was and forego any extraneous material that would not be essential in that context. Seidman (1996) suggests one way to present material from in-depth interviews is to thematically organize the content once all the transcripts have been read. This methodology is closely akin to van Manen's (van Manen, 1990) "selective or highlighting approach" (pp. 92, 93). Since the interviews all addressed the same basic questions, I was able to arrive at eight major categories as Seidman (1996) describes them, which the teachers shared in common. The categories are: the decision to teach, memories of school, family background and support, undergraduate experiences, beginning teaching, support systems they encountered, philosophy of teaching, and reflections and future goals.

This chapter will share each teacher's "lifeworld" (van Manen, 1990, p. 7) by providing a brief biographical sketch of each teacher and address how each of the teachers responded to the eight categories. I conclude this portion of the chapter with my insights about the individual teachers based on the perceptions I formed during the interview process and from transcribing the taped sessions with each teacher. After presenting the teacher participants I will summarize their responses to the question, "How do beginning early childhood teachers define concern in relation to teaching?"

Recovering themes of concern from beginning early childhood teachers was the premise of this study and, therefore, the major portion of this chapter will be spent discussing what these teachers shared with me about concerns they have experienced the first three years in teaching young children. Following the discussion of themes I summarize my findings and revisit how concerns about beginning teaching have been portrayed in the literature.

## THE TEACHERS

### First Year Teachers

#### Carleen<sup>1</sup>

When I interviewed Carleen in the spring of 2001 she was thirty-two years old, had been married for thirteen years and had four children, three boys, ages ten, nine, and two and one girl, eight years of age. Carleen's husband is an associate band director for the high school and head of the middle school and junior high music program. She lived in four different states from kindergarten through twelfth grade and attended college two



years before dropping out to marry and begin a family. Carleen and her husband are both very involved in church and community activities, which she said, has helped her in the adjustment of working with parents this first year. Carleen started back to school when she was twenty-six and graduated at the age of thirty-one with a degree in early childhood education.

The school system in which Carleen teaches kindergarten is situated in a community of approximately ten thousand and has a mix of high to low socioeconomic levels and has a lower and upper elementary, a mid-school, and a high school. Carleen has a class of nineteen students and her school's total daily attendance was approximately eight hundred students at the time of our interviews. The lower elementary has eight sections of each grade level kindergarten through third grade and offer students extra services such as a gifted program, tutoring in reading, and speech. The school's administration consists of one principal, one vice-principal, two counselors, a nurse and two office staff. The vice-principal has only been at this school site since December.

### My interviews with Carleen<sup>2</sup>

#### Decision to teach

Entering college Carleen's initial intention was to become a music performer. Instead she attended two years, married, settled down and started a family. After her third child was born, Carleen and her husband decided she would go back and finish her degree. She chose to pursue a degree in early childhood where she could effectively use her musical talents and incorporate her love of reading. Her husband and family provided

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<sup>1</sup> All names of the teachers, administrators are assumed. Schools and locations have also been disguised.

the support she needed to make it through school and she mentioned her children “absolutely love it” that she is a teacher. She and her husband teach in the same district and are able to use their talents both within the district and in their community.

### Memories of school

Carleen related that she truly liked school even though her family moved extensively while she was growing up. Her dad sold his oil business to attend seminary and become a pastor, which contributed to the families frequent relocation. Carleen was able to remember most of her elementary grade years although the memories were pretty sparse. Third grade was the year she remembered getting in trouble for talking but doesn’t know how it came about. During her fifth grade year, Carleen moved to another state where she encountered having to go to school with African-American children. She had an African-American teacher for the first time in her life. For some reason she remembered being very frightened of the experience. Carleen had more difficulty making friends after the second grade when her family began their frequent moves and told me that she “always felt slightly different.” She continued to be a good student and graduated as salutatorian of her high school class.

Subjects Carleen really liked in school were science and mathematics. She hated history because she had to remember so many dates that seemingly had no relevance to her. Science was logical and she could experience it. She puts a lot of emphasis on science and reading in teaching kindergarten.

### Family background and support

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<sup>2</sup> The complete text of Carleen’s interviews is in Appendix E.

Carleen made no mention of having difficulty convincing anyone of her decision to become a teacher except for the fact that some of her family told her, “you don’t make enough money being a teacher.” It was unclear whom she was referring to as “family.” Her parents had experienced life-changing decisions later in their life and may have contributed to their cautious attitude when viewing her choice to teach. Carleen has had experience teaching pre-school, directing the nursery program at her church, participating in youth camps and teaching vacation Bible school. With her husband’s support, she was able to finish her degree.

Having had children before she started teaching seemed to hasten some of the processes of constructing knowledge about young children. She feels being a parent gives you a bigger base of knowledge from which to draw especially in the areas of discipline and the ability to understand and relate to children in your classroom. Three of Carleen’s children attend school where she teaches and one is in the preschool right across from her building.

#### Undergraduate experience

When Carleen began taking her education classes she became fascinated with how children develop and wished she had had Cognitive Development, Creative Expression and Beginning Reading classes before she started her own family. Carleen made a couple of comments in relation to her undergraduate classes. One, an instructor who teaches early childhood education students needs to have a thorough understanding of early childhood philosophy themselves was prompted by an experience she encountered while taking a science education class. The types of activities and projects

she assigned to the class gave her the impression the instructor did not fully understand early childhood philosophy. The second aspect of the undergraduate experience she shared dealt with the importance of constructing a philosophy for her portfolio.

Developing a professional philosophy encouraged her to construct what she believed about how children learn and develop knowledge in different curriculum areas, what the role of the early childhood teacher should be, and how to design meaningful lesson plans for particular ages of children. She shared that her philosophy continues to develop and change with her direct classroom teaching experience and plans to update hers at the end of this year.

Carleen expressed in our final interview that a teacher's entry year experience should be connected to the university for the entirety of the first year to help support beginning teachers during the most stressful time of their career. The types of connections could be accomplished with projects related to their teaching experience, attending meetings, or participating in workshops specifically designed for beginning teachers. Teachers in Boccia's study (1991) showed a preference for collegial models of support which may well reflect the desire of beginning teachers to replicate a key feature of their preservice program, and that being a member of a group who is able to share the first year with a faculty team. Fogarty and Lennon (as cited in Clyde & Ebbeck, 1991) elaborate on this notion of support from institutions of teacher education stating that they should "offer systematic follow-up efforts to evaluate the quality of its graduates ..." and to assist these beginning teachers with a smooth transition from their preservice program into their professional development as a beginning teacher. Preservice teachers should have more time to observe and participate in classrooms with all different types of

students before they start teaching. Classroom management techniques should be incorporated into all required preservice classes such as social studies, language arts, science and mathematics not simply covered in a classroom management course.

### Beginning teaching

Carleen bubbled with excitement when I asked her to describe how she felt walking into the classroom for the first time. She related that she was extremely excited about getting to know her students that she had waited such a long time to meet. Sleeping the night before school started was difficult and she was filled with nervousness and doubt. Carleen expressed concern as a beginning teacher because she wasn't sure that the mandated curriculum would mesh with her teaching philosophy. She also wanted to be assured that there was a good balance between organization and control – covering the skills yet remaining a child-centered affectionate teacher. Carleen has already had to learn how to defend her philosophy in requesting materials for student use in her classroom.

### Support systems

Four support systems in particular were mentioned in our third interview session: her mentor, assistant principal, principal, and one of her former university professors. Her mentor teacher has been teaching for almost twenty years and has been available to answer questions, accompany her on field trips, and provide positive feedback on practices she needs to have in place for the principal's evaluation. The assistant principal has been an additional source of support for Carleen this year although she has only been

at the school since Christmas. Carleen is able to discuss discipline procedures and conflicts that have arisen with families and other teachers but most of the advice has been “quick fix solutions”. The principal has been visible and has the desire to help Carleen but due to the fact that she has been the only administrator in the school until Christmas her advice has not been sought very often. A former university professor has been able to provide Carleen with assistance in using logical consequences in her classroom this year.

### Philosophy of teaching

In formulating a philosophy for her undergraduate portfolio Carleen had to carefully consider what she believed about how children learn and what she believed the role of the teacher was from a developmentally appropriate perspective. She has discovered through being a parent, attending classes and now having taught almost a complete year that you don't make kids learn or develop. It happens gradually over differing periods of time for each child. The teacher's responsibility is to provide appropriate activities so children can learn and also furnish them with opportunities to reinforce important concepts that they have already learned. Each class of students will have their own temperament, and what works this year with these students may not work for next year's class or even for another teacher. Carleen shared three things she plans to expand on as she revises her philosophy at the end of this year: the role of the teacher as a facilitator, how to foster meaningful relationships and communication with children, and the critical component, learning is forever, you never stop learning.

### Reflections and future goals

Now that the year is coming to a close Carleen has begun to formulate plans for changes she wants to implement next year. The focus of her concern right now is how to handle behavior problems. She wants to learn about using logical consequences with her students next year. She also wants to reconsider how she will teach mandated curriculum and restructure her schedule to allow the students larger blocks of time with her. In addition to these considerations Carleen wants to examine various alternative assessments she might use with this age group of children. She will be spending her summer rereading her textbooks and learning more about beginning reading. She mentioned it would be nice to begin visiting other first grade classrooms next year that have a strong reading program. A teacher's first year is so overwhelming in so many areas that being able to expand beyond the basics this year has been difficult.

Eventually Carleen would like to get involved in the lives of other beginning teachers because she has had such a positive experience this year. She loves to teach and would welcome the opportunity in the future to teach somebody else how to interact with children. Carleen has no definite plans at this time about furthering her education because she feels her focus right now is becoming better at teaching first graders. Then she may be able to think about attaining more education.

### Interviewer's insights

From the moment I first sat down to talk with Carleen, I was aware of her enthusiasm for teaching. Her mannerisms, her tone of voice and the atmosphere of her room all left me with the impressions that this teacher was well on her way. Carleen was

a very mature individual as detected in her thoughtfulness in answering the questions and the attitudes portrayed in the types of responses she gave me. Her philosophical statement that “learning is forever, you don’t stop learning” was not offered glibly. She truly exemplified this attitude throughout all three-interview sessions. Although Carleen doesn’t belong to any professional organizations or read professional literature, she is seeking and without a doubt I feel that she will make some great gains in this area. *[When I contacted Carleen after sending her the completed transcripts she relayed to me that she had requested to have the school supply The Reading Teacher for the teacher’s professional library. The school agreed to purchase the journal and she now has a reputable source to obtain information about becoming a more informed teacher of reading.]*

#### Nancy

Nancy had graduated in May of 2000 at the age of 34. She received notification of her first teaching job a week before school was to start that next fall. At the time of our interviews Nancy was married and had three children the youngest of which was in second grade. She lives twenty minutes away from her school, which is in a very rural town. Most of her student’s parents have not attended school beyond their high school graduation. The school is a first through third grade site and has approximately 350 children in attendance. Nancy had 17 children in her classroom when I interviewed her and she stated at that time that almost all of the children in the school were either White or Native American.



Nancy was born in Texas and she and her family moved eleven times while she was growing up. She met her husband, got married and lived in the same house for fifteen years. Recently they built a new house closer to the school and plan to retire in that community. She characterized her school as a warm and friendly place to work, at least for the most part.

### My interviews with Nancy<sup>3</sup>

#### Decision to teach

Playing school with any friends she could round up or her brothers was a favorite pastime of Nancy's growing up. The full realization that she wanted to teach came in junior high school, but her father was against her going to college only to make eighteen thousand dollars as a teacher. Nancy was sent on a different path and took two years of vocational schooling to become a photographer. She eventually had her own business and after ten years realized she was seeing more of her clients than her family. The business was sold and still desiring to become a teacher Nancy, enrolled in a nearby university in the teacher education program to become an early childhood teacher.

#### Memories of school

Nancy's family moved around quite a bit during her years of schooling except from second grade to sixth grade. During her first grade year she attended five different schools and remarked that it was a wonder she ever learned to read. She remembers being in a bilingual kindergarten where they learned "tons" of Spanish songs and did their work

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<sup>3</sup> The complete text of Nancy's interviews is in Appendix F.

in Spanish, which made it a fun and interesting year for her. Her third grade teacher, Miss Younger, had the children construct a miniature Indian village with little teepees, people, fences and gardens. Nancy's elementary years were more memorable for her and she feels those experiences may have contributed to her desire to become an early childhood teacher. Nancy was a very good student throughout her school and grew to like all subjects although she contends that science was and still is her favorite and has influenced her teaching curriculum with her first graders.

#### Family background and support

During Nancy's second through sixth grade years in school her father was a truck driver and maintained a dog kennel. After sixth grade her family moved across the state so her father could open a restaurant. The business, which lasted only one year, had a significant financial impact on Nancy's family. They went from being a middle class family to a family in poverty soon afterwards and thereafter the family moved every year. Nancy's husband was about the only person who understood and supported her desire to teach. Once she sold her photography business and began not only taking classes at the university but making excellent grades, the rest of her family began to take notice and stand behind her. Nancy's mother-in-law would take care of their youngest son while she attended classes so she would not have to leave him in daycare.

#### Undergraduate experience

There were students in Nancy's classes that began to bond and form a long-term friendship taking the same classes, working on projects together, and sometimes even

tutoring each other in areas where they needed some extra help. Working with her peers proved to be a very good opportunity to get in some practice teaching. She expressed that most of what she learned during her undergraduate years she has forgotten and that there is definitely a need for incorporating more hands-on projects and spending more time in a classroom with children in the preservice program. Nancy never had any experience in her undergraduate work to gain any understanding of other grade level curriculum and suggested that education students should start getting into the classrooms earlier into their program in order to find out if they were cut out for a teaching career. She stated it is critical that interns be placed with teachers who will allow the student teachers to practice what they have been taught and thereby learn from their mistakes before they have their own classrooms.

### Beginning Teaching

One week before summer ended Nancy was hired to teach first grade. That week she practically lived at the school trying to clean, decorate and organize her materials before the students showed up for the first day of classes. Nancy was clueless as to how to start that first day. Her final interning experience was split between two grade levels and she was unable to witness how you go about starting a year with first graders. Fortunately she had a very astute mentor, also a first grade teacher, and she was able to follow her lead while learning the basic practices of starting her first year of teaching. She reminisced that the first few weeks were the scariest and most tiring that she has ever experienced. Teaching first grade is an awesome responsibility and proved to be very, very stressful, scary and fun all rolled up together.

### Support systems

The advice and support system Nancy relied on her first year of teaching included her mentor teacher, other first grade teachers, her principal and the counselor. The principal had expressed confidence in the mentor's classroom organization and stated that her students have always come out of her class well prepared to move on in their education. Nancy dialogued on a consistent basis with her mentor about anything and everything a first year teacher might encounter including how to set up her grade book. Other first grade teachers have stopped by her room to lend her materials, advice and support through this first year. The principal was consulted on several occasions about concerns Nancy had in preparation of her students for second grade, not knowing what the second grade teachers expected nor if her own expectations were adequate. A meeting was requested but never materialized, and she feared that next year those students sent on to second grade would not meet those teachers' expectations after all. Nancy has referred back to textbooks from her undergraduate program, articles from professional journals and the Internet as sources of help during the course of the year for answers to classroom management, children's behavior and assistance with the reading curriculum. She has had to work with the school counselor this semester in helping her to deal with the death of one of her student's fathers. The counselor was able to offer Nancy, her students and their parents some critical insights in coping with an untimely situation.

### Philosophy of teaching

I gathered several essential elements of Nancy's philosophy from the three interviews I conducted with her. She is mindful that teaching is a live-and-learn

profession and that you are constantly having to practice your skills until you get them right. Experiences from her own schooling continue to remind her of the incredible amount of influence a teacher has with students and how vitally important it is that teachers provide positive experiences for students to look back on. A teacher's dedication and perseverance with children help them feel successful and provide encouragement in helping them learn what they need to know. An early childhood teacher needs to exhibit patience, caring and understanding that not everyday is going to go well for you or the kids and have strong convictions about what they believe about how children learn and be able to convey that to colleagues, administrators and parents. Nancy realizes now that teachers don't need to know everything. Her first year has reminded her that there will always be more to learn. That's why it is important to be willing to listen and think through things before they pass judgement on other teachers' ideas. She has the determination to continue pursuing answers to the questions she encounters in her practice as a teacher so that next year she will be even more prepared for teaching children about life.

### Reflections and future goals

The opportunity of having taught almost a complete year gave Nancy some insights for improving her future practice. She planned to spend much of her summer rereading her textbooks, attending workshops and revamping her units. Teaching reading was a critical component of her first year as a teacher and an area she felt she needed to improve on for next year. Nancy also realized that she would have to make a better effort in reaching parents at the beginning of the year and had already begun to formulate some

definite plans of what she might be able to do to improve parent participation in her class activities. Classroom management and conducting parent conferences were also mentioned as areas she wanted to improve on for next year. Knowing what transpires within a year of teaching first grade has given her confidence and a foundation upon which to build in the coming months and years ahead. She wished she could go back to college and retake her classes because she knew they would have more meaning to her now.

### Interviewer's insights

Nancy exuded concern for her students in making sure the critical skills were covered in enough depth for them to be successful in their education. Her concern for students was also detected in her statement that she took a lot of her students' problems home with her and takes them to heart. It is difficult for her to separate the problems kids have from the life she lives outside of the classroom knowing there is little she can do to help the situation. I felt her experiences as a photographer and having had a business before entering teaching enhanced her perceptions of people, situations and her own capabilities. Nancy displayed confidence in her resolve to improve her practice. She strives to find answers to those questions that have arisen this year and is beginning to understand what it will take for her to become the best she can be for her students. From what I observed and what Nancy related to me during our interview sessions gave me the impression that she will succeed in her journey in becoming a well-seasoned teacher. In her future goals she mentioned that she would want to be one of those "old teachers that

everybody goes to,” who has tons of confidence, and whose students are thriving and growing.

## Second Year Teachers

### Julie

Julie was in her second year of teaching when I interviewed her and was most cooperative during the interviews. But she has had little contact with me since the conclusion of those sessions. Numerous phone calls and requests for further information which I felt would inform my study were ignored.

The school where Julie was teaching was located in a deprived area of a large metropolitan city and was unique due to the fact that children attended from all parts of the city. They were not just children who lived in this neighborhood. During one of the interviews it was mentioned that some of these children’s parents had attended this same school. There were thirteen classrooms with approximately twenty students per class and an additional class containing ten students designated for children with special developmental needs. The majority of children attending this school come from minority groups and the school reports a high mobility rate among its students.

Julie had one child, a little girl, before she began her education coursework and had her second child, a boy, during the previous year at this school. Julie began teaching first grade the spring after she graduated in a smaller town but in a very affluent neighborhood. The teacher had moved to another state and Julie had been an intern in a kindergarten there. She had sixteen children at the time I interviewed her but began the year with twenty, which she stated was too many four and five-year-olds for one teacher.

Julie is no longer teaching. The last I heard she was working in a Parents-As-Teachers program in the same school district where the preschool was located.

#### My interviews with Julie<sup>4</sup>

##### Decision to teach

Julie describes her decision to teach as “I just sort of fell into it.” She originally wanted to pursue a degree in horticulture and eventually own her own floral business so she earned her associate’s degree in horticulture and worked at a craft store. Julie enjoyed the satisfaction she received from seeing people figure things out for themselves in the different classes she taught.

Her family had encouraged her to work with adults and teach horticulture since there were so few women in that field and Julie had never been one to enjoy working with little children. Julie’s father was adamant about her not going into teaching because of his previous unfortunate experiences with educators. Others around tried to discourage her citing a teacher works long hours, makes little money, and has to deal with increased student ratios. After having a child of her own she realized how much she would enjoy teaching young children after all. Once she made up her mind to become a teacher things fell into place and Julie enrolled in college again with the support of her husband and mother. Her father eventually came to accept the fact that she was going to school for a teaching degree and supported her from that point on.

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<sup>4</sup> The complete text of Julie’s interviews is in Appendix G.



### Memories of school

Julie shared very little about her schooling except to say that her family moved around a lot while she was growing up and that those experiences have helped her relate to all different levels of society. An art teacher's negative attitude towards her was still a vivid memory and motivated her in the way she teaches creativity to children.

### Undergraduate experience

Julie related she had the most difficulty obtaining information about what she was supposed to take and who to talk to during her enrollment. Most of her basic general education courses had been taken at that point. Her interning experiences were in a kindergarten program, pre-kindergarten program and a developmental first grade. Through her reflections she conveyed a desire to have had more time being in the classroom for these internships because the process of getting to know the children takes time and it is important to establish before you can begin teaching them. Julie took some summer classes, but she felt that too much was crammed into a short period of time for her to gain any relevant material. Designing of lesson plans, constructing a philosophy and developing a portfolio were some of the more beneficial assignments she had to fulfill in her undergraduate training.

### Beginning teaching

Julie describes her experiences as being able to see both sides of the spectrum. Her first teaching assignment was the spring semester after her graduation in the same school where she had interned. The teacher had moved and she was hired to finish out the

year since she was already familiar with the children. The parents were a source of concern for her that year because they had very high expectations for their children and were not very pleased that their children would be having a different teacher to finish out the year. The school was in a high socioeconomic area and the parents were frequently present in the school trying to dictate how she should be teaching their children. Teaching first grade Julie expressed she felt inadequate having to teach reading and faced the pressures of test scores and accountability during that year.

The next fall Julie taught in a pre-K program where she was still teaching during our interviews. She mentioned how much better it was to begin the year with the children and had more confidence even though she was teaching a different level of students. The parent participation her first year in the pre-K program was excellent but dwindled her second year at this same school. Julie had two different mentors from the university during her entry year in teaching.

### Support systems

Describing her support systems, Julie expressed confidence in going to her principal this year more so than in the past, but she would probably not be the first person she goes to when she has problems. Parents would most likely go see her first before they came to her. A comment was made about how a principal makes all the difference in the school's environment. This was the third principal Julie had worked with. She described the differences among them during the course of our conversations. The teachers down her hallway this year have been the most helpful in providing answers to questions, giving her materials and modeling techniques she would need to use for testing. Her first

year she had contacted her advisor from college but not very often. Other support sources used by Julie included veteran teachers at her church and other beginning teachers who had attended classes with her at the university or she had participated with in workshops.

Julie used support sources for information on room arrangements, thematic unit ideas, behavioral problems, testing and screening children, daily schedules, and parent relations. If a particular situation or concern required an unbiased opinion she stated she would most likely go to someone outside the school for that advice.

### Philosophy of teaching

Julie felt very strongly about how important it was for a teacher to be a life-long learner and be challenged professionally. When she was asked to construct a philosophy in her undergraduate studies, she felt she hadn't established enough of her own opinions to clearly state what she believed whereas older adults in the class had enough life experiences that they could draw from in writing a teaching philosophy. Having taught a couple of years now her beliefs about how children learn, play and the specific needs they have are much more solidified than when she first constructed her philosophy.

### Reflections and future goals

Julie didn't express any need to go back for further schooling. She did mention in our last interview that she would like to work with new teachers after she had been in teaching for a while – probably ten or fifteen years from now. Workshops are Julie's main source of improving her craft as a teacher, although she does mention using the Internet as another avenue she has pursued. There seemed to be little evidence from our

conversations that she was getting any more from these two sources other than lesson plans and ideas for classroom activities. Seeking answers to more philosophical questions about teaching was not mentioned.

### Interviewer's insights

Julie was a very energetic person and was very pleasant to converse with during the course of interview sessions. She tended to get off track many times during the interviews and I am not for certain if it was due to lack of understanding the questions, which I did try to reword and restate for her, or if she had an agenda she would rather have discussed. I lean toward the later of my reasons due to the fact that when I initially contacted the teachers for their consideration in the study, she pounced on the opportunity to share what she had been through. Her eagerness caught me off guard.

There were several questions that I failed to ask her as follow-ups, which is to be expected in doing this type of interviewing. Julie was inconsistent on several different occasions throughout the interviews and it appeared to me that she was trying to give me the "right" answers and not what was truly happening in the classroom. I also received the impression that she had a very controlling personality and she described herself as a "take charge person." Since she is no longer in the classroom, this may give an indication that there were many more things she failed to express during the interviews about her concerns and struggles as a beginning teacher. Another interpretation may be that the interview experience itself may have challenged her to re-think her teaching practice and possibly encourage her to go in a different direction. Julie also failed to provide feedback to me when contacted after completion of the interviews.

I believe that beginning teachers not only have preconceived ideas about how the classroom will be once they are engaged in teaching, but that they may also have unresolved personal issues that they bring with them into the classroom. With Julie I had the impression that she had some definite unresolved issues in her past that needed to be addressed before she would be able to affect the lives of the children she was working with. Again, these are my perceptions based on what I have observed through my career as a teacher, mentor, and researcher.

### Cameron

Cameron is in her second year teaching kindergarten and was twenty-five at the time of our interviews. She has been married for almost five years and has recently had her first child, a baby boy. Cameron has lived in the city all of her life except for three months when her husband had to leave the state for his job. During our interviews she mentioned she went to the same school where she is now a teacher.

The school where Cameron teaches is a K-6 school and has an enrollment of 325 students who are mostly from low socioeconomic families. The school is situated in a high drug/poverty area. There are 19 teachers and one administrator at the school, which now has a year-round program. There is very little parent involvement and a high rate of teacher turnover in the school. The city in which the school is located is approximately 50,000 and has 10 elementary schools including the one she teaches in, 1 middle school and 1 high school.

Cameron went straight from high school to college at a nearby university. She commuted back and forth to school for four and a half years till she graduated. She mentioned that she has not taken any extra hours since completing her degree in 1998.

### My interviews with Cameron<sup>5</sup>

#### Decision to teach

Cameron's dream as a young girl was to open a dance studio and a wedding shop. She never planned to go on to college until she received a scholarship upon completion of high school. Her mother encouraged her at this point to go on and get a degree now because she may never go back later. She made plans to pursue a degree in business management since it would be beneficial in opening her future businesses. Cameron's future plans were altered once she was enlisted by her mother to help as a volunteer in an English as a Second Language (ESL) program in a local church. Cameron began working with three, four, and five-year-olds the later half of her senior year in high school and as time progressed, became enamored with these children and intrigued by the academic growth she was privileged to witness. This experience convinced her that her place in life would be working with young children not managing a business after all.

#### Memories of school

Early schooling experiences for Cameron added another dimension to this life-changing decision to teach, however. Cameron shared that she never liked school after kindergarten and her first, second and third grade years were overshadowed with an

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<sup>5</sup> The complete text of Cameron's interviews is in Appendix H.

enormous amount of unsuccessful attempts at learning. Chronic ear infections in her younger years made hearing and verbalizing sound extremely troublesome and reading became a labored process. She began to feel more unsuccessful with her attempts to learn much of anything those first three years in school and found herself trying to evade school or making up numerous excuses to go home. Cameron began to feel more successful in her academic attempts after third grade when reading became easier and graduated from high school in the top 10% of her class.

### Family background and support

Cameron did not mention having any real strong push from her family or any other significant individuals to pursue a degree in teaching although her parents did encourage her to complete a college degree. Once she made the decision to be an educator she did seek out individuals who were already teachers and asked pointed questions about their experiences in order to determine what would be the best direction to pursue. Some of the individuals she consulted proposed that she might want to consider speech pathology since she had had such difficulty in this area in her early years of school. Ultimately she chose to work with young children and earned a degree in early childhood.

### Undergraduate experience

Cameron enjoyed the classes at the university that centered on young children's cognitive learning and those that incorporated creative, hands-on projects. She began molding a philosophy of how children learn best and what a teacher of young children

needed to exemplify to her students. Observing teachers in their classrooms proved valuable during these years and throughout her interning experiences Cameron was influenced by the caliber of teachers with whom she was placed. A drawback of her undergraduate experience was the fact that she wasn't presented enough background to the different curriculum programs she may encounter in public school classrooms.

Cameron's interning experience started after the school year had been in session about four weeks. The delay in starting in a classroom until the third or fourth week of school did not give her a good foundation for how to start a school year which proved to be a concern for her the first week of teaching her own class. She felt education students were also not adequately prepared for the special children they will encounter in their classrooms but offered no advice on how this type of problem for beginning teachers could be alleviated.

### Beginning teaching

When the first day of school came for Cameron she related, "I was scared to death!" She attributes some of those feelings to lack of having someone to go to and ask questions and insufficient experience with procedures for starting a school year. Her relationship with parents that first year was a rough one. She had thought this was one area of teaching she was fairly well prepared for and found out within the first three weeks of school that it can be a very stressful part of a teacher's life. The reflections that Cameron related about that first year show that she is developing an ability to constructively build upon the types of situations that have caused some of her concern.



### Support systems

Cameron described her school as “very unique.” She qualified this statement by saying they have a high turnover of teachers each year. Her first principal left the year she began teaching and they had almost a brand new staff in the early childhood grades. The year began with a substitute in the other kindergarten class and so Cameron had to carry the load of not only doing planning for her class but for the other kindergarten class as well. Cameron’s second year followed the same scenario. The little support she received that year was from her new principal, a college advisor and a few friends teaching in other schools in the district. She had no time to consult with her mentor, a fourth grade teacher, as they had different planning times and their students were on such different levels. Journals from professional organizations she belonged to and workshops provided some needed advice, but Cameron mentioned she “wished she had had someone to be behind so she could feel her way around the first couple of months.” When an additional kindergarten teacher was added to the faculty, replacing the substitute a relationship blossomed and has continued to grow. The three kindergarten teachers get together on a regular basis to share happenings in their everyday lives and have found solace in having someone to turn to and confide in.

### Philosophy of teaching

Although Cameron didn’t express a succinct philosophy bits and pieces were woven throughout the three interviews. She expressed the importance of developing a curriculum based on children’s developmental stages and interests. Cameron mentioned she preferred dealing with parents as team members and felt this kind of relationship was

significant in building an environment where everyone can experience the importance of trust and security. Cameron stated toward the end of the last interview, “everyone needs the magic triad – kind touch, kind word, and a kind smile.” Cameron has learned to use reflection on past practice as a tool to set future goals and desires to be an active learner through reading and participating in professional development. She uses a variety of ways to assess her children’s progress and talked about the importance of modifying instruction for those children not capable of reaching a goal everyone else can reach. Cameron felt that beginning teachers should be more accepting of their colleagues even though there may be differences in their ideas. Teachers working together can really make a difference in a school.

#### Reflection and future goals

Her future aspirations include being able to model a love for teaching in order to inspire other teachers beginning their careers. Without stating, “this is my philosophy,” Cameron gave me a very clear cut picture of where she had been, where she hoped to be and what she learned along the way throughout our three interview sessions. She would like to earn a master’s degree but uncertain what particular area it will be except she did state it would not be in administration. She sees each year as a part of the growth process and hopefully she will continue to work on a different aspect of that process every year she teaches.

### Interviewer's insights

Looking back over Cameron's transcripts I was first of all impressed with the frequency and quality of her professional development considering her age and few years of teaching experience. She was very attuned to making sure the children would learn to trust her and that she could provide them with a safe and secure environment where they would feel successful. She still struggles with teaching developmentally appropriate curriculum while under pressure to teach to the first grade teacher's expectations.

Although she was a very quiet-spoken young teacher, she came across as someone very focused on her goals and aspirations. It was interesting that she seemed to think she came across so negative during the interviews when I was viewing her as someone so positive and caring. Through the course of our dialogue I realized how much of Cameron's life experiences have impacted the manner in which she deals with her students and the level of empathy she is able to show towards them. It was rewarding to me to know that Cameron is learning to stretch and grow based on daily experiences and desires to remain fresh and eager about her future as a teacher.

### Third Year Teachers

#### Suzanne

When I interviewed Suzanne she was twenty-nine years old and had been married eight years. She grew up in a neighboring community to where she now resides with her husband and two daughters, five and two. She had moved three times before her third grade year in school because her parents were completing their college degrees and trying

to find employment. Suzanne graduated from high school in 1989 and enrolled in college that fall. She obtained an associate degree in travel before deciding to pursue a degree in early childhood education in 1994. Upon completion of her college work in 1998 she began teaching second grade in the same school where she now teaches. Suzanne was moved down to first grade her second year and has taught that grade for two years in a row. This next year, her fourth year in teaching she will move to third grade and she related that it will be hard starting a new grade and she hopes to be able to stay there for a while.

Suzanne teaches in a school of approximately 375 students. The community has approximately 35,000 citizens and has ten schools. Her particular school employs approximately 35 teachers, support staff not included, and one administrator and counselor. The socioeconomic status of the community/school is a mix of blue and white collar, middle class citizens with her school having a higher percentage of high economic families than the other elementary schools in this district.

#### My interviews with Suzanne<sup>6</sup>

##### Decision to teach

Suzanne didn't desire a teaching career even though both of her parents and several other relatives are teachers. She felt she had been around teaching all her life and wasn't that interested in making it part of hers now. After graduation from high school she pursued a degree in travel and worked in the business world for a few years before deciding to return to school to become a teacher. Suzanne wanted to have a family and

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<sup>6</sup> The complete text of Suzanne's interviews is in Appendix I.

being a teacher would give her a schedule that would be more fitting to family life. There were those that discouraged Suzanne from becoming a teacher because of the low pay, parents were not very caring, and kids were getting harder to handle. Suzanne stated on several occasions that her mind was already made up and she refused to be discouraged.

### Memories of school

Schooling was fairly uneventful for Suzanne up until the fourth grade. She remembered liking two particular grades, kindergarten and third grade but there was nothing particularly poignant about why she seemed to like them better than other years. In fourth grade and ninth grade she experienced bad encounters with her teachers. Those memories remain imbedded in her mind even today. The teachers were about ready to retire and had no enthusiasm for teaching or patience in working with students who had difficulty grasping a concept. Because of these two particular experiences in her schooling, Suzanne has been motivated to insure her students do not go through the same humiliation she had to endure. She strives to explain what she is teaching to her students in a thorough manner and is open to their questions and concerns and has a willingness to adjust the curriculum to meet the needs of her students. The worst thing she could think of would be that some student would come back to her and hold her responsible for not teaching them what they needed to know to be successful in school.

### Family background and support

No mention was made during the interviews about her parents not supporting her decision to teach. She does mention that she has gone to her mother on several occasions

to seek help or advice once she had her own classroom. Her grandparents and some of the teachers she eventually interned with tried to emphasize the realities she would face as a teacher. Suzanne's husband was not opposed that she was choosing to teach. He "just wanted me to get a job I had been in school so long." Now he sees the benefits for their family since Suzanne is in education and will be able to work with their children and be home at the same time they are, once they start to school.

### Undergraduate experience

Choosing to be an early childhood teacher instead of an elementary teacher was based on two reasons. One reason was the university that Suzanne would have to go to for an elementary education degree was not acceptable to her. She chose early childhood because another university close by did offer that and it was a more plausible situation for her at that time. Suzanne preferred working with younger children over the older ones. The biggest concern she had in regards to her undergraduate experience was that she did not receive enough information about dealing with children with special needs. What the courses did offer was not nearly enough to prepare her for what she faced this year, her third year in teaching, but she was not sure how it could be done differently at the university. For the most part everything else in her undergraduate experience went fairly smoothly and she had no suggestions to offer on what could be done differently.

### Beginning teaching

Scared and hectic were two words Suzanne used to describe her first day of teaching. She didn't feel she knew enough about what she was doing while trying to

determine her boundaries as she was now “the teacher.” Suzanne acquired her first teaching assignment only a few weeks before school started and had to work diligently to ready the room and prepare her curriculum. The few weeks previous to starting school she got acquainted with the school and the other teachers in the building, especially the other second grade teachers. She describes herself as a very organized person and wanted everything in order before school started but even having the room set up and plans made still didn’t give her the assurance that everything would work as planned. The first day was a success and the rest of the week just seemed to fall in place. Suzanne had been provided money to start her school year and the teacher who had retired left many materials in the classroom for her to use, which she labeled and filed away for future use. She is concerned that next year will not be as easy because of moving up to third grade and doesn’t know what to expect.

#### Support systems

From day one of entering her school the teachers, staff and principal have been totally supportive by sharing materials, ideas, and suggestions in helping her get situated. Suzanne’s school employs aides who also assist the teachers with coloring, laminating, copying to help them prepare for the weeks ahead. There was another second grade teacher who had been at this school one year but not in the capacity of a classroom teacher. Suzanne mentioned that they were in each other’s classrooms on a daily basis asking questions and sharing materials throughout that first year. Her mentor, a fifth grade teacher, was not consulted very regularly due to the differences in age span of the children they taught and the distance between their rooms. The mentor did visit

occasionally to assess her for the entry year meetings and would also sometimes stop by and engage in an activity with her students.

Suzanne relied on advice from her mother, friends, and other teachers outside of her district during that first year mainly for ideas with curriculum or for supplies. The principal in Suzanne's school was highly visible around the school and always available and willing to go the extra mile to assure her success that first year. Suzanne continues to rely on his and the counselor's support for a variety of needs and feels especially comfortable discussing concerns with them about her students since they know the students on a very personal level.

#### Philosophy of teaching

Suzanne believes very strongly that an early childhood teacher needs to love children and love what they do. What a teacher says and does on a daily basis interacting with children has a lasting impact on children whether we realize it or not. Not all children can be taught the same way. You have to be sensitive to the needs and age of the child and willing to revamp your instruction accordingly. Being open-minded, a good listener, effective communicator, resourceful and persistent in seeking out information are essential characteristics if you expect to succeed as an early childhood teacher or help children thrive and grow in school. Becoming a parent has helped her identify more closely with what transpires at home with her students and made her more responsive in what she expects from them. One of the last things she brought out was how important it is for a teacher to continue learning in the areas where they feel the greatest need and to reflect and evaluate those areas that can be improved.



### Reflection and future goals

Suzanne, in retrospection, stated, “I never realized how mentally tired you get, it [teaching] just drains your whole body.” Teaching takes a lot of time and effort especially when you change grades several times in a three-year span. Looking back to what she expected and what actually transpired these past three years she was able to put many things into perspective and see an evolution of her life as a teacher. She felt she is much more in tune with what is going on in her classroom now and wonders what she was so worried about before. Suzanne expressed that beginning teachers have more concerns but as the conversation continued it was evident that she still has concerns but that they have changed because she has changed and grown through her experience. Looking at what she has done in the past that she is not satisfied with has provided her with the motivation to change and strive to do better the next time.

### Interviewer’s insights

From the time I met Suzanne I have known her to be a confident and knowledgeable teacher. Her classroom is interestingly decorated and there is evidence that she goes beyond what is expected of her in her organization and planning. Visiting with the principal while waiting for school to be out, it was clear he thought very highly of this teacher. His comment was that you usually do not find a beginning teacher with her skills and abilities. This may be the reason he is moving her to a third grade position to model reading strategies she has been using. Suzanne knows what she wants and is willing to work with her students, faculty, and parents to see progress and she has the desire to grow and develop her weak areas. Professional development opportunities have

been in the format of workshops and meetings but her professional reading has been quite limited. The types of activities in which she does participate may not be adequate in substantially arousing her ability to seek deeper understanding of who she is as a teacher, what she is trying to do with children, or in assisting her in stretching beyond her comfort zone.

### Ann

Ann was 44 at the time of our interviews. She has been married for seven years and has a stepson, 21 and two other boys 18 and 16. She has lived in the area where she teaches for twenty-seven years. Ann has always attended private schools in both states where she has lived. Her father worked for a large food conglomerate and was transferred after her third grade year. Ann had attended college two years right out of high school but did not complete her education at that time. She went back to school in 1994 and completed her degree in early childhood in 1998 from a nearby university.

The metropolitan area where she teaches has a population of approximately 500,000 and has eleven elementary schools, a sixth and seventh grade center, an eighth grade center, an alternative school, intermediate high school, and a high school. The enrollment in her building has increased to 600 in the short time she has been there. Most of the children are upper middle class although they do draw students from a low-income apartment complex nearby. This was Ann's third year to teach but first year in this building which is nestled in a brand new subdivision. She stated she works with 27 wonderful faculty and has a very competent caring principal. At the time of our interview

she had 27 students in her classroom which was bright, well supplied with materials and showed definite signs of children's engagement with curriculum.

### My interviews with Ann<sup>7</sup>

#### Decision to teach

Ann attended parochial schools from kindergarten through twelfth grades and moved in and out of state several times before she graduated from high school. Any time there was an opportunity to volunteer for service projects Ann always chose to go into an elementary classroom and assist a teacher grading papers or work with young children having a difficult time in school. A first grade teacher with whom she volunteered would tease her and tell her what a great teacher she would make someday. She related that "when you start hearing those things it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy," you begin to incorporate that into your thinking, trying it on and it begins to fit. Her decision to teach was "an evolution ever since I was young." Ann volunteered quite frequently in her own children's classrooms and it was through observing the teachers explaining to the children or the activities they planned for them that she realized "I can do this better!" This was the turning point when she decided to go back to school and finish her degree. Ann declared in our interview that "I've never looked back, I've loved it."

#### Memories of school

Ann's memory of school was that it was a rigid and structured experience. There were a few teachers throughout her schooling that left a lasting impression and I believe

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<sup>7</sup> The complete text of Ann's interviews is in Appendix J.

have had an influence on her teaching philosophy and attitude toward the students she daily encounters. One of these teachers was a kindergarten teacher who was described as “the closest thing to a developmentally appropriate teacher” she has ever experienced in her life. The teacher was always providing “wonderful experiences” for the children including a full Thanksgiving feast with a turkey her husband had shot and prepared for them. There were three other teachers that Ann remembered. One was her junior and senior year world literature teacher who was “passionate about what she knew ... and determined we would grow to love it.” This teacher was “very interested in us as people, very caring, had a sense of humor, and just very real.” The two other teachers she talked about were remembered for their ability to “tackle the challenging issues” they were faced with as teens and caused her to really think about important issues and ultimately guide her in forming her own opinions. She later shared that this same characteristic was valued in the instructors she had during her undergraduate work.

#### Family background and support

Ann only attended college two years before she chose to marry. Later in life after having children she made the decision to finish her degree and her husband and children were supportive of her in this decision, but that the degree was in teaching held no particular importance. Attending classes at the university and working on assignments did not provide any real hindrance to her family life or schedule and through a dedication to her goal graduated with her bachelor’s degree in early childhood. Nothing was mentioned about any negative feedback with her decision to become a teacher.

### Undergraduate experience

Ann described her undergraduate coursework as “way too broad” and did not feel that she really got into the “meat of teaching.” As a result she felt ill prepared entering the classroom for the first time. One thought she kept at the back of her mind was that with the experience she had raising her own children she knew she would probably figure it out and she would be okay. The preparation period was additionally difficult due to the fact that “you had no idea where you’re actually going to land.” Her first teaching assignment teaching first grade, a grade that was not her first choice.

### Beginning teaching

The school environment of her first assignment was less than ideal – no furniture, supplies, and the teachers she encountered upon entering the building were less than cordial about assisting her in getting settled. The principal of this school was absent on the week she began her preparations of preparing her room to start school and admonished her for taking things into her own hands in getting furniture and supplies without asking. Ann was replacing a teacher who had been asked to leave so she knew from the time she was hired that the principal would have her under close scrutiny. She managed to accumulate enough of the basic furniture to make a semblance of a classroom and purchased other materials from her own resources to enable her to conduct school the first day when she was presented with twenty-eight first graders. Ann’s first thought was “I have made a giant mistake, what was I thinking?” She felt sure that terror was written all over her face for everyone to see. Even though someone from the school’s district

administration did come by and promise that they would get her some help it was a month before they could find another teacher to take some of the children.

### Support systems

Support during her first year was scarce and Ann's assigned mentor was in another section of the building and rarely came by to assist her and answer her questions. Ann approached her mentor about scheduling regular meetings and she replied "she just flat didn't have time." Ann was forced to learn everything on her own and related "it's the hardest thing I've ever done in my life." As she looks back on that first year she recounts that she was grateful for the experience, but that "it is a deplorable way for anyone to come into this field." She had perceived, during her undergraduate training, that someone would take her under their wing and guide her through the induction year. It did not take Ann very long to understand the stark reality that not all environments for new teachers are as they are supposed to be. Eventually a mutual friend, who was a principal in another district, provided her with the name of an experienced first grade teacher she could go to with all her questions and concerns and she has continued to be involved in Ann's life these past three years.

### Philosophy of teaching

While still in her undergraduate work, Ann had to compose a philosophy about teaching. Throughout our interview it was evident that she put much thought into its development and she continues to revisit it each year. Constructing a philosophy was one of the most appropriate assignments she had to fulfill. Originally she stated "right now

this is how I feel about myself as an educator, but I know that it will change, because ... I know I'm going to change and I want to change." Ann's philosophy centers on the importance of being prepared and knowing "why you're teaching, what you're teaching and how you're going to teach it" in order for your day to be productive for everyone.

### Reflections and future goals

Ann admitted being "sometimes way too hard on myself" but also added that the rethinking process has aided her in figuring out the situation and seeking some answers on how to best help the student she is having difficulty reaching. She stated that "the most valuable learning, which she acknowledge as what Piaget said, is where you are constructing your own knowledge and therefore it becomes yours." Ann is still grappling with some very important issues in dealing with her students and places a high regard on keeping children's self-esteem in tact in every encounter she has with them. Her future plans include working toward a master's degree although monetarily there is not a lot of incentive to do so. She would like to become a mentor to others seeking to make a career of teaching, and using her experience as a tool in helping others.

### Interviewer's insights

As Ann reflected on her first years of teaching I sensed an undercurrent of confidence despite the frustrations she expressed having during her experience. It is important to note that the circumstances she encountered her first few years in teaching contributed to the level of unrest she felt and from literature seem to be the experience of many other beginning teachers. I perceive that Ann is motivated by her ability to reflect

and analyze situations in teaching. She continues to be an “evolving” individual and has found a place that will nurture her talents, desires and goals as well as motivate her to become better at the act of teaching. I was left with a positive feeling about Ann’s future knowing she possessed a mature insight of what it takes to be a good teacher and a willingness to pursue it.

Ann is thoughtful about not only what her students are learning but extends that same amount of care to them as persons, valued individuals much the same as her teachers were with her. She strives for fairness with everyone she works with whether it be parents, students or her colleagues. Her quest to become better at her profession is indeed apparent and she is making strides in that direction. I felt somewhat uneasy about the fact that she had no professional membership in any organization, nor was she acquainted with any professional literature.

## ANALYSIS

Each teacher’s set of transcripts were carefully analyzed to recover expressed themes of concern they had in teaching young children. Each of the three interviews approached the life of a beginning teacher from a different aspect in order to fully understand the origin of their concerns. The first interview set the stage for describing what it was like to be a beginning teacher. How concern is defined by the beginning teacher and what particular concerns they have experienced in their beginning teaching were the central foci in the second interview. And finally, the third interview examined the question what it means to be a teacher based on the experiences they have encountered in either the one, two or three years they have been teaching. This last



concept allowed me to gain a glimpse of the support structures they utilized, the extent of their professional engagement, and also their future goals.

### How do beginning early childhood teachers define concern in relation to teaching?

Literature defines teacher concerns as expressions of felt need, which most likely occupy the focus of the teacher and possess the ability to motivate or decrease motivation during each stage of teaching (Clyde & Ebbeck, 1990). Francis Fuller is recognized as conceptualizing the concerns of teachers into three categories: concerns about self, concerns about the tasks in teaching, and concerns with impact of teaching on pupils (Parsons & Fuller, 1974). A differentiation between the terms concern and problem is made by Boccia (1989) stating the word “problem gives a negative connotation and that many concerns cited in literature about beginning teachers were not necessarily problems, but were issues of importance” (pg.3). Veenman (1987) defines problem as a “difficulty that beginning teachers encounter in the performance of their task, which hinders the achievement of intended goals” (pg. 5). The New Webster Dictionary and Thesaurus (1993) defines concern as “a matter of direct interest or importance to one, a share of interest, anxiety or worry” (p. 202).

Most of the participating teachers in this study had to stop and think about how to define concern as a teacher and a few had me rephrase the question before they would give me an answer. Initially the teachers defined concern by providing explicit illustrations rather than stating a definition, I began to wonder if the word itself defied definition in a succinct form.

First year teachers in this study defined concern as it relates to teaching in these terms: “going further than worry,” it means, “I care.” When I perceive a need making sure I am doing the best I can to meet that need, whether it is in relation to the curriculum or an individual child in my class (Carleen Appendix E, Interview 1). Concern was defined as “fears”, something that might frighten them about being a teacher; things that make them feel inadequate, things they don’t know that would cause apprehension on their part. To be concerned meant “caring enough to desire the best for your kids,” but was also expressed as something that “weighs on you and puts stress in your life” (Nancy, Appendix F, Interview 1 ).

Teachers completing their second year of teaching described concern from the standpoint of “a worry, something that you don’t feel like you’re prepared for ... something you may need a little more information about.” Concern encompassed “doing the best for children,” whether it be an awareness of physical/emotional abuse taking place or that you have enough materials to teach a developmentally appropriate lesson (Julie, Appendix G, Interview I). “Something that you feel that either could be done better or something that arises that needs to be dealt with,” would be a concern. Added to this aspect of concern as a teacher would be “something that is not going right, something that would need to be changed, or something that you need to study more about to be able to deliver in a correct manner” (Cameron, Appendix H, Interview I).

Teachers who were in their third year of teaching described concern in relation to “the students and their welfare and how they are taught.” Concern as a beginning teacher is making sure the students are “getting what they’re supposed to be getting in order to further their schooling.” It includes “how I’m [the teacher] doing, how I am teaching

them what they're supposed to know." At the conclusion of her definition of concern this teacher stated, "... you have to have concerns. If you're not concerned how your kids are doing or what's going on around the school or in the classroom then why are you doing it?" (Suzanne, Appendix I, Interview I). "A concern is something on my mind a lot" (Ann, Appendix J, Interview I). Children of diversity coming to school today and the different things taking place in their lives you have to be aware as a teacher and have the wherewithal to deal with them. You as a teacher need to be informed of all aspects of a situation and guard against coming to any quick conclusions that may affect how you see or interact with a student, parent, or family. Teachers need to show concern as they communicate with colleagues or administration by exemplifying care and trustworthiness. Concern carried a connotation of reflection with this teacher in that it [concern] causes her to reevaluate "what I'm teaching and how I'm teaching so that it better meets the needs of the children" (Ann, Appendix J, Interview I).

Though these teachers have had divergent amounts of teaching and life experiences, they all seem to express some of the same aspects of concern in their definitions. Throughout these definitions of concern I detected a similar level of intensity of feeling in conjunction with concern described with words such as caring, worry, fear to the extent that it put stress in your life. A second aspect of concern, which surfaced in my analysis, was a direction of the focus of their concerns. These beginning teachers were focusing on either their abilities as a teacher, being adequately prepared, knowing enough, how they are doing or on the students making sure they met their physical, social and educational needs. The last element I retrieved from these teachers' definitions was the aspect of resolution of concern and the level to which they were willing to go in

dealing with the concerns they were facing. This is where I noticed the biggest difference among the three groups of teachers I interviewed. The beginning teachers perceived a need, expressed how they felt about that need and mentioned a desire to fulfill the need but gave no concrete direction which they would pursue in filling it. The second year teachers briefly touched on how concerns in teaching made them feel and spent more time describing the focus of the concern but again gave no indication of how they planned to resolve their concerns. The last group, those in their third year of teaching acknowledged that concerns were something necessary to feel as a teacher but spent more time explaining the direction of their focus in detail and went on to explain the purpose for having concerns. These two teachers not only recognized concern for what it was but knew what steps to take in bringing about resolution of those concerns in order to enhance their teaching practice.

These first, second and third year teacher's definitions of concern reflect how it is defined in the reviewed literature. They expressed it as a felt need occupying a teacher's focus and having the ability to motivate them to become better (Clyde & Ebbeck, 1990). Concern was defined from the standpoint of being something of direct interest to them and a few described it as an anxiety or worry (New Webster Dictionary and Thesaurus, 1993) or a difficulty encountered in the performance in their task of teaching as Veenman (1987) discusses. The last significant thing I noticed was the fact that they defined concern in all three of the areas highlighted by Fuller's research (Parsons & Fuller, 1974), those being concern relating to self, concern relating to the tasks in teaching, and concern relating to the impact of teaching on pupils.

## EMERGENT THEMES OF CONCERN

Rereading what the beginning teachers had expressed in their interviews, I formulated three main categories of concern. These three broad premises reflect what I have deciphered from conducting the interview and analyzing the transcripts. My teaching philosophy and classroom experiences have undoubtedly played a part in how I perceived what the teachers shared and how I determined the categories for reporting their concerns. Others viewing this study may possibly come to differing conclusions based on their perceptions of the dialogue contained in the transcripts included in the Appendices of this study and their own personal experiences in teaching.

The concerns expressed by the six beginning early childhood teachers are representative of these three concern categories: concerns associated with the task of teaching; concerns relating to students; and concerns affiliated with support. The task of teaching category encompasses concerns related to curriculum, materials, and time. The second category, student related-concerns is comprised of issues directly related to matters influencing the student's learning. The concerns in this category revolved around assessing and evaluating students, classroom management and discipline, meeting student's needs so they can learn, and problems students have which include their home-life, parental/family issues, and social/emotional temperaments. The third and final category, concerns affiliated with support, involve concerns related to administration, colleagues, concern issues with mentors, the residency teacher committee and preservice training.

## Themes of Concern Related to the Task of Teaching

### Curriculum

Teachers in the younger grades are very aware of the awesome responsibility they have in teaching children what they need to know. If in the first three years of school children do not learn the basic skills, they quickly fall behind which contributes later on to low motivation, sporadic attendance and eventually they drop out of school completely (Sheehan, et. al., 1991). Ann (Appendix J, Interview 1) Nancy (Appendix F, Interview 1), Julie (Appendix G, Interview 1) and Suzanne (Appendix I, Interview 1) all expressed trepidation in teaching first grade because of having to teach children to read. Nancy (Appendix F, Interview 1) was unsure how to begin. Julie (Appendix G, Interview 1) stated her reading classes had not fully prepared her to teach reading like she would like to have been prepared. Darling-Hammond (1999) indicates that a teacher's ability to teach is a highly significant factor in a student's achievement, teachers need to have critical pedagogical knowledge if they wish to affect student learning. Suzanne (Appendix I, Interview 1) expressed frustration in having to spend the first nine weeks getting kids ready to read.

Teachers who adhere to the philosophy of whole language attempt to integrate all of the language areas into the curriculum such as writing, reading, spelling and handwriting (Heuwinkel, 1996). Carleen (Appendix E, Interview 1) was concerned that by teaching a language program piecemeal such as was required by her school, this would not be possible to do. She wanted her curriculum to be child-centered and child-focused not teacher driven. A certain amount of time and effort is required of beginning

teachers in order to become familiar with teaching a program they have not been exposed to during their undergraduate work. “Beginning teachers must learn while they are teaching; they are both learners and teachers” (Hayes & Kilgore, 1991, p. 1). Carleen (Appendix E, Interview 1) and Nancy (Appendix F, Interview 1) found themselves having to teach a phonics program that was complicated, required time to use with the students and for which they had no formal training to use it with their students. Nancy (Appendix F, Interview 1) did say she knew about the program from her preservice teaching but had not used it herself.

Since this was Nancy’s (Appendix F, Interview 1) and Carleen’s (Appendix E, Interview 2) first year, they wanted to know how to best prepare their students for the next grade without being unduly stressed over it. Nancy (Appendix F, Interview 1) went to her principal to see if a meeting could be set up to discuss those expectations. One was never set up but she knew at the beginning of school this next year she would find out one way or another what her students should have learned or what they should be able to do. Cameron (Appendix H, Interview 2) shared that the first grade teachers in her building were appalled when students coming from her class weren’t able to fill in bubbles correctly on their tests nor were they able to copy from the board when they got to first grade. Rust (1993) relates that early childhood practices are for the most part not congruent with the thinking about teaching and role of curriculum present in elementary schools. Nancy (Appendix F, Interview 2) gave the example of having to teach her students to sit for longer periods of time and take timed math tests since they would be expected to do these things in second grade. Vartuli (1999) reminds teachers it is important to remember that when children move to another grade it will require “quite an

adjustment for the child” (p. 19). These beginning teachers were concerned with how the children would adjust to a change in expectations knowing that they would be moving to a classroom structure much different than what they were used to. Teachers need to be mindful setting expectations for their curriculum to not simply consider the capabilities and limitations of the children at a particular age but also consider the appropriateness of the activity in light of long term consequences. Katz (1990) refers to the normative and the dynamic dimensions of development. It was in this same light that Carleen (Appendix E, Interview 2) stressed the importance for beginning teachers to remember what they learned during their training about best practice for young children and make application of those practices on a daily basis.

One of the givens in being a beginning teacher is that you may not only be assigned to a grade you don't want but you may be requested to move to another grade the next year. Teachers changing grades during their first years of teaching and the challenge of adapting to their different assignments made several of the beginning teachers feel as if they were starting all over. Ann (Appendix J, Interview 1) a third year teacher, has taught first grade, second grade and now third grade. She shared how different the expectations and content were between first and third grade and how she has had to really study more to keep up and provide students help they needed. Julie (Appendix G, Interview 1) taught first grade for one semester and then changed to preschool and is just now beginning to feel comfortable with the change. Suzanne (Appendix I, Interview 3) taught second grade for one year, first for the past two years, and will be moving to third grade next year. Her concern during our final interview was



focused on how the transition will take place and the expectations the other third year teachers will have of her.

### Materials

Carleen (Appendix E, Interview 1), Ann (Appendix J, Interview 1) and Cameron (Appendix H, Interview 1) had all interned with teachers who had developmentally appropriate classrooms and materials. These beginning teachers felt they would also have classrooms furnished in much the same way when they began teaching. It didn't take long for them to realize that not all classrooms are created equal. Their first classrooms not only lacked basics such as tables and chairs but materials with which to teach and set up learning centers for the children. Cameron's (Appendix H, Interview 1) first classroom was furnished with only some tables, chairs, one computer and a teacher's desk. The teacher whom she was replacing had retired and taken everything with her. She recalls having to call her mother and tell her there was nothing to start school with. Since this time she has been able to procure a few things in garage sales to furnish her classroom (Appendix E, Appendix H). Ann (Appendix J, Interview 1) experienced an even more dramatic experience arriving at her school shortly before school was to begin. She found she didn't even have chairs and tables for the 25 first graders she was expecting in a couple of weeks. She quickly went into action rummaging around the school and pulling together what she could only to find out later that day when the principal called she would have to put everything back until she [the principal] told her what she could take. Instead of 25 students the first day Ann (Appendix J, Interview 1) had 28. She taught two years at this school without any textbooks or up-to-date teachers' manuals. The teachers

in the building were just as uncooperative in providing materials for her to use so Ann (Appendix J, Interview 1) ended up going to a local teacher store and purchasing her own things. She shared in the last interview that she regretted having to buy so much that first year but didn't know what else to do if she wanted children to have good experiences. Beginning teachers have an infinite number of challenges when they face the realities of being a full-time classroom teacher and have to find ways to cope with these realities despite the hindrances of "less-than-ideal teaching conditions" (p.49).

Julie's (Appendix G, Interview 2) pre-school did furnish each of the teachers with a large sum of money at the end of the year if they have money left over in the budget to purchase materials for their rooms but she found that this money could not be used for any cooking activities she wanted to plan for the children. Carleen (Appendix E, Interview 1) had applied for a grant through her district to furnish some early childhood materials for her kindergarten. Most of the materials were ordered except for a sand and water table, a large set of big wooden blocks, and a puppet stage, three critical pieces she felt the children should be using in kindergarten. The committee reviewing her request did not share the same philosophy as Carleen (Appendix E, Interview 1) and therefore denied awarding her the materials. She shared later on that her counselor would be assisting her in rewriting the grant a second time to try to get the things she had requested earlier. She would have to justify why she needed these things in rewriting the grant application and had developed a better rationale for her requests.

## Time

“Time is undoubtedly one of the most precious commodities in schools, and it usually is cited as the most important factor inhibiting educators’ ability to do their jobs well” (Barnett & Whitaker, 1996, p. 130). The concerns expressed by the teachers relating to time include the lack of time, organization of time, demands on time and effects of time constraints. Being able to plan a schedule, which allows larger blocks of time for young children to be actively engaged in the curriculum, is sometimes difficult as Carleen (Appendix E, Interview 2) shared with me. When children have time to explore their environment without being pressured to move from one activity to another, teachers can nurture curiosity, friendliness and creativity in the children. Carleen (Appendix E, Interview 1) expressed that there were occasions when she was pressured to accomplish so much in a certain length of time that it was difficult to take advantage of those teachable moments that appear.

Hewitt (1993) cites a statement made by Shulman (1988) concerning the beginning teacher and lack of teaching time. The comment was that the beginning teacher often complains about the inability to set a regular schedule because of all the other special programs children are pulled out of the classroom such as speech, reading, counseling, and computers. Nancy (Appendix F, Interview 2) made the comment that her mornings are a series of interruptions with students coming and going to speech, Title I reading, JOM [Johnson O’Malley] reading, and some going to a special county counselor. She noted that sometimes the other teachers in charge of these programs would change the schedule at the last minute leaving her to have to improvise other arrangements. Mornings are a very critical time of day for young children and Nancy

(Appendix F, Interview 1) wished that her students would not have to leave as much. Julie (Appendix G, Interview 2) also shared that many times her children would be engaged in a class project and had to be told to stop what they were doing because it was time for one of their special classes. Extending the school day had been proposed for her preschool next year in order for teachers to have more time to work with students and allow for teachers to have quality plan time. Julie (Appendix G, Interview 2) was resistant to this idea because children become fatigued as it is and she felt it was inappropriate for 4-year-olds. Additionally it has been shown that more time in school for young children does not improve achievement (Rust, 1993).

Another concern brought up was the duty schedule that teachers have to participate in. There is bus duty, lunchroom duty, detention duty, and playground duty that they must share in the responsibility of. Although none of the teachers expressed overriding concern about this aspect of teaching, they never-the-less were brought up as something else they must contend with. Principals would be well advised to consider a beginning teacher's schedule before adding to it any additional duties (Hewitt, 1993).

Nancy (Appendix F, Interview 1) expressed that the time constraints of teaching have forced her to do things she hasn't felt completely comfortable doing and thought she wouldn't ever do when she had her own classroom – such as using worksheets instead of conducting an inquiry-based activity. She explained that the first year of teaching is so stressful that you do find yourself implementing something quick and easy and then end up feeling bad about it later.

Julie, (Appendix G, Interview 3) Cameron (Appendix H, Interview 3), and Carleen (Appendix E, Interview 2) expressed the desire to get out and observe other

professionals in a variety of school settings. Carleen (Appendix E, Interview 2) was especially interested in observing other programs that had a rich reading component in order to gain some ideas in improving her practice. Julie (Appendix G, Interview 3) shared that the lack of time and inability to find substitutes in their schools would prevent any time soon. Alvarado (2000) states that “one professional development strategy that is absolutely necessary is the use of visitations” (p.8). When a teacher desires to learn about another teaching technique they want to see someone else implementing it with children similar to their classroom.

Teaching can take time away from a teacher’s personal life and family if they are not careful. Stress in teaching often results in conflicts at home which can lead to emotional exhaustion and eventually affect a teacher’s performance (Hewitt, 1993). A lot of Cameron’s (Appendix H, Interview 1) first year was spent at school coming early in the morning and staying late each evening. She feels the time outside of school is hers and she wants to be able to get involved in other things that interest her especially since they are expecting their first child. Suzanne (Appendix I, Interview 1) shared that the time demands of teaching deplete your energy and require a conscious effort on her part to eat, sleep and exercise if she wants to keep up with the children. Ann (Appendix J, Interview 1) stated that it doesn’t matter what grade she has taught she has spent the same amount of time in preparation. It is just of a different nature. The aspect of time had a much different meaning to Cameron (Appendix H, Interview 1) since she was teaching in a year-round school. She mentioned that despite a lot of benefits with a year-round schedule, delayed paychecks and materials were disadvantages since they followed the same schedule as the other school sites for these services.

## Themes of Concern Related to Students

### Assessing/evaluating students

One of the concerns referred to in literature about beginning teachers is whether students are learning what they need to as a result of the teacher's efforts and how to best evaluate their progress (Clyde, 1991). The act of evaluation requires that a teacher know the curriculum as well as the students' abilities. Giving grades and learning how to evaluate the student's performance with the state's criteria was difficult for Cameron (Appendix H, Interview 1) her first year. Assessing students is difficult because as Nancy (Appendix F, Interview 2) stated, "it is so ambiguous," and is much more inclusive than simply considering a student's academic achievement. There must also be consideration of the child's maturation. Several of the beginning teachers Suzanne (Appendix I, Interview 1), Carleen (Appendix E, Interview 1) and Nancy (Appendix F, Interview 2) had all come face-to-face with student's maturity levels and how to best address that issue with parents with student placement issues. Carleen (Appendix E, Interview 2) works with teachers who have labeled children as problem students due to their lack of information about the differences between assessment of academics and developmental ability.

Using alternative methods to evaluate children's progress was mentioned by several of the teachers, but they expressed that the stress and time factors of a beginning teacher keep them tied to more conventional assessment practices. Julie (Appendix G, Interview 2) shared that the time it takes to get things written down in anecdotal form for evaluation purposes takes a lot of time and effort that many times she can't afford. She is

also dissatisfied with the instrument they use to evaluate preschoolers because it is geared to kindergarten aged children not preschoolers. Knowing if students are ready to handle curriculum in the next grade concerned Carleen (Appendix E, Interview 2), Nancy (Appendix F, Interview 2), Cameron (Appendix H, Interview 2).

Ann's (Appendix J, Interview 2) main concern was assessing a child for inclusion in the gifted program. The methods her school employed in choosing who would and wouldn't be in the program made her feel uneasy. She shared that her uneasiness stemmed from the fact that maybe she might be the one to overlook someone who is truly gifted and not recommend him or her to be evaluated. Ann's (Appendix J, Interview 2) concern extended to how students reacted when they were told they weren't good enough to be in the program. She wished there were another way to handle this issue. Why couldn't they just test all the kids?

### Classroom management and Discipline

Managing a classroom can be a very frightening experience for a beginning teacher who hasn't had a great deal of practice arranging a room, designing a schedule, or determining rules and procedures. These tasks are usually not practiced to any great extent in their preservice classes. "How do I start?" is a question that seemed to be of utmost importance in the minds of these beginning teachers. Nancy (Appendix F, Interview 2) had a split internship and being in kindergarten for the first nine weeks was unable to observe how the first grade teacher would start her year. Suzanne (Appendix I, Interview 1) expressed that her first year organizing her class took precedence over everything else she had to attend to because she functions better when she knows things

are under control. Carleen (Appendix E, Interview 1) took a little bit different attitude toward organization. She feared having too much organization on her part would come across as control with the children. She didn't want to be so organized that she failed to take advantage of those teachable moments with her students.

Fearing that things were not going to work out as she planned occupied Suzanne's (Appendix I, Interview 1) thoughts the first week but the fear subsided when she realized how easily things were falling into place after that first day. Part of the reason her year went rather smoothly was attributed to her obsession with being organized. Suzanne (Appendix I, Interview 1) taught second grade her first year and developed some confidence with procedures but her second year she was moved down to first grade and her confidence dwindled quickly. First graders have difficulty with procedures and rules as Suzanne (Appendix I, Interview 1) and Nancy (Appendix F, Interview 2) both realized rather quickly. Suzanne (Appendix I, Interview 1) has learned that you need to spend the first few weeks of school just teaching the procedures to first graders. Nancy (Appendix F, Interview 2) has had to realize that even with very few rules the children had difficulty remembering them and she found herself spending instructional time reminding them of what they were supposed to be doing. Pennington (2001) mentions how surprised novice teachers are when they realize that their students don't do what is expected of them. Establishing rules and procedures takes patience and experience as Cameron (Appendix H, Interview 2) is realizing even though she is still struggling with this aspect of teaching after two years of practice, she admits she is learning more effective ways to deal with classroom management. She attended a workshop last summer devoted to helping teachers with setting procedures in order to have a smoother run classroom and more



effective teaching time. More time was spent at the beginning of this school year establishing classroom procedures with her kindergarten children.

A leading factor, which influences a teacher's level of stress, is dealing with disruptive students. Hewitt (1993) mentions this may be due to the beginning teacher perceptions that their authority is being rejected. Disruptions taking place due to discipline take away from valuable teaching time. Several of Nancy's (Appendix F, Interview 3) students have had difficulty getting along with others in the class and within the school all year long. Discipline is one of the biggest areas of need and absolutely the hardest thing Carleen (Appendix E, Interview 1) has ever had to deal with. She has found that the end of the year is more challenging as far as behavior and much different than she imagined. It never seems to never end. You know what you should be doing from your training but end up falling back on something less appropriate because you need something to implement quickly. Carleen (Appendix E, Interview 1) knows logical consequences work, but it takes dedication and focus to use them. She went on to state that knowing your kids is a key element for effective discipline and therefore she and her class have started having class meetings at the end of the day. They discuss the events that have taken place that day both good and bad and come to some sort of understanding about how things can be better.

Julie (Appendix G, Interview 2) expressed that controlling her class has been difficult and disheartening because it seems she is documenting bad behavior a lot more than good behavior. Ann (Appendix J, Interview 2) was led to believe in her undergraduate work that if she taught developmentally appropriate lessons she wouldn't have discipline problems. She stated that this was not to be true and it caused her to have

feelings of self-doubt her first year. Teacher education programs many times don't prepare beginning teachers in dealing with discipline management problems and therefore the teachers move on with feelings of loneliness and inadequacy (Clayton, 1991). This year Ann (Appendix J, Interview 2) described her personal reactions to the difficult students as those able to "push her buttons" and has raised her awareness to a different level in dealing with problem students. With these students she has had to reevaluate not only the situation but also how she might come to terms with her reactions and put things into a better perspective. She has developed a Friday luncheon with small groups of her students in order to help her see them in a different light and assist them in working through some very critical issues they have. This finding did help her to reevaluate what she was doing to help meet student's needs.

Nancy (Appendix F, Interview 1) was preoccupied about how she was going to handle situations that might arise such as talking and playing. Cameron (Appendix H, Interview 2) also felt the same lack of confidence about discipline in her kindergarten class. She found herself engaged in a power struggle with her students at the beginning of her first year. Cameron (Appendix H, Interview 2) would give the children chance after chance and eventually they learned how much they could get away with and the trust they had in her began to erode. She has changed things around some this year but even now as she visits with the other kindergarten teachers and they ask her for suggestions about what to do with difficult children, she simply has to tell them, I don't know. When asked whether it has been easier dealing with student behavior this year Cameron (Appendix H, Interview 2) stated that the question was difficult to answer because each year you get different children and have different parents to work with so you can't always expect

things to be better the next year. It is definitely one area that she plans to find out more about as she continues to examine her practice. Concerns such as Ann and Cameron have expressed here can serve as motivators for additional inquiry into their professional practice as they have noted (Clyde, 1991).

### Meeting student's needs

The beginning teachers in this study expressed concerns about meeting student's needs on several different levels from emotional to physical to academic. Cameron (Appendix H, Interview 3) stated that teaching subject matter was her first reason for being in the classroom, but after seeing the difference in a student whom she was able to help with a home situation she is sure her reason to teach goes much deeper. It was evident through dialogue with these teachers many of their concerns stem from meeting the emotional needs of children. Nancy (Appendix F, Interview 2) and Suzanne (Appendix I, Interview 2) shared that they feel an emotional responsibility for their students seeing what they go through. She went on to say it is not so much witnessing the situations they are a part of outside the classroom but the concern comes from not being able to help. There are many inadequacies in our society in relation to dealing with children's problems that anger her (Appendix F, Appendix I). Nancy (Appendix F, Interview 2) takes a lot of the emotional baggage she accumulates at school, home and takes it to heart. She thinks about problems her students have and it is hard to separate that from real life especially when most of the time nothing can be done by the teacher. Julie (Appendix G, Interview 2) spoke about feeling inadequately prepared to deal with students who have emotional problems and therefore require the services of a school

counselor. The drawback has been the counselors in her school don't stay long enough to really get to know the kids and effectively help them before they move on to other schools.

Another aspect of meeting students' needs is in the academic realm being able to adjust the curriculum to meet the needs of students' at all different levels of learning. Ann, (Appendix J, Interview 1) now in her third year has taught first, second and third grade and explained that the more advanced the grade the more levels there seem to be to deal with. She added to this the fact that time constraints and the advanced level of curriculum you teach at the upper levels make it more difficult to spend individual time with students. Suzanne (Appendix I, Interview 2) finds it a challenge to design a curriculum to meet student's needs and expressed concern because she will be moving up to be a third grade teacher next year. "It is like anything else when it comes to children," Nancy (Appendix F, Interview 2) said, "you want to know that you are not expecting too much nor too little of them".

It is a full time job-teaching children in the younger grades as far as Cameron (Appendix H, Interview 2) is concerned. She shared concern about not being able to get several of her kindergartners additional services because they were lacking in mental aptitude. In Clyde and Ebbeck's study (1991) with beginning early childhood teachers one of the concerns those teachers expressed was the need to try and find support for children with specific needs. The parent, who was illiterate, was unaware of what the child's problems were and could not be an effective advocate for the child. At this particular school the children are not tested for special services until the later semester of first grade meaning students live with frustration and feelings of inadequacy because they

cannot do what the other kids are doing. As a teacher Cameron (Appendix H, Interview 2) wants to be able to make kids feel safe, loved and successful no matter what level they are on intellectually.

When a student's basic needs are not being met a teacher has difficulty teaching them anything academic. This was a sentiment I heard from Suzanne (Appendix I, Interview 2), Julie (Appendix G, Interview 2), Ann (Appendix J, Interview 2) and Cameron (Appendix H, Interview 2). Many children are hungry, sleepy, or have been sent to school after an emotional altercation at home and yet they as teachers were supposed to help them learn. This caused concern in these teachers because they see the whole child and when one area is in need the whole child is in need. You can't fix one part without considering what else has been affected.

#### Problems students have

A beginning teacher's optimism can be destroyed due to the problems children bring with them when they enter the classroom (Hewitt, 1993). Some of these problems that affect a child's ability to learn are influenced by situations beyond their control. All of the teachers with the exception of Ann, shared specific incidents with me how the relationships between adults living in the home affect a student's behavior in school. These relationships ranged from separation or pending divorce, to custody battles, to death of a sibling, to sexual and emotional abuse, and to pregnancy to name a few.

What kind of neighborhood (socioeconomic status) the school is located in has a bearing on issues of safety and cooperation for the teachers. McBee (1998) discusses the importance of preservice teachers becoming familiar with the growing diversity

culturally, linguistically and economically of student populations today. Julie (Appendix G, Interview 1) shared that the first school in which she taught was in a very affluent neighborhood and many of the mothers did not work outside the home. They were up at school frequently to try to tell her how to run the classroom. Ann (Appendix J, Interview 2) has had similar experiences this year in her second school. Julie's (Appendix G, Interview 2) present school is located near a very precarious section of the city where gangs and drive-by shootings occur. Although the school is safe during the daytime hours for her to stay after school to work has been a concern.

Parents not informed about educational practices, inadequate or non-existing parent involvement are issues beginning teachers' face. Julie (Appendix G, Interview 1) referenced the amount of parental involvement with socioeconomic class between the two areas where she had taught her first and second year and Ann (Appendix J, Interview 2) mentioned the difference in attitudes of parents from different social classes have differing roles in the school and in their child's education. She stressed that is a number one reason that it is important to develop a relationship with parents of your students.

Parent-teacher conferences were stressful for some of these teachers. Ann (Appendix J, Interview 1) expressed that she anticipated problems with parents in this area but they never materialized. Cameron (Appendix H, Interview 1) on the other hand thought she was prepared to deal with parents but found out within the first few months of school that she wasn't. Perceptions about parents can be totally different for various teachers and also contrary to reality. Nancy (Appendix F, Interview 2) said that she was "too nice" with parents and not really telling them what they needed to hear for next year. She is determined to inform parents about what is really happening with their child.

Being up front with parents and documenting happenings with students is a challenge but has helped Suzanne (Appendix I, Interview 2) in her communications with parents when it came time to retaining a child in her class. The parents attempted to cause problems for her because of her recommendation. But because she had been diligent in documenting the student's progress and keeping her principal informed nothing came of it.

Confrontations and communication breakdowns caused problems for Julie (Appendix G, Interview 1) her first semester of teaching. She was replacing a first grade teacher who was moving. That semester she felt the parents were judging her by the other teacher's qualifications and really had to work on her communication skills and learn how to be tactful with parents.

Parent contacts hindered by lack of transportation, a language barrier, or not having a phone or current address were concerns shared by Cameron (Appendix H, Interview 1). She reasoned that many of the parents might not feel comfortable coming to school possibly because they may have had a bad experience in school at one time. Nancy (Appendix F, Interview 1), Cameron (Appendix H, Interview 1) and Suzanne (Appendix I, Interview 2) told me that if folders are sent home they don't come back on time and more than not, never come back partly due to the communication barriers and unrealistic expectations they have of parental responsibility. Cameron (Appendix H, Interview 1) has to supply basic materials for her students or there are community services that provide them because parents fail to take responsibility to secure these for their children. All of the beginning teachers, with the exception of Cameron, had children of their own and expressed how this role has definitely affected relationships and expectations they have in relation to their students' parents. Additionally the experience

of being a parent has been able to assist them to some degree in working with their students, too.

Frequent moves during a school year make it difficult to place students or get them caught up before they move on to the next grade or leave the school. Julie (Appendix G, Interview 2) and Nancy (Appendix F, Interview 1) both expressed other concerns in this area. Students on medication in Suzanne's (Appendix I, Interview 1) class require extra effort from her for monitoring and assessing their physical situation and being alert to their special needs. She had one child her first year diagnosed with Turret's Syndrome, and this year has one on a list for a kidney transplant, and one who has had kidney surgery already this year and several on Ritalin.

Nancy (Appendix F, Interview 1) has a majority of the children who had been recommended to be held back from starting first grade. She expressed concern that she is expected to have them caught up by the time they leave her class. Maturity is not something that you can teach and she felt many teachers in her building still don't understand how it should influence how you work with the children.

#### Themes of Concern Related to Support

The environment or situation in which a teacher works has been viewed as a possible contributor of concerns they may experience. The support systems either received or perceived by beginning teachers "impacts their persistence rate – whether they stay in a profession" (Camphire, 2001, p.4). The difficulties teachers' face in their beginning years of practice "can have a continuing negative effect" (Halford, 1998, p. 34) and ultimately their students are affected by inadequate support of these teachers. The



support systems dealt with in this study will encompass concerns related to interactions with administration, colleagues, mentors, and the resident teacher committee.

### Administration

An administrator usually wants to see beginning teachers succeed, but their focus of attention is receiving the cooperation of these teachers in insuring that the year goes smoothly (Ryan, 1970). This is a much different perception than that of the beginning teacher who is looking at their very basic needs such as having a clean, presentable room, and adequate materials and supplies with which to start their year. Cameron (Appendix H, Interview 1), Nancy (Appendix F, Interview 1), and Ann (Appendix J, Interview 1) all walked into rooms that were either dirty, in need of paint or sparsely furnished. Before they could attend to the task of preparing a curriculum they had to do some major work on the room and finding supplies and materials with which to teach. Cameron (Appendix H, Interview 1) had nothing in her room except tables, chairs, a teacher's desk, computer and boxes of Saxon phonics, nothing to use for centers with children. All three of these teachers received little if any help in remedying the situation with the rooms and supplies from their administrators.

Administrators can affect the level of confidence a new teacher develops through the attitudes they display towards their faculty. Both Ann (Appendix J, Interview 1) and Julie (Appendix G, Interview 1) talked about differences between principals they had in previous years and their current administrators. The concerns that they had in their previous situation have been resolved due to the attitudes and expertise of their current administrators. Julie (Appendix G, Interview 1) viewed her former principal as someone

who didn't want to be engaged in discipline with kids, nor did she feel she was around enough to know what was going on in the school.

Carleen (Appendix E, Interview 2) has concerns about administrators keeping current on research and classroom practice. Also they need to get into classrooms more often to see what teaching looks like, not just at evaluation time. She felt the same advice should be shared with school board members who may need to be informed of what good practice looks like to help them make decisions that affect the classroom. Her principal has been helpful but has been so consumed with running the school that she hasn't had much time to interact with Carleen (Appendix E, Interview 3). All of the teachers expressed that they appreciated the visibility of an administrator and placed importance on having a principal willing to interact with the students. When a need arose with a child they felt there would already be a connection between principal and student upon which to base any informed action.

Suzanne (Appendix I, Interview 2) was the only one of the teachers that expressed a fear of doing something wrong and possibly having her administrator upset with her. She had mentioned the fact that he didn't like to see teachers sitting behind their desks when he came in and even though she didn't make that a practice, she was afraid that she may be sitting there when he came into her room on his frequent visits. Suzanne (Appendix I, Interview 2) was also concerned about the expectations he had for her next year moving her to third grade because he wants her to revamp the reading program at that level. She is afraid that she will not be able to meet his expectations and that the other teachers will be uncooperative. The school situation, the colleagues you work with, the administration all have a bearing on how a teacher enjoys teaching and in turn these

feelings, as Ann (Appendix J, Interview 3) stated, are picked up by the students. The principal's actions and attitudes toward a beginning teacher can either make or break their will to teach and to teach well.

### Colleagues

Carleen shared that she has not had a great deal of problems, being a first year teacher, with many colleagues not being friendly or helpful but a few have tried to put a damper on things she would like to do. New teachers need to be sheltered from apathy and inertia that seems to be prevalent in many schools today. There should be other educators willing to extend a hand of support to a beginning teacher (Shanahan, 1998). Carleen (Appendix E, Interview 1) takes a lot of field trips and tries to make learning a natural extension of the children's lives outside of school. She feels that the teachers' not understanding developmentally appropriate practice are her worst critics and in addition has been warned about what the first grade teachers will say about her students next year.

High turnover of faculty at her school, especially in the early childhood area, has caused some concern for Cameron (Appendix H, Interview 1) although she stated that they do work pretty well together. She said they have had to accept each other although they had different ideas about education and classroom management as they have all worked together to change the school over to a year-round program. It hasn't been easy but everyone has worked well to make it happen. Ann's (Appendix J, Interview 3) experience her first two years in another building has provided a stark contrast to what she is doing this year at the first school she taught in the teachers were unwilling to share materials, information or even give support to her. The teachers with whom she works

with now are very collegial and have made a dramatic difference in Ann's (Appendix J, Interview 3) attitude about coming to work each and every day. She mentioned how very lucky she feels being able to change schools this year. Julie (Appendix G, Interview 1) also felt the move she made from her first school to the preschool where she now teaches was a positive move as far as working with other teachers. The teachers in her hallway have been very helpful with materials. They are a good source to go to with her questions.

Suzanne (Appendix I, Interview 3) expressed concern about not only having to move up to third grade from first grade next year but the fact that her principal was sanctioning the move because he wanted her to teach different reading methods to the third grade teachers. This worried her because the other teachers were all more experienced teachers and she didn't want them to dislike her because of what her principal has requested her to do at that grade level.

### Mentor Teachers

Beginning teachers have so much yet to learn and as a result have an endless amount of questions to be answered. The most reasonable choice for a mentor of a beginning teacher would be someone in close proximity, someone who possesses a willingness to extend support to them, and most of all someone who is an active, engaging teacher themselves. The role of a mentor could be seen as someone willing to tutor a beginning teacher in answering questions, providing feedback, giving encouragement and providing the support needed to make it through those first few years. Mentors may need specific training in order to provide the apprentice teacher with

feedback and personal support and challenge at the level these teachers need (Veenman, 1987). Ann (Appendix J, Interview 3) expressed concerns about the deplorable situation in which she started as a beginning teacher. The statement she made in our last interview was that it is important for the persons you are placed with during your interning and first year have the same philosophy as the university. They need to be willing to expend time and energy helping new teachers find their way the first year. The mentor assigned to Ann (Appendix J, Interview 3) virtually washed her hands of any working relationship with her because she just didn't have time. She had to wing it through that first year and eventually found support outside her building through a mutual friend. She had expected to have someone to shadow her the first three years of her teaching until she could learn the ropes.

The reality of having a class to herself and no one to depend on was Cameron's (Appendix H, Interview 1) experience her first year. She not only didn't have a mentor who could offer her much help, she had a brand new principal her first year of teaching. She ended up having to plan and consult with the other kindergarten class since she was only a substitute teacher the first couple of months. This put undue concern and stress on Cameron (Appendix H, Interview 2), and as she related this year, she had also to assist the other class because they couldn't find a teacher when school started and hired a substitute. Carleen (Appendix E, Interview 3), Nancy (Appendix F, Interview 2) and Ann (Appendix J, Interview 3) all felt that having a good mentor is the key to a successful first years for a teacher.

### Resident teacher committee

Only two of the teachers I interviewed were having to go through evaluations by a Resident Teacher committee. The committees working with these teachers were composed of the school principal, the mentor teacher, a university faculty member and the beginning teacher. Each of the committee members are required to visit the teacher's classroom a certain number of times throughout the first year and also meet with the teacher's committee about three times during the year. The role of the university faculty member on the resident teacher committee is to provide guided assistance to the new teacher and make recommendations to improve their practice. The concern that Carleen (Appendix E, Interview 3) had about the process was the visits were too frequent and became a source of interruption without providing her with substantial information about areas of concern she had in relation to her classroom. These required evaluations only tell part of the story of how a beginning teacher is succeeding in their classroom practice. Heuwinkel (1996) suggests those evaluating new teachers consider using alternative assessments such as journals, videotapes, portfolios, individual coaching and various other types of observational protocol. On one occasion the university professor assigned to her spent a good portion of his day observing her teaching and then sat down with her and provided immediate feedback. She said that was one of the most beneficial visits from her committee.

Julie, (Appendix G, Interview 2) a second year teacher, had started teaching in the spring of her first year at another school. The university committee member caused some aggravation to both Julie and her principal when Julie was assigned to someone else when she moved to the preschool. The principal ended up having to direct the situation

and Julie had a much more positive experience her second semester of teaching with the second university member. The remaining teachers, Nancy, Cameron, Suzanne and Ann didn't express much in the way of concern with their resident committee meetings, recommendations or members.

Beginning teachers need to have the ongoing support provided through regular contacts with faculty at the university, their school administrators, and teachers at their site. Karge (1993) suggests that these relationships be "maintained and nourished in the first two years of the new teacher's employment" (p. 6).

## SUMMARY

In summary the concerns expressed by the six beginning teachers in this study fell into one of three categories: concerns about the task of teaching, concerns related to students and concerns affiliated with support systems. These teachers expressed concerns about curriculum, materials and time in the area relating to the task of teaching.

Assessing and evaluating students, classroom management and discipline, meeting student's needs and problems students have all reflected the category of concerns related to students. The last of the categories addressed in this study considered teachers' concerns about administration, colleagues, mentors, and the resident teacher committee.

Fuller and Bown's study (1975) describes three distinguishable kinds or stages of concern that they found characteristic of preservice and inservice teachers. The first phase they mention is noted as survival concerns and envelop concerns one has about their adequacy, surviving as a teacher, class control, being liked by students and also being evaluated. Their second phase describes the teaching situation concerns or task concerns as they are usually called. These concerns are related to limitations and

frustration inherent in the teaching situation, methods and materials, and the mastery of skills required within the teaching situation itself. The last phase or stage they delineate centers around concerns teachers have about pupils, student learning, the social and emotional needs of students, and the ability to relate to pupils as individuals. Other studies continue to use the categorical divisions or phases of concern determined in Fuller's studies but each study is based on finding out different aspects of information about beginning teaching.

The categories I devised were based on reported information from these six beginning early childhood teachers and therefore do not mirror the exact demarcations of teaching phases as Fuller reports. I have chosen to treat the three different years of experience as a whole, simply beginning early childhood teachers, rather than by the concerns expressed at each level of teaching. Fuller not only compared concerns experienced at the different levels of teaching experience but looked at the intensity of the concerns within each one of those phases. I have detected a number of similarities in the types of concerns expressed by Carleen, Nancy, Julie, Cameron, Suzanne, and Ann and the concerns reported by those teachers Fuller studied.

The emerging themes of this study are the threads of experience that the teachers have used in sharing their handiwork of being a beginning teacher. They have revealed themes of concern inherent in the task of teaching, themes of concern related to serving the students they teach and themes of concern in relation to the support systems they have. The essence of sharing these concerns is not simply for the benefit of those who wish only to "know" but for the hope of assisting others in making the lives of future



beginning early childhood teachers richer and more meaningful. The act of learning is essential for all of us.

These teachers, with the exception of one who dropped out of teaching, display a deep desire to move beyond the mere act of teaching. They have begun to use their concerns as the first step in the process of reflection in improving their teaching practice and meeting their students' needs. In the first set of interviews I had asked each teacher the question, "What is it like being a beginning teacher in early childhood?" Along with this question they were asked to supply an analogy to illustrate their view of beginning teaching. By asking the question in this manner I purposefully wanted them to reflect on their first year as a whole. Each analogy contains a succinct view of their understandings, feelings, and personal philosophy of what they encountered during that year. These analogies will be discussed more fully in Chapter Five as their reflection of the essence of their experience being a beginning teacher. These teachers have shown through the expression of dialogue that concerns in teaching need not be stumbling blocks but heights to scale in becoming a life-long learner.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY

The intent of this study was to gain an understanding of the “lifeworld” (van Manen, 1990, p. 7) of beginning early childhood teachers through the process of in-depth phenomenological interviewing. Studying the characteristics of beginning teachers in their first years of teaching and also examination of the social settings in which they work will enable others in understanding how much help, support, and training these teachers require in order to keep them in the classroom (Veenman, 1984).

But the purpose of my study has been taken to a new level of meaning since the interviewing began. Rubin and Rubin (1995) state that a researcher cannot always plan the entire design for a qualitative project in advance. I realized this when one of my first-year teachers, having completed her review of the three transcribed interviews, wrote a very simplistic but astute comment, “This was great! You really made me think about what’s going on in my classroom this year.” What I have discovered through the process of interviewing these beginning teachers is that I had invoked an opportunity for the teachers to reflect on their students’ needs in a different light and given them the opportunity to become investigators of their own practice. As teachers evaluate and reflect on their teaching practice and the concerns associated with beginning teaching, they are developing a significant framework of teaching, learning and research (Research Advisory Committee, 2001). This teacher’s perception reemphasized the importance of reflective activity on the part of both the interviewee and the interviewer.

The reflection process has been described as “one of the linchpins of continuing professional and personal development” (Jewett, 1998, p.xxiv). The act of reflection can lead to restructuring of our preconceived notions of the work of teachers. Reflection can assist beginning teachers in reframing the dilemmas they face or the new understandings that they build in the process of teaching day in and day out. “The first year of teaching has been described as “trial by fire”, a time during which many beginning teachers “sink or swim”. From the very first day of their first teaching job, novices are expected to fulfill the same job expectations and responsibilities as experienced teachers. “Beginning teachers must learn to teach while they are teaching; they are both learners and teachers” (Hayes & Kilgore, 1991, p. 1). During the course of the first set of interviews each teacher was asked to provide an analogy of what it is like being a beginning early childhood teacher.

Carleen<sup>8</sup> use on example that being a beginning teaching is like a certain kind of candy that is intensely sour when you first put it in your mouth. If you can resist spitting it out, the candy becomes very sweet to the taste. The second example she provided compared beginning teaching to jumping into deep water and having to tread water for a time. After a while it becomes easier to navigate. Carleen’s analogy describes beginning teaching as an extremely intense experience encountering so many things at once, feeling like you have been stretched to your limits. Eventually as the year passes and you gain experience things begin to fall into place and you sense direction.

Nancy<sup>9</sup> made the comparison between beginning teaching and having your first child. Raising a child is an awesome responsibility with no instruction books to follow.

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<sup>8</sup> Carleen’s complete analogies can be found in Appendix E, Interview I.

<sup>9</sup> Nancy’s complete analogy can be found in Appendix F, Interview I.

You want to make sure the child gets everything they need but there are no guarantees that you will be able to do that. You may even have second thoughts about the decision you made. Sometimes you may have people willing to help you when you need it.

What Nancy was saying in her reflection was that a beginning teacher is given no instruction books to follow in trying to meet their students' needs. They have no guarantees that what they do will ensure success for that student but they need support during the best and the worst times to assist them in becoming a better teacher.

“Being an egg in a frying pan” is the analogy Julie<sup>10</sup> gave when she was asked the question about what it was like to be a beginning teacher. The yolk of the egg surrounded by white is placed in a hot pan and expected to cook to a palatable state. A second analogy was the weather. Things could be sunny and then quickly the weather changes and everything goes awry. Eventually when things clear a rainbow appears to signify things are going to clear up.

Julie perceives a beginning teacher as someone catching the heat. From what she shared about her first semester this seems apropos because of the troubles she experienced with parents. But she switches contexts when she describes beginning teaching as a time of vacillating feelings and circumstances—one minute being up and the next minute being confused and disoriented. There are positive results after all the trial and error a beginning teacher experiences.

Cameron's<sup>11</sup> analogy was very simple. Being a beginning early childhood teacher is like a person being pulled behind a car or a greyhound at a track always one step

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<sup>10</sup> Julie's complete analogies can be found in Appendix G, Interview I.

<sup>11</sup> Cameron's complete analogy can be found in Appendix H, Interview I.

behind the mechanical rabbit. No matter how fast or how hard you work to keep up as a teacher you always seem to be behind and usually dragging.

When Suzanne<sup>12</sup> was asked to supply an analogy of what it was like to be a beginning teacher she stated that she felt like a duck out of water – being thrown into something she was little prepared to deal with. Her second analogy was that of a puzzle. As a beginning teacher she had all the pieces just didn't know how to put them altogether the right way.

Suzanne's first example was describing the feelings of loneliness that first year. Everyone thought she had it altogether because she had things so organized but inside she knew she needed help but didn't know how to ask. The puzzle represents a project to complete yet every year a teacher is looking at things from a different perspective.

Being a beginning early childhood teacher for Ann<sup>13</sup> was like a science experiment in which you take a light bulb, battery and some wire and put them together in such a manner that you get the bulb to light up. A tremendous amount of frustration and doubt precede a beginning teacher's ability to teach children what they need to know. Through trial and error she has developed the majority of her teaching insights and is devising ways to assist her students in building understanding.

Each one of these analogies provided me with an encapsulated view of their experience being a beginning early childhood teacher. They have described it as an intense experience and one where they felt totally overwhelmed. These teachers have alluded to the awesome responsibility they feel towards the children in their care knowing there are no guarantees and the inevitability of second thoughts about their

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<sup>12</sup> Suzanne's complete analogies can be found in Appendix I, Interview I.

<sup>13</sup> Ann's complete analogy can be found in Appendix J, Interview I.

decision. Having a support system was mentioned. The beginning teachers expressed a range of emotions in several of their analogous descriptions, good days-bad days, catching the heat, always running behind but running as fast as they can, feeling lonely, and puzzled. In addition they expressed the recognition that much of what they have learned, or hope to learn in the future, will most likely be the result of trial and error on their part. Each year will be a new beginning where they will be challenged to look at things from a totally different perspective.

### Implications

These analogies only present a birds-eye view of the concerns they faced as beginning teachers. This study has shown how beginning teachers express their concerns, and how they reflect on their beginning year(s) in sharing examples of those concerns. Where do we go from here? Of what use is this information and with whom should it be shared?

Since the early thirties teacher educators have been trying to determine what and how to best teach content to students (Fuller & Case, 1969). Fuller studied preservice and inservice teachers in an effort to understand what motivates students to learn material presented in the education coursework. What she discovered is that students usually learn what is interesting to them and negate any information not applicable to their present set of circumstances. Veenman's (1984) review of the research centered on those studies that looked at the perceived problems beginning teachers in their first few years in the classroom in hopes of providing information to improve or redesign preservice and inservice programs.

Serk (1981) and Clyde and Ebbeck (1991) chose to study early childhood graduates from specific universities hoping to gain insights about these teachers particular concerns. The outcome of their studies was to support a more coherent inservice program, provide administrators with viable information for more effective on-sight intervention and most of all to underscore the need for the teachers themselves to understand concerns are a normal part of their development.

Boccia's two studies (1989 & 1991) stretched the objective for studying beginning teacher concerns to include preparing graduates for what they would face their initial years in a classroom. She based a major portion of her two studies, both with secondary and elementary teachers on Fuller's work looking more closely at the influence individual characteristics had on a beginning teacher's concerns.

Katz (1972) and Steffy, et. al (2000) used studies on teacher concerns to highlight a much more specific need in a teacher's life, that of developing as a professional. These two studies determined that within each stage of teacher development they face different challenges and therefore exhibit different needs. Those who work with beginning teachers need to be informed of these needs in order to support them in the ways most appreciated.

Several of the studies (Parsons & Fuller, 1974; Adams, Hutchinson & Martray, 1980; Serck, 1981; and Clyde & Ebbeck, 1991) used the format of the Teacher Concerns Statement (TCS) or Teacher Concerns Checklist (TCC or TCCL-B) to arrive at some indication of what concerns of teachers were. Other studies used an open-ended format alone (Fuller, 1969) or a combination of questionnaire and open-ended statement (Boccia, 1989, 1991) to elicit teacher concerns from their participants. All of these efforts

were aimed at understanding the concerns teachers faced at various points of the spectrum of teaching in hopes of bettering the systems which prepare and support the beginning teacher. A more detailed explanation of the studies, the participants, instruments used, their results and the purposes for their individual endeavors can be found in Tables I and II.

The study of teacher concerns has developed into something much more specific and personal throughout the past sixty years and will hopefully continue to become more focused on improving the lives of this nations' teachers. The students who fill our classrooms and will rule our great nation in the near future will depend on the quality of their teacher's experiences even more so than they do at present.

What has been discovered through all these studies regardless of methodology is that the lives of teachers are complex and their perceptions of their work are affected by the unique characteristics they possess. The ways in which they view the nature of their work is further influenced by their past history, "personality dynamics, motivations, needs, feelings, education, roles, and status" (Hall, 1977, p. 5).

If indeed there are other influences in the life of a teacher then it stands to reason that the concerns of individual teachers will also be different in type and intensity and therefore must be studied on a much more personal level. We must begin to give credence to how teachers understand their classrooms, students and practices and the



TABLE I  
STUDIES OF TEACHER CONCERNS CONDUCTED BEFORE 1989

RESEARCHER	DATE	PARTICIPANTS	INSTRUMENT	RESULTS	PURPOSE
Fuller, F.F.	1969	Student Teachers - three different groups of student teachers	Counseling sessions conducted during their student teaching seminars	"Concerns with self, i.e., concern with self-protection and self-adequacy: with class control, subject matter adequacy, finding a place in the power structure of the school and understanding expectations of supervisors, principal and parents. Also <b>concern with pupils</b> (more frequent during later weeks of student teaching): with their learning, their progress and with ways in which the teacher could implement this progress" (p. 211)	To examine the developing concerns of small groups of prospective teachers to discover what they are concerned about and whether their expressed concerns can be conceptualized in a useable format.
Parsons, J.S. & Fuller, F. F.	1974	Preservice Teachers, Inservice Teachers	TCS & TCCL-B	"Teachers are concerned about at least four basic kinds of concern -- <b>concern about self-survival</b> (includes insufficient skills or information, discipline problems, being evaluated, being liked, and about presenting information adequately); about <b>teaching</b> (elements that interfere with or prevent effective teaching i.e., concern about insufficient instructional materials, lack of time to prepare lessons, lack of time generally, inflexibility in the situation, lack of freedom to be innovative, having too many pupils, and becoming personally involved with pupils); about <b>impact on pupils</b> and about <b>the teaching situation</b> (i.e., has to do chiefly with recognizing needs of individual pupils and adapting self, teaching methods, and procedures in an attempt to meet these needs)" (p.8-9).	To give teacher educators access to knowledge about preservice and inservice teacher concerns to help them teach education students what teachers need to know.
Adams, R., Hutchinson, S., & Martray, C.	1980	Student Teachers, First-Year Teachers, & Third and Fifth-Year Teachers	TCC	Student and beginning teachers were more <b>concerned about pupil perceptions of self and adult perceptions of self</b> . Teachers at all levels were more <b>concerned about academic impact on students</b> than any other factor.	To test Fuller's self-task-impact theory of teacher concerns with three different levels of teaching experience.
Serck, L.M.	1981	Graduates of a Church-related teacher education institution in their first five years of teaching	TCC & TCS	Total group" expressed high concerns about meeting needs of different kinds of students, about diagnosing student learning problems, and about whether each student is getting what he needs" (p. 104). Total group "expressed very little concern about lack of instructional materials, about having too many noninstructional duties, and working with too many students each day or about the routine and inflexibility of the teaching situation. Half of the subjects expressed concern about their adequacy as a teacher, sixty-one per cent expressed concern that pupils are learning what the teacher is teaching, eighty per cent expressed concern that pupils are learning what they need" (p. 105).	To identify the concerns about teaching expressed by graduates of an early childhood education program from a church-related education institution and determine the relationship between their concerns and selected variables.
<b>Explanation of Tests Used:</b>					
		TCS = Teacher Concerns Statement	Content coded instrument		
		TCCL-B = Teacher Concerns Checklist	5 point Likert Scale instrument		
		TCC = Teacher Concerns Checklist	Francis Fuller's 56-item 5 point Likert Scale instrument		

See References for more information about the individual studies

TABLE II  
STUDIES OF TEACHER CONCERNS CONDUCTED AFTER 1989

RESEARCHER	DATE	PARTICIPANTS	INSTRUMENT	RESULTS	PURPOSE
Boccia, J.A.	1991	Beginning Elementary Teachers - Graduates of a fifth year master's program in a large university in Massachusetts	Questionnaire designed for 1989 study, Open-ended questions	Concerns were divided up between four different headings: Classroom Concerns (p.6), Outside of Classroom Concerns (p.7), Topics of Teacher Successes (p.8), Assistance Beginning Teachers Want (p. 14). Each variable considered in the study was addressed and results were reported as such making it difficult to delineate the concerns noted. Does mention that overall the elementary beginning teachers had same concerns as reported in Veenman's review of Teacher Concerns' Studies although the levels of the concerns varied somewhat. "Apparent that beginning elementary teachers give more weight to concerns of instructional nature than administrative or organizational nature" (p. 15). Their focus was on "topics related to the teaching task, including planning for instruction and securing engagement in learning" (p.15).	Determine concerns of beginning elementary teachers, identify their perceived successes, learn the extent of orientation provided them, ascertain kinds of professional support received from fellow teachers/administrators, relate findings to other variables to better prepare graduates for their initial years in teaching.
Clyde, M. & Ebbeck, M.A.	1991	Graduates of the de Lissa Institute of Early Childhood Studies and the School of Early Childhood Studies at the University of Melbourne, Australia teaching in 1988, 1989, or 1990.	TCS administered three times during the first year as well as qualitative data	The beginning early childhood teachers in both South Australia and Victoria did reflect four major areas of concern. These concerns relate to feelings of lack of awareness of, and knowledge about school readiness, administration, the management of children's behavior and working with parents. Several of the respondents commented on isolation they felt. The vast majority of these teachers wanted to do their best but above all wanted to survive.	Reforming teacher preparation in Australia
Steffy, B.E., Wolfe, M.P., Pasch, S.H., Enz, B.J.	2000	Review of literature and systematic observation of teachers over time these researchers have concluded that there are six phases of teacher growth and within each phase there are specific concerns.		Three areas seem to affect a majority of apprentice teachers: Personal and professional needs - "They want to be accepted by colleagues, and they need to develop workplace friendships. In addition they want to feel competent and secure in their job" (p. 49). Dealing with realities of full-time classroom teaching and teaching conditions.	"A prescriptive model for enhancing the teaching profession ... and encouraging the process of reflection and renewal that leads to growth at each phase" (p. 3).
<b>Explanation of Tests Used:</b>		TCS = Teacher Concerns Statement	Content coded instrument		
		TCCL-B = Teacher Concerns Checklist	5 point Lickert Scale instrument		
		TCC = Teacher Concerns Checklist	Francis Fuller's 56-item 5 point Likert Scale instrument		

See References for more information about the individual studies

theoretical frameworks they build, the questions and concerns they raise (Research Advisory Committee, 2001).

This study was designed to deepen understanding of what beginning early childhood teachers express as concerns in their first three years in the classroom in order to be better informed to meet their needs. As educators we can read volumes of literature devoted to the topics of what it means to teach, what it takes to make a good teacher and what concerns are peculiar to this profession. We could even study discourse on how to teach from the printed page. To only view teaching from one perception we have negated a very critical piece of the research. Failing to consider the “lifeworld” (van Manen, 1990, p. 7) from the teacher’s perspective and all the implications it may have, leaves us with a very constricted view of teaching. We cannot experience the unique aspects of the life of a beginning teacher simply by reading about it. Dialogue affords us the opportunity to interact with teachers to question and probe their experiences in a much more meaningful way. “When choosing a methodology the researcher takes into account the nature of the subject being studied, the underlying goals of the research, and the researcher’s theoretical perspective. The choice of methodology is influenced by the question the researcher asks, as well as the researcher’s view of the world and how it is to be understood” (Hayes & Kilgore, 1991, p. 1).

Themes presented in these personal in-depth interviews reveal that these teachers have concerns about being in teaching associated with curriculum, materials and time. They have concerns about assessing and evaluating students, classroom management and discipline along with meeting students needs and the problems, which exist in their lives. There were also concerns expressed about administration, colleagues, mentors and

resident teacher committees. (See Table III pp. 161-164 for a complete breakdown of the themes of concern recovered through interviews with these six teachers.) In each of these categories the teachers explicitly related example after example of how each concern has played out in their role as teacher. I was enveloped in their world for a very short time but came to appreciate the quality and strength of character each of these individuals portrayed. It is hoped that through this study those who are working with new teachers will take heed to what they have expressed.

### Comparison of Concerns Related to Curriculum, Materials and Time

In comparing what the beginning early childhood teachers revealed through our dialogue and the research cited for this study there were certain similarities and differences observed. With concerns about the curriculum the teachers in my study related lack of confidence about teaching certain areas of the curriculum such as reading, which could be related to comments made about their lack of preparation. Fuller (1969) and Parson and Fuller (1974) labeled these concerns with self, which include concern with self-adequacy and subject matter adequacy. Serck (1981) states that half of her subjects expressed concern about their adequacy as a teacher. Lack of preparation also corresponded to Boccia's findings (1991) as one of the four most important concerns her teachers identified in their practice.

My participants expressed concern about teaching a program that was philosophically in contrast to what they believed about how children learn and develop and having to contend with teachers in the next grade level imposing expectations not

TABLE III  
THEMES AND SUB-THEMES OF BEGINNING TEACHER CONCERNS  
ASSOCIATED WITH THE TASK OF TEACHING

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Concerns Associated with Curriculum:	Teaching children to read <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unsure how to begin</li> <li>• Lack of preparation</li> </ul> Teaching something with different philosophical base Learning new curriculum Preparing students for next grade level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirements expected</li> <li>• Pressure from other teachers</li> <li>• Adjustment of children</li> </ul> Changing grades – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching a grade you do not feel comfortable teaching</li> <li>• Learning new curriculum</li> <li>• Expectations of other teachers</li> </ul>
Concerns Associated with Materials:	Reality of not having materials you had while interning Having more children than supplies Spending your own money to outfit room Money provided but only for certain things and given at end of year Grant award – people not informed about best practice
Concerns Associated with Time:	Lack of time for quality activity in class Schedule problems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disruptions for special programs</li> <li>• Duties outside of classroom</li> <li>• Having to stick to a schedule</li> </ul> Time constraints force bad choices about curriculum Lack of time to observe other classrooms Time away from personal life – depletes energy to spend on family Time for preparation Year-round – delays in pay and materials

TABLE III  
THEMES AND SUB-THEMES OF BEGINNING TEACHER CONCERNS  
RELATING TO STUDENTS

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Concerns About Assessment/Evaluation of Students:	<p>Giving grades and evaluation of students' progress</p> <p>Evaluating maturation vs. academic needs</p> <p>Use of alternative assessment – lack of time and ability</p> <p>Instruments used by school not appropriate for age level of student</p> <p>Knowing if students are ready to handle requirements of next grade level</p> <p>Testing students for special classes such as Gifted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation is ambiguous</li> <li>• Concern about how students handle rejection.</li> </ul>
Concerns Associated with Classroom Management and Discipline:	<p>Fear that planning wouldn't be sufficient</p> <p>Being organized</p> <p>Developing procedures for one grade level then having to revamp for another</p> <p>Teaching procedures/rules/consequences</p> <p>Disciplining takes time away from teaching</p> <p>Documenting more bad behavior than good</p> <p>Biggest area of need – end of year is more Challenging</p> <p>Manner in which you are trained doesn't always work – switch to something more conventional</p> <p>Little preparation for disciplining/classroom management in undergraduate work</p> <p>Certain students challenge – power struggle</p> <p>Lack of consistency with children</p> <p>Discipline doesn't get easier next year – different children/different parents</p>

TABLE III  
THEMES AND SUB-THEMES OF BEGINNING TEACHER CONCERNS  
RELATING TO STUDENTS (Cont.)

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Concerns Associated with Meeting Student's Needs:	<p>Having to meet student's emotional, physical, and academic needs</p> <p>Children have needs that take precedence to academics</p> <p>Emotional responsibility for kids when you can't do anything about it</p> <p>Inadequate preparation in dealing with children's emotional/physical problems</p> <p>Adjusting curriculum to meet needs of all learners</p> <p>Obtaining additional help for children in need</p> <p>Providing an environment where children feel safe and secure</p> <p>Meeting children's basic needs first is a challenge</p>
Concerns Associated with Problems Students Have:	<p>Relationships kids have to deal with at home affects attitudes at school</p> <p>Safety issues associated with school Neighborhood</p> <p>Diversity of neighborhood different than teacher background</p> <p>Parental involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of transportation</li> <li>• Language barrier</li> <li>• Parental expectations</li> </ul> <p>Parent conferences stressful due to not knowing how to conduct or what to say</p> <p>Confrontations and communication with Parents</p> <p>Irresponsible behavior-Parents/children</p> <p>Physical problems requiring special care</p> <p>Students who have been held back</p>

TABLE III  
THEMES AND SUB-THEMES OF BEGINNING TEACHER CONCERNS  
AFFILIATED WITH SUPPORT

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Concerns Associated with Administration:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of attending to physical arrangements of room and supplies</li> <li>Poor leadership skills</li> <li>Ability to keep current on research and classroom practices</li> <li>Being more involved in classroom/school</li> <li>Fear of not pleasing an administrator</li> </ul>
Concerns Associated with Colleagues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of friendliness or helpfulness</li> <li>Others not understanding developmentally appropriate practice</li> <li>High turnover makes collaboration difficult</li> <li>Feelings of jealousy and caution when someone younger is given leading role</li> </ul>
Concerns Associated with Mentor:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of support from mentor</li> <li>Mentor outside of grade level/not helpful</li> <li>Leaving new teacher to fend for themselves</li> </ul>
Concerns Associated with Resident Committee:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of feedback from visits</li> <li>Too many visits cause disruptions</li> <li>Change of university person on committee</li> </ul>



developmentally appropriate. These two concerns were absent themes in both of the early childhood studies as well as the other studies conducted with other teacher populations. The closest example of this concern was cited in Parsons and Fuller (1974) when they listed lack of freedom to be innovative, but none of the other pieces of research touched on these two aspects of concern. Fuller (1969) raises the question, "Can an individual regress to an earlier phase?" (p. 222) Several of my teachers expressed concern along these lines when they mentioned having to change grades and that it felt like they were starting all over again.

The reality of not having proper materials, or enough materials and having to spend their own money to furnish their rooms was an expressed concern prevalent among my participants. Parsons and Fuller's study (1974) classified these concerns as fitting in the task of teaching category. The elements in this group were defined as those things that interfere with or prevent effective teaching and concern about insufficient instructional materials is mentioned. Serck's (1981) teacher participants were noted as having expressed very little concern about lack of instructional materials while Boccia (1991) notes her teachers mentioned their ability to find resources as a success area. Having more children than supplies was an issue of concern with teachers in my study as well as in Parsons and Fuller's study (1974) yet it was an area of little concern for the teachers in Serck's study (1981). An aspect brought out in conjunction with the materials that was peculiar to my study was the fact that one of the teachers had to provide justification for a grant purchase and then was denied due to those in charge being uninforming about developmentally appropriate practice and materials.

The theme of time incorporated concerns about scheduling such as lack of adequate amounts for developmentally appropriate practices, disruptions, and preparation all of which are mentioned by Boccia (1991) and Parsons and Fuller (1974). Again participants in Serck's study relegated matters related to duties and schedules on a level of little concern. One teacher in my study brought up a unique aspect of concern in relation to time she teaches in a year-round school. Problems conceived as part of this type of school schedule were delays in pay and in receiving materials on time since both of these practices hinged on the regular school schedule. The teachers mentioned the amount of time teaching took away from their life outside of school because of preparations they had to make and also how drained they felt at the end of a day. Going home to a family and trying to meet their needs caused them some concern. The mental fatigue teachers' feel can be just as depleting as physical exertion and sometimes more stressful.

#### Comparison of Concerns Related to Students

Assessing and evaluating students, classroom management and discipline, meeting student's needs and dealing with their problems were all themes in my study of concerns related to students. The Parsons and Fuller (1974), Adams (1980), Serck (1981), Boccia (1991), and Clyde and Ebbeck (1991) all mention concerns associated with recognizing and providing for individual children's needs, concern about what they are learning and if they are learning what they need to be, and knowledge about school readiness for beginning teachers. Fuller (1969) cites that preservice teachers, during the later portion of their experience expressed concerns about student learning and progress.

The fact that all of the studies reviewed implied some of the same concerns about the academic needs of students lead me to believe it is a very common concern for teachers starting out in the profession. Fuller (1969) and Parsons and Fuller (1974) did assign this type of concern to the later stages of their preservice and inservice experiences. Adams, et.al., (1980) found teachers at all levels more concerned about the impact of teaching on students and 60% to 80% of Serck's (1981) teachers expressed concern that pupils are learning what the teacher is teaching or that pupils are learning what they need.

Assessing students was mentioned as a concern by the teachers Boccia (1991) studied at the same level of importance as classroom control, lesson and unit planning, dealing with individual differences and time spent in preparation. Serk (1981) mentions assessment in the form of diagnosing student learning problems. The beginning early childhood teachers I interviewed reported concerns about giving grades and evaluating students' progress because of the ambiguity involved with the process. They lacked time and ability to effectively use alternative assessments, which are emphasized in early childhood programs. One of the teachers, teaching preschool, was concerned about the instrument being used to evaluate her students for inclusion in pre-school mentioning that it was not appropriate for her age group of children. These two aspects of assessment were not indicated in any of the studies used for this project.

They also talked about the differences in assessing maturity levels and academic abilities of their students. Many of their cohorts were unable to distinguish between the two and this caused some concern on their part. Evaluating children for participation in a gifted class was a unique concern from my group of teachers. The particular teacher mentioning this issue felt the students had too much at stake in the manner that they were

evaluated and expressed concern about the role she had to play in the selection process. None of the studies examined revealed any information on these two expressed concerns.

Comparing the concern teachers had in relation to children's needs most of the beginning teachers I interviewed expressed more concern about the emotional/physical rather than academic. They expressed that a student's basic needs had to be met before they were teachable. Those needs included having enough rest and adequate amounts of food before they come to school. Teachers felt inadequately prepared for dealing with children's emotional problems and they ended up taking many of these problems home with them. They felt they lacked coping skills in dealing with those issues where they could not do anything about. Parsons and Fuller's study (1974) mentions concerns about becoming personally involved with students in the task of teaching category, the other studies did not. Teachers as a whole wanted to provide their students with a safe, secure and loving atmosphere where children could learn the meaning of trust. The teachers in my study reported concerns in adjusting curriculum to individual students' needs and being able to obtain additional help for students whose needs they as a teacher could not meet.

Classroom management and discipline have been known to permeate the literature in relation to beginning teachers and possibly to teachers in general. Fuller (1969) Parsons and Fuller (1974), Boccia (1991), Clyde and Ebbeck (1991) mention that classroom control is a concern with preservice teacher and inservice teachers. Serk (1981) and Adams (1980) made no mention of the teachers they studied as having mentioned concerns in relation to discipline or classroom management. The teachers I interviewed mentioned the discipline as their greatest area of need. A few mentioned

having to resort to something quick rather than rely on a method more appropriate for young children such as logical consequences. Changing grades not only required two of my teachers to revamp their curriculum delivery methods but also their disciplining techniques. The students that caused power struggles, the most challenging, had triggered a change of practice for two teachers. They were very thoughtful about the process of discipline and the multitude of consequences that could result. These teachers showed wisdom in dealing with this aspect of teaching and have continued to revamp their approach as each different class of children with different needs come to them.

#### Comparison of Concerns Related to Support

A whole section of Boccia's study (1991) was devoted to exploring the kinds of professional assistance teachers felt would be most useful. The top responses by 25% or more of her teacher participants include things such as: "opportunity to observe other classes, opportunity to share experiences with other beginning teachers, workshops specifically for beginning teachers, observation and feedback from other teachers, mentor teacher in the building, ... graduate courses in teaching strategies, ... more observation and feedback from supervisors, and telephone to university faculty for specific questions" (p. 14). The six teachers I interviewed could have written this list it was so closely aligned to what they described. A few of my teachers expressed that the administrator should be more involved in what is happening in the classroom and that it was important for them to keep current on best practice, which wasn't mentioned by Boccia (1991). The teachers being observed for their resident year of teaching felt the visits of the committee members were disruptive to their class with way too little constructive feedback offered.

Two remarkable points worth mentioning here are that the administrator set the tone for how these teachers were able to navigate their first year or years in the classroom and that a good mentor can make all the difference in the world as to how successful you are in teaching.

The concerns that have been expressed by six beginning early childhood teachers in this study seem not much different than those which have been identified in the published research. Those concerns particularly identifiable to this group translate into needs, needs that can be met by administrators, mentors and university programs.

For one we know that the needs of early childhood teachers should be identified in a more personal and specific manner if we hope to make a difference in their lives. Just as each teacher is unique so are the situations in which they teach. What these teachers need as expressed through themes of concern are:

- Better preparation in core curriculum areas they will be expected to teach,
- Exposure to curriculum materials and the philosophical basis for them,
- How to state their philosophical beliefs to administrators, colleagues and parents,
- Dealing with reality of the classrooms in which they will teach,
- Handling issues about schedules and dealing with adjustments,
- Familiarization with assessment tools,
- Need of substantial information dealing with classroom discipline issues,
- Dealing more effectively with emotional and physical needs of students as well as academic issues,
- Help with parental issues.

All of these needs mentioned can be turned into powerful learning opportunities for beginning teachers through study, doing, reflecting, collaborating with other teachers, learning to observe students at work, and communicating on a variety of levels. One of the best places to begin implementing these tools of learning can be the college or university classroom. Schools of higher education should be providing not only a good foundation in theory but opportunities to combine theory with practice. Some of the ways this can be accomplished would be through experiences with research and inquiry, opportunities to try and test their ideas in situations similar to what they will experience once they graduate, and talking about and evaluate the results of their learning and teaching tasks (Darling-Hammond, 1998).

Some of the ways that this type of teaching is occurring throughout the United States is through schools expanding their four-year programs and incorporating more integration of subject-matter coursework with the clinical training in real classrooms. There are schools that have opted for five-year programs and the inclusion of a full-year internship. Several of the teachers in my study expressed the wish that the internship had been longer because it would have given them more opportunities to practice and thus made them better prepared to handle a classroom of their own. Darling-Hammond (1998) mentions that “studies have found that graduates of these extended programs are more satisfied with their preparation, and their colleagues, principals, and cooperating teachers view them as better prepared” (p. 8). In addition the effectiveness of these teachers with their students is enhanced and they are staying in teaching.

Professional Development Schools are also a way to provide for some of the needs mentioned above. In these types of settings teacher education faculty work closely

with the teachers and administrators in the school setting. Together they build a vision of good teaching that draws from theory and practice and integrates that vision into something achievable and fulfilling. This type of setting works to enhance teacher practice as well as the faculty from the university. Relationships are built beyond the immediate school setting and professors come away from the experience with “a better understanding of the realities of teaching in today’s schools” (McBee, 1998, p. 56). School teachers are an important link in assisting in the preparation of future teachers. It was mentioned by McBee (1998) that the opportunities afforded to teachers involved in Professional Development Schools are of a wide variety and more intense than those of a traditional education program.

New teachers benefit from other established partnerships such as trained mentors who are able to be close at hand. California has recently instituted a Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program costing approximately \$17 million and focused on assisting the beginning teachers in becoming successes in the classroom (Halford, 1998). The mentor can do something as simple as assist the new teacher with arranging their room, introducing them to other staff members, and checking over lesson plans. When difficulties arise the mentor is there willing to provide a listening ear and guidance in resolving the situation using questions and prodding’s rather than just quick fixes. The essential consideration in the mentoring issue is that its success is determined by the systemic support it receives in the school district. Schools that have developed successful mentoring models share key components. They have “leaders, particularly principals, who are committed to the notion of helping beginning teachers find success, ... tangible



incentives and district support, and mentors who have received specialized professional development” (p. 35).

New teachers will benefit from ongoing professional development in the form of study groups, peer coaching, observations and effective collaboration. The Internet has become a tool in linking teachers with teachers and teachers with universities. Harvard Graduate School of Education has one such network developed called the Beginning Teacher Computer Network. This network offers teachers beginning their journey in teaching with support and direction especially appreciated by those who are in remote locations and not able to reach help in a short amount of time (Merseeth, 1990). A regional state university has developed a program titled Center for Teaching Excellence geared toward providing the novice teacher help and support just a phone call away 24-hours a day. They use university professors in the college of education as well as experienced teachers to field calls and also make visits to classrooms in order to assist teachers with problematic situations.

The list of support possibilities and options are only limited by the vision we as educators have. If we as an education community embrace teaching as a learning profession then we will all be encouraged to reach beyond status quo and climb to new heights in our teaching responsibilities that we may strengthen the learning opportunities for students.

It is further more stressed that each and every member of a support system begin to look at these beginning teachers as unique individuals with the ability to make a valuable contribution. These six teachers have added yet another dimension to the study of beginning teachers' concerns.

## Recommendations and Reflections

As with any type of research study there are drawbacks and changes that have been revealed throughout the process and this study is no exception. I have come to understand the role of an interviewer in a much more thorough manner. Techniques of questioning have certainly been targeted as an area in need of improvement. The original intent of conducting this study was to investigate concerns in light of how beginning teachers are using professional journals to answer their questions. The study has evolved into something more specific and more in-depth in the hope that it can be taken to another level in the near future and that would entail looking at ways the early childhood profession addresses concerns of beginning teachers in journals and conference protocol. But for the time being I have learned a very essential aspect of understanding how to design a study and seek a methodology to carry out the research.

In understanding a beginning teacher's concerns I think it would be profitable to interview teachers who have left the profession after only one, two or three years of teaching and compare those findings to what these teachers have reported as concerns. This aspect became clear when one of the second year teachers did not continue in teaching this year. All attempts failed in contacting her after the interviewing was completed and raised questions in my mind of why she chose to neglect contact. Interviewing teachers from specific areas of teaching, such as special education, those teaching in very rural areas or those in areas not in close proximity to a university might be other considerations to take into account in additional study. It would be interesting to interview beginning teachers who belong to specific early childhood professional organizations versus those who have no such affiliation. One of the parameters of

Boccia's study (1990) was examining factors influencing a teacher's life. Being able to use this type of information might provide some interesting comparisons between what factors have a positive impact and which ones have a negative impact on a beginning teacher's life.

Another angle to pursue in examining beginning early childhood teachers would be interviewing administrators, university faculty, mentors and colleagues to recover themes of concern they perceive the beginning teacher to possess.

Entering the world of six beginning early childhood teachers through the method of qualitative interviewing centered on a teacher's experiences has allowed me to enter their world and explore many facets which influence their resolve to teach. Some of these concerns I could directly relate to having been in the early childhood classroom, others I could not. I feel privileged to have been presented this very unique and precious opportunity to learn about teaching from a different venue. In turn I anticipate that my questions will prod them to reflect upon their daily interactions in the classrooms they inhabit with children. van Manen (1991) states, "Both living with children as well as reflecting on the ways we live with children are manifestations of our pedagogical being" (p. 27). It is through this type of practical study rather than merely with the contrived intellectualized forms of knowledge in textbooks that teachers become more attuned to their mission in life.

Dewey (as cited in Fosnot 1996) stated almost a century ago that it may be of a more significant consequence over a substantial length of time for educators "to develop an orientation to children conditioned by ongoing reflection on the pedagogical meaning and significance of experiences in their lives than to acquire

an external set of behavioral competencies that enables one in the short term to improve ‘the mechanics of school management...[but with which one] cannot grow as a teacher, an inspirer and director of soul-life’” (p. 10)

Studying six beginning early childhood teachers’ lives through dialogue only represents what was happening at one point in time. The teachers’ lives will move on and as they do will grow, change and continue to impact many more children. Therefore it is imperative that continued study of the lives of beginning early childhood teachers be examined, evaluated and the results used to improve the quality of preparation they receive, the environment in which they work, and support they receive during the critical stage of their career.

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## APPENDIX A

### SAMPLE OF SCRIPT FOR ADMINISTRATOR

Hello, my name is Bonnie Voth and I am a doctoral student at Oklahoma State University. I would appreciate a moment of your time to explain why I am calling you. (If they are unable to talk at this time I will ask for a convenient time to call them back.) I am conducting a study for my dissertation that will involve interviewing beginning early childhood teachers. The focus of my research is to investigate themes of concern early childhood teachers have during their first three years of teaching. Persons working with the teachers or with preservice teachers will be able to use this information in developing support programs for teachers and in preparing students for their entry into teaching.

I have chosen twelve teachers who have graduated from Northeastern State University and have or are currently involved in their entry year of teaching. One of those teachers (give teacher's name) is employed in your school. Would it be possible to talk with \_\_\_\_\_ by phone to arrange a time outside of school to meet. (If they agree, I will ask for the convenient time to call the teacher back and speak with them.) I will eventually interview six of the teachers I contact, who agree to participate in my research. I will be meeting with the teachers on four different occasions. All interviews other than this initial contact will be handled outside of school time. I will agree not to interview any of the teachers contacted who wishes not to be included in the study. Additionally, I will not expect the teacher to participate during school hours and will abide by any school policies related to this type of contact.

## APPENDIX B

### SAMPLE SCRIPT FOR TEACHERS

Hello, my name is Bonnie Voth and I am a doctoral student at Oklahoma State University. I have contacted your administrator for permission to contact you. Is this a convenient time to speak with you? (If they are unable to talk at this time I will ask for a convenient time to call them back.) I would appreciate a moment of your time to explain the reason I am calling you. I am conducting a study for my dissertation that will involve interviewing beginning early childhood teachers. The focus of my research is to recover themes of concern early childhood teachers have during their first three years of teaching. Persons working with the teachers or with preservice teachers will be able to use this type of information in developing support programs for teachers and in preparing students for their entry into teaching.

Twelve names were chosen from the list of entry year teachers who have graduated from Northeastern State University and have either completed their entry year or are currently involved in their first year of teaching. I would like to involve you in my research. Can I call you back when you get home and explain in more detail the purpose of this study and what it will involve? (If they agree I will ask for the most convenient time to reach them.) By agreeing to speak with me further, by no means obligates you to participate. Participation will involve meeting with me on four separate occasions you will choose the time and place. The meetings will not take place during school hours and I will abide by any school policies related to this type of contact.

## APPENDIX C

### LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Date

Dear Teacher (Name will be supplied when chosen)

I was glad to be able to make contact with you and share with you the study I am doing for my doctoral dissertation through the University. I am including a brief account of what the study is about, why I am doing the study and what I hope to accomplish by involving the beginning teacher's voice in my study.

I would ask that you read this material over carefully and take time to consider a role that you may perhaps want to have in expressing what concerns you as a beginning teacher have experienced in your teaching. I will be contacting you in approximately one week to see if you would wish to be an active participant in the study and contribute input.

If you have any questions as you read through this synopsis or wish to have things clarified further please feel free to email me or call the numbers provided below. Again, I want to thank you for the opportunity to visit with you. You are under no obligation whatsoever to participate if you have any reservations. I applaud your willingness to work with children in preparing them for their future.

Sincerely,

Bonnie L. Voth  
918-456-5511 x3803 (Work)  
918-825-0656 (Home)

## APPENDIX D

### CONSENT FORM

#### General Information

It has been estimated that up to 40% of U.S. teachers will not be teaching until retirement (Terry, 1997). Others report that nearly one third of all newly hired teachers throughout our nation leave the classroom during their first three years of teaching (NCTAF, 1996). The majority of these talented and dedicated beginning teachers are leaving because they are unable to handle the concerns associated with the profession and have become disenchanting (Terry, 1997).

It is believed that a student's success is strongly linked to good teaching (Ayers, 1996) and it is believed that teachers can either foster or hinder children's development through the types of interactions they have with students (Kamii, 1981). Concerns teachers have need to be taken seriously since they are the critical agents in our nation's classrooms and have an effect on their students.

Beginning teachers of young children are learning to establish a professional identity and need informed guidance from knowledgeable supporters to assist them in their efforts and secure their success for future years in the classroom.

This study was initiated out of a desire to know what the life experiences of beginning early childhood teachers are in order to heighten the awareness of those who work with them in the schools and universities across our state and nation. It will require conducting interviews with early childhood teachers like yourself asking questions about your experiences being a beginning teacher in the early childhood classroom. These

stories and accounts shared by you will be ones not always accurately depicted through a survey or textbook

I am asking that you participate in sharing your reality with others so that they may come to know your world and appreciate your contribution. Also, I would add that in sharing your concerns with other beginning teachers their feelings of “I’m the only one to feel this way” can be dispelled and they can profit from your experiences. Your story must be told and your personal involvement will be much appreciated.

### Procedure

The participants will be engaged in three 90-minute interviews over the course of three to four weeks and a final meeting to discuss transcriptions of the third interview. The interviews will be scheduled at a convenient time for both parties and conducted at a site suitable to you. The sessions will be audio taped and a transcription will be mailed before the beginning of each successive interview for you to review and note any corrections or additions. Your participation in this study is voluntary and there will be no penalty for refusal to participate in this project. You are free to withdraw your consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty after notifying the interviewer. It is hoped that once the interviews begin that you would continue for the length of the study.

### Confidentiality

The interview will be conducted according to commonly accepted research procedures and the information taken from the interview will be recorded in such a manner that participants cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to respondents/interviewees. The names and places will be represented fictitiously in the

final written document and will be provided to you at your request upon completion of the study. Any field notes, tapes and disks will be kept in a locked file cabinet for the duration of the study and destroyed upon final approval of the dissertation.

You may contact Bonnie L. Voth at (918) 456-5511 x3803 or Dr. Kathryn Castle at (405) 744-7125. You may also contact Sharon Bacher, IRB Executive Secretary, 203 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078; (405) 744-5700, should you need further information.

The interview will not cover topics that could reasonably place you at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to your financial standing or employability or deal with sensitive aspects of your behavior.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ (a.m./p.m.)

I have explained all elements of this form and study to the participant before requesting them to sign.

Signature of Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ (a.m./p.m.)

APPENDIX E  
Carleen's Interviews

CARLEEN  
Interview #1  
April 22, 2001

The first thing I'd like to ask is will you describe what it was like growing and going to school, things you got out of school, and the teachers you came in contact with? So you're asking about my educational experience? Yes. I remember liking my first grade teacher a whole lot. She was a very affectionate, young, and pretty teacher, you know that little kids like. We moved after that year and I don't remember third grade at all except that I remember it was a hard year. I remember getting in trouble for talking but other than that I don't remember how on earth it happened. Fourth grade was pretty good, fifth grade we moved to a state where there were a lot of African-Americans. It was Alabama and I had grown up in New Jersey and the particular town I had been in was really not around African-Americans. I had an African-American teacher and it was pretty rough for me. I was for some reason very frightened by the experience and that was a hard year. That was fifth grade? Yes, fifth grade. I was an achiever. I was a high academic student through high school and graduated salutatorian of my class and was real involved in the academic clubs and music. I had a lot of success in school and enjoyed the educational experience, enjoyed school and I looked forward to it. I wasn't the type of student that didn't want to go but we did move quite a bit. You moved from state to state, or you moved within the state? Yes, we moved to Kentucky around that second-grade year and then moved again to Alabama my fourth grade year. Was your dad in the service? No, he sold an oil business and then wanted to become a pastor and so one of those moves was to get some more education in seminary and then the last one [move] was for a pastoral job.

As far as making friends when you were in grade school, was that a difficult task, moving around so much? Initially it was not but then after moving after second grade it was hard. Yea, I think I always felt slightly different and part of that was being one of the smarter kids, and then also having moved I remember feeling different.

Do you remember any specific instances other than getting in trouble for, what was it, talking? Getting in trouble, discipline, you mean. I remember in second grade helping, I was one of those students that she had a program where if you finished your work first you were like a peer tutor, I guess that is what it would be. You could go and help another child. I had done this and I was helping another student, well, at some point she had asked for all the students that needed to use the restroom. Well I didn't hear it or whatever and then I ran out later to go use the restroom. I didn't tell her that I had gone and she got very upset and she was going to call my mother because I had gone to the bathroom and didn't tell her, and had gone at the inappropriate time. That is really my first experience of being in trouble and I was terrified. I cried and cried and cried.



What about subjects, are there particular subjects that you liked in school more than others?

Science and math and I hated history. Why? I could not, and I still do, I have a very difficult time remembering dates. I couldn't tell you the date of the Civil War. I could learn it and help my class with a historical thing but I just can't relate to it. If it's not real to me at that moment then I don't remember it so maybe that's why I like science because it's logical or it's there and I can experience it. Well sometimes the things that we enjoy or don't enjoy we have a tendency as a teacher to emphasize that area more. Science, I do science with animals and plants yes we do science. I think that's great.

How did you come to decide on teaching?

Initially I went to school as a music performance major. I went two years to college and then fell in love, got married. At that point my husband got a job and we just decided that I would go ahead and stay home and be poor and have children because he was also in the teaching profession. After I had my children, I chose education and I chose early childhood. I wanted to do that because of my musical talents and my love for reading. I absolutely love reading and I wanted to teach beginning reading. I wanted a schedule for my children and I felt that was best for my family.

What grade do you teach now?

Kindergarten. Kindergarten, is it all day, half day? From what time to what time? All day from 8:15 to 3:05, 3:10.

Do you have a planning period?

Yes, I have a fifty-minute planning period in the morning.

Initially when you started your education courses, what were some of the things that crossed your mind that helped solidify your decision to teach other than the reasons you just explained?

Fascination with their cognitive development. I remember, there were a couple of courses that I took, I don't remember but it may have been when I took beginning reading and I don't remember what class. Are you talking about before I started taking my classes in my major? When you started taking classes in your major what were the courses that really sparked your interest and kind of pushed you on? Creative Expression, Cognitive Development, definitely those and the beginning reading class. I'm fascinated with how they [children] develop and you can see it, it's so apparent. It's fun now to watch children develop knowing what I know whereas I wish I could go back and I would do differently with my family. It's fascinating.

If you were to describe some of the people that had an influence on you once you started your course work, your pre-intern, and interning, what characteristics did they portray that you really gravitated toward?

I gravitate towards people who go against the flow. Who really are autonomous, people who think for themselves and don't do things just because everyone else has done them, but they question. Those are the type of people that I gravitate towards.

Describe a little bit about your pre-interning situations. You had a pre-intern one and two and a full internship. Describe something about those experiences.

My pre-intern one was here in a kindergarten class. It was a very good experience and the teacher was a very loving, positive teacher. She was very quiet spoken, but had control of the kids that was a good experience. My second intern experience was in a more traditional second grade, no it was third, it was second or third, I want to say it was third. It was a third grade class in another school district near here. The teacher was more traditional but she really pushed character and spent a lot of time on good character and had some neat ideas. Matter of fact, she did the Great Expectations, that's what it was and I got a lot from that. It was a more traditional environment, so as far as that goes, I didn't glean a whole lot educationally. Then my full internship was in a preschool and the teacher that I had was absolutely wonderful, really good, affectionate loving, warm, very child-centered. Was the preschool part of the public school system? Yes, yes it was a public school. She actually had a lot of high need children in her class. It was a small school and there was an autistic child that had some sort of a behavior mood disorder. He was actually going for therapy at that time because they were trying to identify what it was. Several students had severe speech problems, but there was no special education program, I mean she was it. Well, and really for four-year-olds there was no pull out program at that school like we have here. We would have a pull out and there was nothing. It was a challenging situation, but I really learned a lot.

How many students were in that class?

Twenty-one, twenty-two. And was she in there by herself with you? Or did she have an aide? There was an aide then when I came the aide would occasionally get pulled out for other things, but basically there were at least two or three of us in the room.

Thinking about the class work you had and the types of experiences from your pre-intern and interning, what were your feelings and experiences walking into your classroom the first day?

The very first day? Well, I was extremely excited to get to know my students. I was so excited because I had waited a long time. I was very nervous about how I would implement some of the things and unsure how I would do them. I knew what I wanted to do. I knew I was going to have to face a couple of obstacles just because of things that maybe were mandated by my school or the curriculum or whatever we were going to use. I knew I would have to deal with those but overall I was very, very excited. Did you sleep the night before? No, no, no!

You mentioned that there were things that you knew you wanted to do. You had some apprehension about being able to implement them or how you would go about implementing them? Can you explain what some of those things might have been?

Well, I don't know if I want to, you may not want to go this avenue, but just the whole language aspect. How I would teach that way since we use the Saxon phonics program. I wasn't sure how I was going to use it and how it would work. Throughout the year I've made my way and how it works for me and I've still done the things that were very important to me. I wanted it [my curriculum] to be child-centered and child-focused and I wanted them to have ownership of what was going on. It takes time to work those things out as a teacher it doesn't just happen. This is your first year? This is my first year and I'm finding the balance of the organization and control that you need, covering all your skills, but still being the child-centered affectionate teacher you want to be.

What were some of the obstacles?

Saxon phonics, how I was going to use it. I was required to use it, which I don't know if you're familiar with the Saxon phonics program, but it has a daily lesson and then a worksheet that goes with it that was an obstacle. Children get pulled out, that was an obstacle. Time, I wanted a good block of time for centers. The kids have music and art and then they have to go to library and computers and we lose time. You wouldn't believe, well you do because you've been a teacher, you lose so much time. You don't have the time you think you have and that was an obstacle. Not getting so hung up on doing everything that I wanted to do that I forget to embrace the moment and teach kids.

When you were in school [college] did you make a portfolio?

That would have been in Clinical Teaching.

You construct these for teaching and you're supposed to add to that all along till you get to the end of your classroom experiences. Did you have to have a philosophy? What were some of the other things that you had to include in it [portfolio]?

You were supposed to include an autobiography, resumes and recommendations, and a sample lesson plan. What did you get out of doing that? Well, it makes you think. I know there are some people that say, "how come we're doing this?" but I think it was good. I like the fact that I have my letters of recommendations, and I have a resume that looks great in there I still have mine. I didn't do the scrapbook format I kept mine pretty professional. I've looked at my philosophy and I've actually gone back and looked at it and thought, "how would I go back and change that," because your philosophy changes.

What were some of the things you brought out in your philosophy?

How I felt how children learned best and how they develop knowledge of science and math and what the role of the teacher is, that was kind of the avenue I took with it.

Have you tried rewriting it?

No, I haven't I probably should after a year of teaching.

What about discipline? Did you say you had to have a discipline plan?

I know we'll talk about those things later, I think that's the biggest area of need. I wish that we dealt with classroom management in early childhood we dealt with it more in cognitive and development of programs. When I started out the year I was bound and determined that I was going to use logical consequences, which I did, and I still do. I wanted to use logical consequences and then spontaneous praise and complimenting for students that were showing appropriate behavior. At the end of the year you start seeing a lot of behavior problems and you can give up and burn out or you can make changes and make it a great end of the year. I can't change my kids, but I can change me, and by changing me then I affect them, so I've used that. I've used the praise, and all the research shows that that's the most effective. Not rewards as pre-planned like if you do this, but more if someone's sitting correctly, "well, I like the way, so-and-so's sitting," or whatever. That seems to work the best and I've done that. By second nine weeks, I felt like there was, well I have a student that is ADHD, very severely and was really physically harmful to other students. I went to red, yellow, green cards for his behavior and used that for about a semester. I'm getting ready this next week to start a new plan, but you know that's the area of struggle. I don't mean that I don't have control, I actually have found that my students talk with one another, but it's about the topic that we're talking about. If you came in my room it would be noisy and we're playing but it's not

disruptive. Discipline is absolutely the hardest thing that you have to deal with. I wish I could have spent a class every semester at school talking about ideas and ways to deal with discipline and what is a good logical consequence if they don't line up at recess when it's time to line up? What is a logical consequence if they leave the playground during recess? I don't have the wealth of twenty years of teaching to know when something happens, something wacko like when so-and-so takes their shoes off outside to play. At home that would be fine and safe, but we have safety rules so what are the logical consequences. Having all those ideas, I don't have yet and I've had to boy, and think fast.

Do you feel like what you came up with as a discipline plan in your interning or in your coursework was probably not as realistic as what you would want it to be now?

There were certain things, I had an instructor in college that I thought was a wonderful teacher, absolutely outstanding for Cognitive and Development of Programs. She challenged us to think she's a challenging teacher and taught us basically about logical consequences. If you're a developmentally appropriate as a teacher you're going to see less problems that is realistic. That's hard for some teachers to swallow and I know that there are new teachers out there right now that are probably totally disagreeing with me, but logical consequences work. It is very, very hard to do and it is exhausting. The easiest thing to do is say, "you're going to the principal, or you're going to sit out in the hall, or..." that is easy. There are times that I have had to do that because of the situation I was in at that moment. I was either very upset with the child, didn't need to be with the child, or whatever, but what works is logical consequences, and it's effective. I've found the praise really works if I needed them to change in group time or whatever, praise works.

What kind of relationship did you have with parents this first year?

I've had an excellent relationship. I have never had a parent ever, I'm lucky because it doesn't happen to every body, but I haven't had one parent come to me upset. I've been very open though and I talk a lot with my parents. I love my children in the class and the parents know that, I've shown it. I've already had a relationship with a lot of them, too, because I've been here, and my husband is a schoolteacher in the district, and that makes a difference. I already knew some of the families of children coming into my class this year, so. I've been lucky. I've had a really good experience.

I want to back track a little bit. When you talked about going into teaching what kind of support or discouraging remarks did you get from others that were close to you?

Well my family said, "you don't make enough money being a teacher," which is true. Most people were pretty supportive, they were, and have always been supportive and complimentary of what we're [she and her husband] doing. We're very involved in our community, too, and church and children's programs and so we've had a good support. We really have with family and friends and of course that makes a difference.

How many children do you have?

I have four children, ten, nine, eight and two three boys, and one girl. Is the girl the youngest? No, you'd think that that I would have stopped at a girl, no, she's my third. I had two boys and then a girl but then we decided to have one more.

How have your children reacted to having a mother as a teacher?

Absolutely love it. They love that I'm up here. Two of my children are in this school building and one is right across the yard. My husband is right over there [points to a building close by]. He teaches band. He's the associate band director for the high school and then he heads the mid-school program, and junior high. Both of you come from a music background? Yes, that's how we met. Music's the common denominator.

You said parents were very supportive. Have you gotten any comments about being a beginning teacher from your parents? Has it been a concern?

No, and most of that is because my husband has been here for eight years and I've taught in private situations and have headed children's ministries of the church and summer programs. Even though I was a beginning teacher most people are familiar with me and they didn't see me that way. They just don't see me that way.

What kinds of communication do you have with parents throughout the year?

Well I send letters home, and we go on a lot of field trips. I am the field trip queen.

Matter of fact, in the past they have only allowed the class to go on one field trip a year and I didn't know that. I had a field trip planned for the second week of school and they changed that rule. I go on a field trip pretty much every two weeks and if I don't then someone comes in. So I see a lot of parents that way and I have about six parents that help off and on in the classroom. Basically letters and doing a lot of field trips and little programs or things we do inform them. What are some of the field trips you have taken?

Well, we were doing transportation so we went to see a paddleboat. We've been to a gas station, a drive-through safari, and the hospital those are some of the unusual ones.

We've gone down to the bus barn to see the busses, we had a Japanese tea and went to a Japanese garden, and the dentist that kind of stuff. I keep waiting for them to get on to me but they haven't said anything yet. They haven't said anything they don't know what to think of me.

Describe your class for me, and I'm going to leave it very general because I want to hear your understanding of that.

Okay, I'll give you the statistics first. I have nineteen children and a half. I say a half because I have a preschooler that comes for half a day for reading. There are more girls than boys, ten girls nine boys who are very loving, very expressive kids, extremely expressive. The first day of school I expected to have children cry, not a single one did. They were so excited to be here and it was funny because I was thinking, "okay, I'm all prepared," for these crying kids and they were acting like, "**Here I am!**" and that's their personalities. They just love the limelight. Any one of them would get up and read a story to you, they're not shy. They love to make up stories and love to play games very sociable, happy kids, really happy kids.

What about abilities?

Actually they are a very strong class. I have several that are extremely intelligent children, and by Christmas, if you're looking at skills, they all had with the exception of two or three had what they needed for this year, which is nice. I only have two that I am retaining and it's because of age. They're really a very strong class and very expressive. Their journal writing is really neat, with the creative writing, they're sounding out well and it's really neat.

Do they have a developmental or T-1 class?

Both, they have a developmental and T-1. What's the difference? Developmental-1 would be lack of skills and young age. T-1 they have most of their skills, but they are a younger student. Their birthday was right before the cut off or just for some reason the child would have a slight emotional developmental delay. D-1 would be more those students that are significantly delayed both cognitively and socially.

How many other kindergarten classes are in this school?

There are a total of eight kindergarten classrooms. There are eight of each grade, plus T-1 and D-1 so really because they do things with us there's actually ten.

The lower elementary includes what grades?

Four preschool and eight of each kindergarten first, second and third grades.

What grades are included in the upper elementary, middle school and high school?

Fourth and fifth are in the upper elementary, then sixth through eight in middle school or junior high and ninth through twelve at the high school. We are the largest school in our district as far as the sites go. We have about nine hundred students, something like that.

Do you have an assistant principal?

We just got one at Christmas, bless her heart. The other sites are well equipped and have principals and assistant principals. We finally got one, yes, and she's wonderful. Matter of fact her son is in my class.

When you talked about that many kindergarten teachers and you talked about you taking a lot of field trips, what has been the reaction from the other kindergarten teachers?

Really, interesting, pretty good, there are a couple that you know maybe not quite so friendly or just different I don't know how to explain it. I'm very fortunate because my mentor teacher has been teaching for, oh gosh, about fifteen-twenty years and she's extremely current. I could not have been blessed with a better mentor. I just can't say enough about her. She has taught me a great deal about discipline. She uses logical consequences and she calls it her all stars, which I've done a little bit of. She uses praise, gives stars and is an incredible, incredible teacher. She has started to go on field trips and she does a lot of the thematic type things so we've done a lot together. It's been good, really, really good. That's the key right there, if you have a good mentor, you're going to be okay. If you don't, it's hard.

What kind of relationship do you have with somebody that comes from the university and if you're able to feel like you can ask questions?

Oh, yes, oh yes. She was the one that if I needed a logical consequence I could say, "like okay what do I do if they've colored on the floor?" She would reply okay Carleen, "they wash it." She's the one that would tell me those kinds of things, she had something for everything. There's a lady right down the hall, right next door to me and she's a neat teacher too. We get along very, very well and she's a newer teacher.

Have you found that some of the things that you're doing now, you're revising in your head for next year? Are you planning ahead for next year already?

Oh, yes, some discipline ideas and my schedule. I'm not happy with my center time because I want it longer. It gets cut and ends up being only forty-five minutes and they

have to have a minimum of an hour. I'm going to change some things if that happens next year so I can use that time, I need that time to work with groups and individuals.

Describe your day to me from when they come in the door till the time they leave.

Of course they get here early, you know and I am actually the hub, everybody comes to see the hamsters. I've got every child in the whole school filing in and out to see animals and things. When my students come in they are assigned centers at their table and it's math manipulatives. It would be similar to doing Math Their Way, except that I have it at their table in the morning when they come in. We rotate those baskets throughout the week. At the beginning of the year it was more exploring and now it might be more games or writing down what you just did. They're a little bit more controlled. They do that while I take roll and they can talk to each other and socialize and we find out how everybody's doing. About 8:45 we have a group time and this is where we do our calendar or pick our leader and I do either a science experiment or a math game. We do something that's either science or math and that has to go with our theme. Next week it will be shadows and so we'll do something on the overhead projector and make shadows and read some books and we can go outside and do some things, and do some experiments. We will look at translucent, I mean transparent and opaque and that type of thing. Then we do our creative writing. Every day I do journal writing and I write a message and then they write. That's my favorite time of day, and they love it too, we don't miss that for anything. They then go to what we call block time it is like art, science, computer, PE or music. When we come back we have our DEAR time, Drop Everything And Read, so everybody's reading and then they go to lunch. When they come back from lunch and recess that's our largest block of time. We have about two hours in the room, just shy of two hours. I'll do centers at that point and shared reading and small group reading with me. They go outside again, and come back in have nap time and go home.

What time are you away from the kids during the day?

When they go to their block time I have fifty minutes. At lunchtime as long as I don't have a duty that week, I have a little bit of time and then recess for about thirty minutes. I could have up to two hours away from them but typically an hour and a half, but scattered.

If you were to describe what it was like being a beginning early childhood teacher with an analogy what would you compare it to?

A sour warhead. A what? A warhead, no I'm just kidding. [This is a candy that is very sour at first but if you can keep it in your mouth long enough has a sweet center.] I felt overwhelmed at first. It would be like jumping in deep water and then you know, really I mean it, to me it took so long to jell. It just takes a while for things to jell. You know you have all these things you want to do and you're just trying so hard and, and getting to know your kids and then finally one day you can come in and you're not struggling, or not trying so hard. Things just fall into place and they know the schedule. It's also like a warhead to me and I don't mean sour in the sense that it is bad. Have you ever had one? I let you have one before you leave I should have one in my treat box. It's a piece of candy. It's that candy that when you put it in your mouth it is extremely intensely sour you want to spit it out. But if you can get past the sour, which lasts about thirty seconds, then it's like candy. But that to me is what being a beginning teacher is like. It was very

intense at the beginning and I don't mean in a bad way. Your emotions are very intense, but if you hang in there it's going to get better and it does.

How would your kids describe you?

Crazy, no I don't mean crazy, in their term's funny. They'd say funny or something like that. We have a game in the morning when I do roll. One of the little girls started it. I call their name and they say, "I love you more, more, more, more, more, more, more into infinity and beyond most." You know they try and beat me and then, I, of course top them every day they can't get me. That's a game we play and they would say that I love them and I'm funny. I don't know what terms they would use, but probably something like that.

What kinds of things are you planning to change next year?

The longer center time, I'd like to see an hour and a half in the afternoon and I think I can do that with my schedule. I'm toying with sneakily not doing the phonics sheet, this may be something later I tell you not to use, I don't really know. I'm thinking about it because they never said you had to do the worksheets. They just said that there are wonderful games, and neat things with the program. I think I can do that. I'm going to get rid of that and then with my discipline try some new ideas. I'm thinking about doing a discipline program that is called Character Counts, and use it with tally marks. I mean use it in my morning time at math because it's character "counts." And when I catch a child doing something good their name is put up on the board and a little tally mark or something. We'll count tally marks and try and top our number for the week you know if we get thirty-seven can we beat that next week. I don't know something like that.

As far as the types of things you were taught to use like materials used in your program at college, did you find you had those things available to you here?

You mean textbooks or what? Well things like textbooks, materials, manipulatives and such. Was the early childhood lab in place when you were there? I don't know about an early childhood lab. No, I was a commuting student and I may not have been aware of whatever that was.

Did you find that you didn't have things you needed?

Now there's a couple of things I really need. I do have manipulatives and those things were ordered for me. My principal was wonderful and set me up with a big bookstand and that kind of stuff. I also had funding at the beginning of the year because I was a new classroom. I had extra money that other teachers wouldn't have gotten that I could purchase some things with. The couple things that were essential that I do not have are a big blocks set. I do not have blocks and that is just essential. It was on my list to get and I haven't received it yet, I don't know why. The other item was a sand/water table, which I just feel is essential in a kindergarten classroom and I've written a grant for it. I just wrote a grant you probably saw it outside my door, but they cut it. We have a program called GEFEE, it's an organization in our community that will provide grants for our schoolteachers. I asked for a sand and water table and a puppet stage along with some alphabet games and manipulatives such as alphabet beanbags, and things we could do. I got those things but they did not give me the sand and water table or the puppet stage. I don't know what I'm going to do, I'm using a Rubbermaid box that I think is essential but it's not there. So you know you kind of make do. I bought small blocks, I have a set



of smaller sized blocks and use a Rubbermaid box for a sand and water table, and it's just what you do.

Do you have to provide a rationale with your grants?

Yes, you have to state what the problem is or what the need is. You have to justify why you wanted those things. Did you talk about what's being written about in literature that's pertinent to your request? Yes, I do, and I bring up how children learn best. You have to put it in a way that someone who is not a teacher will understand the idea of hands-on activities. They may not have a full understanding of what hands-on means but most people understand that they have to experiment with things you know in order to gain knowledge about it, or build knowledge. I'm disappointed I didn't get the things that I really needed, the bigger furniture items, but I think that's just a lack of understanding on their part. You fight that.

Do you have parents come in and look at the room and see what you are doing? Do you have that kind of activity here?

No, they don't do a parent night. The first day of school, of course, they are here for a parent meeting and then throughout the year my parents were so involved they were in here a lot. No, we don't do a parent night. I've thought at different times that it would be nice to offer something like that. In the spring now they had a family night, it was through the library. It was a reading function but it wasn't for our classroom.

One thing I wanted to ask was if you had children before you started teaching and do you feel that has affected the way you teach?

Without a doubt, it helps to have children of your own. I don't think you have to have children to be a good teacher, but I think having children just hastens some of the processes of constructing knowledge about young children and how to teach them. Having had young children just gives me a bigger base. It gives me more experiences so that I could gain understanding and knowledge from what I saw it in my own kids. It's also helped me as far as discipline. You know there are something's that I can see as truly just behavior that's appropriate and typical of that age and is not worth sneezing at. That doesn't mean that there's a lack of control it just means that you just don't get upset about some things, whereas another person who hasn't had children would probably be a little more obsessive about behavior. I think that's the biggest area is discipline and just understanding children and my ability to bond with them I think is greater being a mom. You know you have a way that you bond and you have to have a bond in the classroom.

I think kids relate to us through a sixth sense that they have about the way that we perceive them. If we caring and compassionate they sense that. I think a lot of times it's not what we teach them but how we teach them. Changing yourself reflects in their behavior too.

Oh, yes, yes, and I noticed that if I've had a stressful week, if there's something I've had to deal with I'll see it in them. They'll be whinier or argumentative and it's not that I've really been different as a teacher but they pick up on it. They sense things that we don't realize they sense.

Is there anything else that you thought of that you wanted to bring out or that we need to remember to cover it next time?

I didn't have a whole lot of expectations. I expected it to go well, but I didn't know what you would ask. I've enjoyed it. Thank you for asking these questions it makes me think.

CARLEEN

Interview #2

April 29, 2001

Last week I asked you three broad questions. The first one was, "How did you decide on teaching as a career?" and we talked about some of the people that encouraged you and situations when you became interested in teaching. The second question was, "Describe your experiences entering the classroom for the first time as a teacher, what thoughts entered your mind?" The last question was "What is it like being a beginning teacher in early childhood?" and I'd asked you to give me an analogy of something that it could be compared to. You've read over the transcript and you mentioned before I turned the tape on that there were a couple things that you wanted to mention that you thought of that came up this week. If you want to go ahead I'll just turn it over to you and you can share those things that you thought about this week.

I think one of the things, when I had talked about the grant before, you brought up, do you feel you have to defend your philosophy. I had an experience with that this week. The grant that I received was a partial grant and I went ahead and talked with one of the board members to find out why part of it was cut out so if I rewrite it I would know how to proceed. The part that was cut out was the sand and water table and a puppet stage. She said, "well there were two former educators on the committee," this was a hot debate I guess, "and the two former educators felt that a sand and water table in the classroom was not appropriate because children throw sand." They had had one and got rid of it as fast as they got it. Then of course she proceeded to say, "have you used one at all?" I said oh, yes, we use it every day. Matter of fact if I don't have that out I see more behavior problems with certain students. They need open ended stress relievers. There's several kids in my class that deal with high stress situations at home and along with having to develop cognitive types of things it also is very therapeutic. We had a long discussion but I went home absolutely devastated. I felt like that it was just because of funding, but when I heard that and that it was two former educators, it just blew my mind. I thought, good grief, okay I'm going to write this long rationale and I'm only going to write it for a sand and water table next time and give them the whole nine yards and all that. But that's probably not the best avenue either. I don't know what I'm going to do. I talked with our early childhood counselor and she wants me to rewrite it with a rationale and she's going to help me write it. Or I may just find the need filled in a different way, but that was a perfect example of how people and even educators can be. How long have they been former? One of them just retired as a teacher, I'm not sure about the other one. I'm not familiar with the other. I know they taught in early childhood, so, you know it's just very disappointing.

Some of your former instructors at the college would also be able to give you some rationale, because they do have an early childhood lab on campus now. You mentioned some other things that have happened or that you thought about this week.

Well, I went through Gessell training this week and that was really nice and refreshing. I have a preschooler in my class that I mentioned before that comes for a half day. And I

have just gone back and forth on that and I think if I were an experienced teacher I would put my foot down and said, "no, it's just not appropriate." She has a lot of skills but she still needs to develop all the other areas of her life and she needed to be in a preschool classroom although my classroom is set up in such a way that she's done okay. A lot of things we do are open-ended and similar to the experiences that she would be participating in a preschool classroom too. I think that if I were a more experienced teacher I probably would have put my foot down and said no. But being new and the parent really wanted her in here, I went along with that. Was the administration pushing too? No, the parent was pushing and the parent kind of tried to sneak by the administration to do it and wanted to take care of it on her own. The administration got involved and they went ahead and let it happen. But I don't think it was best. It kind of sets precedence too. A preschool child really needs to have an open environment all day long. Her physical needs are still being met, social and emotional those things but it would have been better if I could have said no and put my foot down. I had two students this year that were reading when they started. They had October birthdays so they were really almost to six when they came in and plus they had good learning skills and were pretty well adjusted kids. I used a lot of the Wright group books and big books. The kids that couldn't read one to one yet and loved learning just the rhyming and those kids that could read were reading, voice to print match and if it's that type of environment then all of the kids can succeed at their level.

Was this a parent that was educated?

Yes, actually she's a teacher. I went through the Gessell training and it refreshed me. I knew that my environment would be okay in here for her but I see her behaviors and I know that she's actually developmentally a little bit young. I would say about six months, I think she's just turned five but she's showing four and a half. What's she going to do next year? They want to keep her in my class and just do kindergarten all day. I don't think she's going to send her up to first grade for reading. I think she knows that I do that type of reading and I do a mini-book each week that goes with my theme. I write a real short and easy story that is repetitious. We have a lot of reading in the class that way. I don't know but that's what she says she's going to do.

You said you knew some of that stuff with the Gessell, but now it was refreshing because you have an instance where it comes into play.

Right, but something else I thought about. I think there are a lot of people that aren't going to like this but I think entry year teachers, their first year should still have a tie to the university other than just being evaluated. I think they need to do a project or something both in the fall and the spring. I think it should be a requirement because if you don't, that first year you're so vulnerable, you could really adopt some practices that aren't appropriate. It's easy to do that because you don't know anything. I had a good mentor so it was okay for me, but most people don't. I would have loved to do something even if it's just going to a seminar. Going through the Gessell was wonderful because it refreshed all that. That first year is so stressful and maybe if we had one day in the fall and one day in the spring when we came and just heard great speakers for a day that would help. That's a good point, because it lets us know we still want to have some responsibility in how beginning teachers are developing. We need refreshment, too.

We'll go on to the second set of questions. The first one is "How do you as a beginning teacher define concern?"

How do I as a beginning teacher, define concern? It goes further than worry I don't know in what avenue you're talking about. Are you talking about concern for my students? If I'm a beginning teacher "I'm concerned" that means I care. I see a goal I'm careful about saying need, because they all need. Concern, yes I think that there's something that I see that needs to be fulfilled and I want to do what I can to make sure that need is met. As a beginning teacher that's how I see concern in my classroom.

Do you see concern as positive or negative?

Positive, it has a caring constant, caring, and positive.

How would you describe your concerns as a beginning teacher?

Okay, like what are some of my concerns? Can you give some specific concerns that have come up that you term a concern. Okay, I have concerns about all different areas. As a teacher I'm concerned about not getting so far from what I learned that I can't remember it. Some things have become a part of me but some things I'm still making a part of me because I haven't gotten to the part that I can apply it. Professional development is a concern. Concerns for my students, I'm concerned about their homes. I know that many of them have painful lives and I wish I could change it and that's a concern I can't change that other than being a loving teacher in the classroom. I am concerned about administrators who are current and who stay current because they want what's best for their kids. I'm concerned that parents are misinformed. In what way do you feel parents are misinformed? About how students learn, about what's best for them.

Do you have children now that you have become concerned about that you may not have been concerned about in your interning?

I actually have students from my intern class because I had preschool and the parents found out I was here and brought their students here to be taught. I have two and one of them, yes I am more concerned now than I was before but it has to do with their home life, they've gone through a difficult year. Both students are as far as academics strong students.

You mentioned something about administrators, what about any concerns about your colleagues? Do you have any concerns in that area?

Yes, there have been some frustrations with colleagues. I'm one of those people who just love to be creative and come up with neat ideas, but based on what the kids are interested in, fun things to do, making things fun, make learning fun. I like to collaborate and work with others and there are several that it's just not their style. They have a tendency to put a damper on collaboration and that bothers me or that jealousy thing, which blows my mind. We're all in this together and you know it reminds me of when there are a lot of women in the kitchen, so that concerns me. I wish we all saw education, and we have a few that do that we're in this together and we want to do this for our kids and share our ideas.

Do you have any concerns about how you evaluate students?

You mean as like a formal evaluation, or how we perceive a student? Both. There is a teacher in particular that comes to mind that just has a negative outlook on kids and might perceive what is just a younger child developmentally as having behavior problems. It's

not that they are misbehaving they're just exhibiting younger behaviors. They're discipline approach would be quite different than mine based on that. Mine would be a logical consequence and theirs would be totally different. I have one of my students that's pegged as having major learning problems and actually I don't see it at all.

What about assessing? You mentioned you were going through Gessell training. How do you assess your students in your classroom?

Their learning? Yes. Well, we have what we call the basic packet and it is done every nine weeks. I do ongoing assessing as far as where they are in their reading development. I actually do it like we learned in Reading 4063 with informal reading assessments and notes. I don't actually put it down on paper but there are ones that I know maybe aren't where the rest of the group is some of the lower end. They really aren't the lower end it's just where they are in their reading development. I probably take a little bit more time and figure out why and most of it's just developmental. They're the ones that are younger in my class anyway. The basic packet is phonics skills and alphabet, identifying the letters and some number things. How does some of that relate to how you fill out a report card, or pass these kids on? Our report card is actually in a checklist format so they've either got it or they don't. They go on basically if they have all of their letters and sounds and most of their numbers. They will go on unless we feel like they're developmentally young. Then giving the Gessell would come in I have one that will do that this year, go to T1 just because he is younger. His birthday is in August and his parents actually requested that I do that and I agreed.

Something that crossed my mind when you were talking about the D1 and the T1 grades. Do you feel as a kindergarten teacher that so much pressure has been put on kindergarten curriculum and the way we assess students that we really are not addressing their needs like we should? Is this the reason that we have had to fill in and have T1 and D1 classes?

Yes, no doubt. I would love to teach a multi-age class or something and move kids along based on their development rather than their birthday. I think that's absolutely true. I really do believe things happen naturally it did with my kids. My first son learned to read on his own, there wasn't a lot of pressure we just had fun and he was an early reader, but it was his own choice he was just interested in it and it worked. Then I had one of my children that really didn't read until he was seven, but we did not push him and he was a little bit later and kind of more typical of what you would see with an average child. I don't know if we were all teaching developmentally appropriate that we wouldn't need special classrooms for kids. They could perform at their levels and I've tried to achieve that this year. I can't do it all and that's the biggest lesson I've learned. I pick an area that I worked on and this year and it was to figure out how I was going to use phonics because it wasn't a choice. Next year it will be a different area.

Do you see that we're seeing more curriculum pushed down to earlier grades?

These kids are doing sh, ch, tch, wh, in the phonics curriculum and the worksheets just get harder and harder and harder. There is a lot of pressure for kindergarten students to have all phonics skills before they start first grade. I'm thinking, "look they're not reading, we've got to get these kids in books not on this worksheet." We need to do fun stories and act them out and making it meaningful, because next year all they are going to get is worksheets. I've got to do the best I can to understand what the whole concept of reading is about because they're going to lose it all next year that's how I feel.

I'd like to come back interview you next year about this time and see if you are feeling the pressure from first grade teachers that you're not preparing them like they should. I've had one of the kindergarten teachers forewarn me, she said, "you can say all those high dandy things that you know, high and mighty or whatever her words were, those lofty ideals that I have, but those first grade teachers are going to come get you." But most of my kids have their skills. I have three that don't have all of their letters and numbers and that's it, just three those kids are the ones that are developmentally young. We've done it playing games and having a good time and reading books and find out about things we want to know and writing. We have written a lot in this class.

Describe some situations that involve a concern in some of the areas that you mentioned. You mentioned concern about their homes, concern about the administrators keeping current, and concern about professional development. Can you think of some specific instances where those concerns have played out, or have had to be addressed?

When this business of the sand and water table came out I wanted to be able to say, "this is exactly why," and give her this list of five thousand reasons why we use a sand and water table. I just stood there so dumbfounded and I was able to say some things but not as much as one of my professors would have wanted me to. Those tests that we had to take for her class where had one question, "How would you defend this?" That is what you have to do with parents, with administrators, and with grant committees, and I wish I could. I guess that would be the professional development area. You have to be ready to answer those questions all of the time. With parents I've thought about different situations with students and how their parents have pushed their kids so hard that their emotional development and social development have lagged behind. The child would be just this really wonderful balanced child if they hadn't been so pushed. Now they're frustrated and you can see the stress. I wish that maybe that I can do that in the future and we can get that going of having more educational things for the parents that would teach them like at parent night or having someone come in and do a little workshop for the parents.

You mentioned a concern about kid's home life. Can you think of an instance this year that's really hit home with that concern?

Yes, I had a child that I taught in preschool and the mother left them. I started noticing a difference in the child's behavior not realizing what had happened at home. I took time to call and it was just a really difficult situation. They ended up working things out and got back together and it's a rocky road. I saw how their home life really affects the children. It totally changed how she dealt with things in the classroom. I didn't know fully then that a lot of things she was doing were stress related. I didn't understand what was happening at home but then when I found that out I was able to see that they were stress symptoms. You have to know what's going on in your kid's homes because you have to be able to meet their needs in the classroom. They may have not slept all night before and many times I have rocked a child to sleep because they were tired and then they slept all afternoon and that was okay. There's only so much energy that we have, and if we're using all of our energy coping with a stressful situation, we have nothing left to develop emotionally or to learn some of the things that we need to learn. Did the parents understand how that affected the child in the classroom? They're real good parents and I've met with them several times just talking with them and helping them work through some things. But, yeah, I think that for them realizing their choices affected their own

children that more than anything else a lot of times is really what pushes them to make things work out.

You brought out a good point about the role that we play as teachers. What are some of the roles that you have had to play this year in being a beginning teacher?

Nurse, kindergartners love Band-Aids. We have a nurse but she gets overwhelmed so we try and help her out. I have been a social worker, and obviously like a parent rocking a child like a mom. How many times do they accidentally call you mom? I know you have. I'm a maid cleaning up with them, cleaning their little faces, and of course teacher, friend, and collaborator. We come up with some pretty crazy things to do and we plan things together. Maybe you could include electrician and engineer getting that listening center to work, oh my gosh and fixing the computer because they did something to it, who knows.

Can you think of any other concerns that have arisen that have caused you to say "Oh, I need to know something more about this, or I need to address this particular issue in order to make it better for next year?"

Oh, yes, I want to know more about discipline, keep getting ideas that changes I think a lot. I think that's probably the area that changes the most. I want to go back and really focus on the beginning reading and I want to read that book again, the textbook. I keep all my textbooks and a lot of them right there I read them. I keep some of them up there. Some people get rid of theirs I read mine all the time. If I am planning a unit I go back and look for a new idea and I'd like to reread those this summer from the beginning reading classes. It would be really nice to go see a really neat classroom that has a good strong reading program for the kids.

When you talk about going to visit other classrooms, is there a policy in your school to allow you to get professional development that you feel you needed?

Oh yes, if I wanted to go visit I could do that and that wouldn't be counted against me. It's not a day that I'd have to take against my sick days or something. Actually they're sending two of us, I think I may have mentioned this last time, to a workshop, a science workshop. Two kindergarten teachers were chosen my mentor and myself actually and we get to go to a really neat workshop. Where is it? I don't know she hasn't told us and she hasn't told us the dates, but it's supposed to be a wonderful, wonderful workshop. It sells out like that. All I know is that it's really neat and you get all kinds of free stuff with it, kits and things to do with kids. We're so excited. How were you chosen for that? Our teaching philosophy, she supported it so we were lucky and because we do the thematic units and we do a lot of science. This is something, based on everything that I was taught I don't know if you'll identify with this, but I kind of thought that I could do a literature-based curriculum with kids. That was what was pictured in my head. But these children were so developmentally young that at first to even sit through a story, a literature-based curriculum does not work with my children. It may in future years, but with this classroom it didn't. Science is what really works because it's hands-on and they want to know about animals and want to know about how things work and why and all that stuff and bubbles and wind and all those things, shadows. Of course you can bring in a lot of literature, using science as the core. Right, well that's what I did and I use so much more non-fiction and a lot more writing. Matter of fact our general writing most of the time turns out to be based on that experience. We may do a science experiment that morning



and then right after that we go into our writing and they usually end up writing about what we've just done and or it sparks a thought and they write about something that kind of has to do with that lesson. Then because their doing that they are retaining more and they choose to do it. They're allowed to write whatever they want to. I have found that good sensory experience really creates better writing in them, following right after.

You mentioned a concern about administrators staying current. What kinds of things would cause concern with you with an administrator?

Just one that's close-minded and I'm happy with the administrator that we have. But there are other administrators in the school district that are very closed, been here forever and are only still here because of politics or something.

What kinds of things would you come up with that would help with that area? A teacher can't change an administrator, but if they were leaning toward change or wanting to know something different, what would you suggest?

If the administrator wanted to change or the school district? The administrator. Come to my classroom. Come in my room and watch what we do. Go in my mentor's classroom and look what she's doing. You know quit sitting in your office, get off your fanny and go see the kids. What about board members? Same thing, come in my room. That might be a good way to get them to understand what you're trying to say about a sand and water table. And then I could show them what I'm doing with my day what I taught that they didn't realized I taught.

Getting back to assessment have you ever conducted interviews with your kids?

For fun things, like to ask them a question that they will give me a really bizarre answer. What I do we don't put on tape. The teacher next door does everything on tape. She has so many tapes. She interviews those kids all the time. I don't do things on tape. Next year I'll be better about it, but we end up making books about what I've interviewed them about. You know like what is the White House, what do you think the President does, those are the kinds of interviews I do. Not really, "You know how do you feel about yourself as a reader," those kinds of things, it's not that kind of stuff, not assessment. It's more fun things.

Do you do hands on assessment with kids? I'm thinking of math and that you've been working with something and you want to see if kids understand it so you can be able to check it off on a list. Do you do any kind of hands-on assessment?

Just watching informal. When we rotated the math baskets I talked about before. If there's one that's classifying and I'm thinking about what they know I'll watch or if they are doing simple addition, grouping things or counting. Do you keep anecdotal records then, or just keep it all in your head? I should keep anecdotal records, let's just say that. Sometimes I'll jot it down like in their basic packet, I'll check it off, otherwise they come to my desk later and do it for me with manipulatives in a more formal manner. That is something I would change, talking about things I would change. I talked about it when my reading professor, who is my evaluator, came that is one of the things we talked about is I would like to keep more anecdotal records in reading and math. That's something that takes time. It does, I don't have the organizational skills yet. Not that I don't have them it is just that the first year is so overwhelming and hopefully next year that'll be easier. That will be easier to start getting involved in.

You didn't mention this when I was asking you about specific concerns. Last week you talked about discipline.

That's because I wasn't in the classroom for three days, so it's not on my mind right now. I've had an easy week. Do you feel that's a concern of yours? And explain a little bit more on how you would work on that. You mentioned like doing something with "Character Counts" maybe a little bit more towards the mathematical respect. Well, I don't know.

What are your concerns about discipline?

I really wanted to not use the rewards and solely use logical consequences it's sooo hard, very, very hard. It's best for them and they learn from that. When I use rewards it's competitive, but it really helps when you're in a desperate situation and you need an immediate change from whatever's happening. The one thing that I will do next year that I've kind of started last week and a little bit the week before is closing out the day talking about what things had happened that day. Ask them some of the situations where we could have made different choices and what would those have been or the good things they have done, things that I saw today that really made the day go better. You know things that happened on the playground they have to have time to talk about those things and sort them out. If we just constantly push it aside and not talk about them they can't really learn from them. This week and the week before we sat down and talked about those things at the end of the day and go over the rules again and why we have them. And the ones that we agreed on and do we want to change them or add something.

Do you ever have class meetings?

That's what it is. I've done them once a week, but I think I'm going to do them everyday. Character's so important and I forget that sometimes, I'll get all the stuff I want to do but that's such a big part of kindergarten. It's a big part of anything. It is social skills.

Are there other entry year teachers or teachers within the first couple of years in teaching in this building that you've gotten together with and talk to?

The lady next to me, this is her second year. She went to the same university I did. Do you feel like she has some of the same kinds of concerns that you have? She does the colored discipline program, I can't think of the guy's name that does this but you have pink, purple, green, yellow, blue and she uses crayons. You pull a crayon when someone misbehaves so she kind of just does the negative, but she's a very loving teacher, she's very affectionate. She's not one to buy all that early childhood stuff. She's pretty traditional but I've never seen anybody love kids more than she does. They don't get a whole lot done, but boy those kids know they're loved when they go home. She's really a good teacher.

Do you think you were painted a different picture of what discipline would be like?

Yes, sometimes, I mean you know it never, never, never ends. If you're not good at it at the beginning of establishing how things are going to work you're just not going to implement your ideas. You know you don't just walk in and say, "these are the things I'm going to do today," and you just do them. No, with kindergarten children you're either going to do that and you're going to fight with them the whole time, on getting their attention and how they're supposed to sit on the rug or you're going to do what they're interested in. If you do what they're interested in then you're okay. You need to know what they want to do, how they want to do it, or you're going to have to fight all the time

with discipline. That's a good point. But the trick is how do you still get your objectives across, how do you still get that done. Without them being in control. That takes an excellent teacher and I am not there yet.

CARLEEN

Interview # 3

May 6, 2001

These questions are going to deal with the support systems, when you felt like you were truly a teacher and some of the things you would like to pass on to others. Also I would like for you to tell me what things you have learned about yourself. The first question is, "Can you describe a special moment during your first year as a teacher when you more fully understood what it means to be a teacher?"

I can't think of one moment, this past week. You know I told you last time that I would really want to play with them more before school's out and this past week I did it a lot. We had long center times and I got down in the block center and built with the kids and I think I felt more like a teacher. It's a lot easier to know your students when you play with them and understand them and they may be able to do things for you when you do whole class things or if you do a worksheet or whatever you're doing. They'll perform for you but when you sit down with them I saw things that I hadn't seen before and then you take that moment and make it a teachable moment or enjoy it with them.

In one of the first interviews I was asking you about your experiences coming to the classroom for the first time and you told me how you were ready to go and the kids were ready to go. Have your feelings about teaching or your definition of teaching changed since then?

Oh yes my definition of teaching changes and grows, my feelings about teaching, no way. I look forward to coming every day. It is not a dread to get up on Monday I really enjoy my job, truly do and I'm not just saying that for this interview. Matter of fact I look forward to Monday coming around. As far as my views on teaching, yes. I mean you learn things at school and you try to gain understanding about them and you try to apply it to your life based on your experiences. But now having gone through a whole year I think at the end of the year I'm starting to feel like a teacher. I felt, I taught kids and we did things together and I loved them, but I'm starting to feel comfortable as a teacher. You had done your interning in this school system, right? Actually I did two, or one and a half. I did part of my final intern here, but most of it was at a preschool classroom. So you knew some of the kids beforehand? Do you think that maybe that might have had something to do with how you felt as a teacher? Well, I think so. I knew a lot of the families and I knew the other teachers because my husband works for the school district so I already had relationships and didn't have to worry about that aspect of teaching.

What would you add to your philosophy of teaching as a result of this year's experience?

You don't make teaching happen it happens. You don't make them learn and we learned that in school, we talked about it but I saw it for reality. I cannot make a child develop and learn. I can provide those things that I know would cause them to learn but they learn and they learn at their own rate. We talked about that at school, and I've seen it in my own children but I see it in my class, too. What else would I change? That's the biggest thing I don't make them learn something. I don't give them information and they learn it. I provide opportunities that reinforce important concepts and they learn at their own rate. So it's really not anything new, it was just something that you learned more

fully in depth? Yes, but then it affects more of what I'm doing. I mean it changes some of the things I am doing. Your class has a special temperament and so things are going to change next year and things will be different I know that. Just looking from my class to someone else's class there are certain things that she can do with her group that I dare not do with mine.

Where have you gone to seek advice or help this year?

Mostly from my mentor teacher but also from my assistant principal a couple of times my principal, once or twice. Does your mentor teacher also teach kindergarten? Yes, probably twenty years I don't know exactly how long. Does she come in and observe you on a periodic basis? Three or four times she's come in. We do a lot of field trips together because our themes are usually fairly close. I have gone in her room and observed her probably ten times this year. I'll just pop in and watch her for a while if I need a new idea.

What kind of advice has she given you when she's come in to observe you?

How to get through the principal's evaluation. She'll watch me and say, "now when the principal comes in you'll need to identify your objectives." Whereas I guess you would but you know you're not doing that kind of direct teaching at that time. What she does is picks up on the positive things and encourages me in those areas and then she waits for me to come with a need. She doesn't usually give me criticism or she really doesn't even give me advice unless I ask for it. Have you guys planned together at all? We do not have a mutual planning period. When we do a theme occasionally we'll plan similar ideas, particularly if we're going to have a guest or a field trip or if I have a really great idea. She writes a lot of mini books too so we share those. Has she taught here most of the time? Yes, she did teach in another town but here mostly in preschool, developmental kindergarten, and kindergarten. Has she been able to share anything about her beginning year's experiences? She hasn't talked a whole lot about her beginning year's experiences. I don't recall. She's a very intelligent person and I think she's always been a little, a little different but very, very professional.

Is she's the one that you're going to the science workshop with?

Yes Have you found out any more about that? Not yet, of course this is a busy week and I didn't get in to talk to her. Is it going to be this summer? I think you can also go during the school year.

What other people did you say you went to for support?

My assistant principal and principal. What kinds of questions did you go to them with? Discipline and then I've had some conflicts that have arisen with family members, being a part of the school system, and other teachers they just give me advice on those areas, and how to deal with it. So it wasn't necessarily things happening in your classroom? Discipline a few times. What kinds of advice did you get? Well, probably not the advice I was looking for mostly just quick fix remedies. None of them suggested a particular reading? Reading something? Oh no that's usually not suggested, now Jill would, my mentor would have.

Do you have a section of professional journals in your library that they subscribe to for the teachers?

No, we have curriculum types of things that they subscribe to like Mailbox but I do not believe we get like the Reading Teacher or anything like that. If they do, I have never seen them, I don't believe so. *[Since the interview she related that she asked the librarian to subscribe to Teaching K-8 and the Reading Teacher and she has]*

What would you tell a beginning early childhood teacher about your experiences as a beginning teacher?

What would I tell them? If you were to go in on a panel of beginning teachers what would you say to them? You're supposed to tell me this at bedtime so I can play this out before I have to answer. Okay if I were to go in I would say, "keep all of your textbooks from school because you'll need them regardless of what you think. Don't sell them and read, read, read, read, read go back over things every couple weeks and re-read. Think through things again be open-minded do things the way you want to do them this is your classroom. You have to abide by your school's mandates but you know you need to be autonomous and do what's best for your kids. Find somebody that has similar interests than you and make sure you've got a support, which I was fortunate, I did. Try not to spend too much money because you will, simple is better. Spend more time on a topic instead of less. Spend more time, higher quality less stuff, get more in depth. Listen to your kids play with them.

Throughout this year what kinds of workshops have you gone to that the school provided or that you've gone elsewhere to?

The beginning of the year, I just went to ones that were provided by the school. We went and visited another school in the winter as a department and then went to the Gessell training."

What kinds of workshops would you like to see offered, that would feed you?

That would feed me? ADHD, I would like to learn how to deal with that in the classroom, that's real important to me. More on reading development and then discipline, more on discipline. I think that's such a high need area is classroom management and discipline. They don't really cover that at all or at least I haven't really seen very many workshops on that. Now the workshops are more about multicultural topics and on parents that kind of thing.

What professional organizations do you belong to?

Just our state teacher's organization. Did you belong to any when you were at the university? No.

What would you tell an administrator about your experiences as a beginning early childhood teacher?

What would I tell an administrator? Like if I was talking to a panel? If you were talking to a group of administrators what kind of advice would you give them? Well, I think first year teachers sometimes are not as informed as they ought to be about some things that happen. Maybe there's a packet they could be put together for entry year teachers, "This is how we deal with these issues and on the first day you need to know what bus your child's going to go on." Nobody told me that and it was my job to make sure that they had their address and phone number written down and not the secretary's office job.

Those types of detail that really makes your job overwhelming if you're not aware of those things.

What about an administrator's role as a support for beginning teachers? How they could best do that?

How could they best do that? Matching us up with someone that would be a good mentor. Provide support when they can but in my particular situation my principal's overwhelmed. I couldn't imagine that she would be just a heavy support for me. She is supportive if I ever have a question her door's always open and she will stand by me no matter what. She expects it in return she is a very devoted principal. They could also encourage us to attend workshops, come in our classrooms more often, promote professional reading and provide/support opportunities for family involvement.

What would you, as a beginning teacher tell instructors at a university about preparing beginning teachers?

I think we need probably more time in the classroom before we start teaching, or maybe still be involved with the university once we start teaching. I think discipline needs to be emphasized more, and don't listen to us when we whine because you give us assignments and projects they really are of value. For early childhood really understanding development and then applying that to our teaching and applying it to how we discipline. There needs to be more emphasis on teaching all types of students, gifted, LD, etc. and designing curriculum to meet all of those needs. With using it on real kids? Yes, real situations scenarios so we could get in there and see it happen and then see how will we handle it.

What would you tell a parent about the experience of being a beginning teacher?

Like what advice? What advice would I give? Well if the parent whose child has a beginning teacher came to me, the advice I would give is be as supportive as you can and understand that as a beginning teacher you're not going to be absolutely perfect. Stay involved in your child's education I don't know I don't know the answer. Being involved, very involved and don't hesitate when you have questions I don't know, I'm stuck on that one. What would I tell a parent? You said you got this comment from parents, "Oh you're a beginning teacher," and you said, "no," because you had been in the system. If you were a mentor of a beginning teacher and a parent comes to you upset about something, what kinds of advice would you give them in dealing with a beginning teacher? They need to avoid being emotional and be very honest and open with the teacher. You have to stay very open and work together with that teacher to do what's best for that child. As a teacher we need to keep our parents informed so I would tell the parent this person has been learning for years how to be a teacher and you need to be open-minded and listen and trust her judgement. She wants what's best for the kids. I think everybody involved in the life of a beginning teacher needs to understand that they are not truly a teacher yet. This is still a part of their education. Uh huh. I think when people take that attitude it makes everything go a lot smoother and everybody's more willing to work because they're all supporting you, helping you through. Right, and they can be a support or they could be for some teachers I know it can be a very hurtful process too.

Now you mentioned reading that you kept all your books and that you did a lot of reading when you had a question or you were going to start a unit you went back and read. Do you pick up journals anywhere and read any journal articles?

I do not read professional journals.

Do you look at the Internet for information like that?

Well, I take that back, yes I pull things up on the Internet a lot. I do pull things up on the Internet if I'm looking for a particular topic or a particular problem or an idea and I run across things occasionally. Or if I'm looking up a particular person that I want to read up on that was significant in the field.

Would you ever want to do a presentation for a conference for teachers?

Oh yes! What would you do it on? Well, I have no idea there are so many different areas. Someday, probably as I get more experienced on the development of children and then reading probably and then play, definitely play. Why would you not want to do one now? I guess because I still am formulating ideas maybe that's why. I guess we always do that don't we? I don't know that, just lack of confidence probably.

What have been some of the most important things you've learned about yourself and what areas have you seen the most growth as a professional?

The area that I've learned the most about myself would be I didn't realize it'd be as much organization as it is. I really need a lot of organization and I had to be careful not to move past organization into control. I've really had to watch that and not making my day a teacher directed day. I really had to make sure it was a child-focused day. I didn't realize I was an organized person or I wouldn't have gotten to where I've gotten so far. I also learned that I'm extremely light and sound sensitive and I usually have my lights off most of the day. Isn't that weird, I just don't like these lights they bother me and I have a tendency to keep them off and the kids are calmer anyway. It seems to be a very effective but I'm very sensitive to the sound and light and so I've already had to learn how to deal with that. Then you said the area that I've grown the most or something.

What areas have you seen the most growth as a professional?

Learning to keep my mouth shut talking less and I don't mean just teaching, I mean dealing with professionals and the things that are going on in there lives. I've really learned to keep my mouth shut. What else as a professional? Just the whole aspect of letting go in certain areas.

What about making application to what you learned in school?

I guess that's where the letting go and becoming more of an observer comes in. We talked about that, "we're the facilitator." It is hard to do when you want organization and you have ideas of how you think things are going to go but my first priority is to watch them to get involved in what they're doing so that I can teach them. Building a relationship is extremely important, that's another area. The teacher next to me is so good at developing a bond in connecting with her students and I do connect but I'm just not real lovey-dovey nurturing person by nature I'm not that way. I'm pretty independent and task focused and I have really worked on that this year because that's the most important thing is to have a relationship. When you build that relationship sometimes it opens doors that you wouldn't get to any other way. That's what communication is all about and that's what I'm teaching when I'm teaching reading. It's about communicating and if I don't have the relationship with that they are not going to feel comfortable telling me stories that's happened, things that have happened to them and have them be expressive the way they need to be.



Would you do anything different about teaching?

Next year? Just about teaching in general. If I could change teaching somehow? I would like to see kids move along based on their development and not their age and how they're developing. I think maybe being more open to multiage kids, which we do in a way because of the developmental view. I would like to see kids more involved taking their learning and applying it to their lives in the community and more linked to the community. Instead of getting this picture of school being from 8-3 and this is when we learn and then we go home and act like animals and we play. I don't think that's balanced. Learning is forever, we don't stop learning.

How could you bring that about as a kindergarten teacher?

Well, making the day as natural as possible to what they would be doing and what they would be playing if they were at home. Working together as a family and having responsibilities in the room and but then also be able to get out of the room. Being involved with you the elderly and of course field trips.

Would you ever consider being a mentor to a beginning teacher, would you like to do that?

Absolutely, definitely and I think mostly because I've had such a positive experience with mine. I would like to turn that around and I do like to teach. I love to teach and I would love teach someone how to interact with these guys.

Now you mentioned that you worked with a youth group or something at your church?

My husband's a youth pastor. I had a youth come in my room, she was a teacher cadet does that count.

What other experiences have you been able to use your teaching talents outside of school?

I've taught choir for a long time our young children's choir at our church and preschool off and on. Right now I direct the nursery and preschool program the whole thing so I don't teach anymore just coordinating all the programs. I do teach the babies a lot. I love to go to toddlers and go in and play with them, that is fun. I love toddlers we have the best time. I did that this morning so that's why it's fresh on my mind. I didn't get to teach this morning, which it really isn't teaching it's just playing but we call it teaching. What about camp experiences? Yes I do we have about six weeks of different summer camps and vacation Bible school, which in the past I've usually directed and this year I'll teach. I'll be glad it will be nice not to direct this year. I've worked in lots of children's camps, youth camps, adult camps, Falls Creek, you've probably heard of Fall's Creek, we'll go down there. There won't be a whole lot of teaching I'll be in a sponsor position.

Is there anything that I haven't asked you or haven't addressed that you would like to put in your two cents?

I remember taking one or two classes I probably shouldn't say what they are, maybe I will. We had this science class and I remember the teacher and it may have been her first year to teach but she was unaware of early childhood methods and it really irritated me. I was expected to do projects and things based on a different level than what I'd been trained. I don't know maybe now they've integrated it with cognitive. Matter of fact they had even talked about it at some point but, and she may have changed too, but I think it's

really important that all of those areas need to be supporting the early childhood philosophies.

Anything else you would like to say about concerns as a beginning teacher?

I've already said this but I really think they need to be connected with a university. And then like being evaluated so many times I mean we need to be but you know what it ended up being what nine times or it was a lot or four times by him. It was a lot whatever it was, it just seemed like every time I turned around there's another evaluation. It doesn't mean that I don't want them to come into my room I want him to come into my room, I would love for him to just come in and spend a whole day and then let me sit down at the end of the day and talk. And give me some ideas rather than it be treated like I'm getting a score, do you know what I mean? I felt like I was getting a score. And it wasn't his fault that was just my attitude about it. You're talking about this year right? Yes, this year as an entry year teacher. I would like to see that different, you know have a different flavor because it's a learning process. And it's not something I feel like you get scored on, you have to develop your understandings of how to teach. The professor that evaluated me was really good because he did sit down with me one day and he watched I think it was my journal time. He saw me do my morning writing and then they wrote and he really enjoyed interacting with the kids. He was here for a good block of time and then when we were done he gave me this whole list of things that I could look for in their writing and what that told me if I saw those things in their writing. He also told me what they might be ready to learn based on those things I observed. We probably talked about some of those things in our reading class but him dealing with me at that moment and telling me really made a lot of sense. I see those things and that's what we need. We need someone who would maybe not come in so frequently but when they do come spend a bigger block of time like a whole day. I've had experiences with a friend who either had no mentor or a mentor who did not do her job and she's going to quit she's quitting here, she's just had a rough year. It makes all the difference in the world to have a good mentor and still connection with the university somehow. It makes all the difference in the world. I'm one of those lucky few I guess. Very lucky.

APPENDIX F  
Nancy's Interviews

NANCY  
Interview #1  
April 30, 2001

The first question I would like to ask is "How did you decide on teaching as a career?"

Well, it's a little bit of a long story. I always wanted to be a teacher starting in about junior high, but my father said he wasn't going to send me to college to make 18,000 dollars a year or something like that. So he sent me on a different path and I became a photographer. I had my own business and was at it for about ten years or so and I started having children. It was always in my head to be a teacher. As my kids started growing my photography business was growing and I was seeing less of my children and more of my clients. At that point my husband and I made a decision just to stop. I sold the business and went back to school and we did it ourselves, we didn't need dad this time. I went to college and did it. I planned it so that my last child would enter first grade when I started my intern teaching. I really wanted to be home with the kids when they were little, to be a stay at home mom. My last child is in second grade now so I'm a first year teacher and it just turned out great.

Did you get a degree in photography or you just went to a vocational school?

I took two years of school but I didn't get a degree in it [photography]. I took two years of vocational school and I interned with two photographers in their business. I then took over one-half of their business.

Now you said junior high is the time you really figured out you wanted to teach. Did something specific happen at that time?

Not really I played teacher as a little girl with my friends my brothers. They were the students and I was always the teacher and then as I got older I just realized that's what I wanted to do, I just thought it would be great. Dad didn't so that's the way it worked.

Would you go back as far as you can remember in your education and relate things that happened from your years in school.

That would relate to teaching? Possibly, yes. Experiences you remember with teachers ones you liked or possibly something that happened with a teacher that left an impression on you. I can remember back to kindergarten. I was in a bilingual kindergarten. There were a lot of Spanish children and so we did a ton of Spanish songs and work in that [Spanish]. Not that I can remember it now, I wish I could but I loved kindergarten it was fun. We moved around a lot when I was a child so I went to five different first grades, yes five of them. I don't know how moving around that much I learned to read, but I did and I was a good student luckily. I just remember it was always positive. I can remember third grade. I loved third grade, Miss Younger, I can still remember her name she was great. We did lots of hands on projects. I can remember making a huge, to me it was huge, I don't know if it really was but it was a huge Indian village. We made a mock tiny little village out of toothpicks and all kinds of things we could find. We made little teepees, little people, little fences and gardens it was great. It was. The whole class?

Yes, we all worked on it I guess at different times. I don't remember exactly how it worked, but I just remember being able to work on it all throughout the day. I can remember that all that way back that's a long time. Let me think I guess I have better memories of the elementary than as I got older. Maybe that's why I wanted early childhood. As I got into junior high and high school it was just more work and study and work and study. You really just wanted to be with your friends and hang out. It wasn't as much fun.

Were you still moving around as a family then?

Yes, from second grade to sixth grade we stopped moving and lived in a small country town. When I started seventh grade we moved to another town in the same state and I went to a different school every single year. We moved every single year.

What did your father do?

When we settled those four or five years in one town he was a truck driver and raised dogs. We had a kennel so we stayed there. We've always had a kennel and dogs. Then when we moved across the state we started a restaurant, a steak house. It lasted about a year and a half and then it didn't make it and went under. At that point our life changed from being a middle class, upper middle class family. When we lost that restaurant we went to being a poverty family and that's why we moved constantly. So from seventh grade on you went to a different school every year until you graduated from high school? Yes. Where did you graduate from high school? Right near here. I have an interesting history I know.

Other than your third grade experience of making the Indian village, what subject areas were your most favorite going through school?

Science, I always liked science and I still do. I was good in all subjects although English was boring, it wasn't my favorite and it still isn't. I liked to read because I was a good reader so I liked to show off a little bit. Let me think, math, I was good at math especially elementary but as I got older it got harder and it wasn't quite as much fun. I just have great fond memories of my early elementary years.

How has your background in school affected what you do as a beginning teacher, or do you feel it has affected it in any way?

One thing I didn't tell you was that in third grade we had an intern teacher. She was a new intern. I guess the teachers in that school gave me a lot of leeway because I was very, very smart compared to the kids that they had. I talked a lot and when the regular teacher had left the room the intern had told me to stop talking but I didn't I kept going. We were having show and tell and I kept commenting on the different kid's speeches. She said, "if you don't quit talking I'm going to put tape over your mouth." Well, I didn't and she put tape right over my mouth. Of course I just started crying and she felt horrible. She removed the tape and apologized about one hundred million times but I can remember it to this day. When I'm with these kids [her students] I'm really aware of the fact that it can take one little thing that you say or do and they will remember it the rest of their lives. That's something that stuck with me.

Why do you think you enjoyed science?

Yes, I do because there were a lot of experiments and you got to get messy and gooey and something cool happened it wasn't sitting reading a book and then doing a worksheet. We did a lot of that cause we had our desks in a row. When we got to do

something creative like art that was fun with glue and cutting it was great. You think that art sparked your interest in photography? The art? The creation aspect of art. It could, I think dad sparked my interest more than anything around, I'm trying to think, around eighth grade. He came home with a 35mm camera, a bunch of lenses, filters and flash and said, "here you go, here's some film, go play." I used to go out in the field and take pictures of birds and flowers and just whatever. Had he had an interest in photography? I don't know I think he did. I can remember as a kid he'd take his camera aim it up to the sky and take time lapse photography of the stars and or he'd try to do some creative things but he just never did anything with it. I guess he thought he would steer me that way. I enjoyed it I would have to say I loved it but it wasn't good for our family, unless I could figure out a different avenue.

How many children do you have?

Three. What are their ages? I have a thirteen year old girl, eleven year old boy, almost twelve he would tell you that in a heart beat, two weeks away he's counting the minutes, and then one boy that's eight. I have a girl and two boys.

You said your dad was not supportive of your decision to become a teacher. Can you think of others that did support your decision or others that did not support your decision? As a child or as an adult?

When you and your husband made the decision that you would sell the business and that you would go into teaching what were the reactions of those closest to you?

Except for my husband; it was negative, very negative. I had a successful business and I guess people see if you have your own business and your busy then why would you change? It always comes back to money, it always does. Then they'll say, "well yes I guess you get your summers off, but you know you're not making anything." You hear that over and over and over about, "I can't believe you're going to spend all that money to go to school to make nothing." I don't know why that's all that people see. They don't see the rest of it. Once I started actually going to classes and coming home with good grades and they could see me studying and working hard it turned around. I'd already sold the business so they couldn't say, "why are you doing that." I started hearing positive things like, "wow, we're proud of you and this is great." Who are some of the people that said that to you? My mother and my father, he turned around. He's proud that I'm a teacher now. He'd be prouder if I was a millionaire but you know what I mean? His focus is money and more than anything else that's the end all. Once I started going to school and people saw that I was really serious about it then they got behind me. But it took that.

What were some of the avenues of support you found once you started your program?

My youngest child, I guess he was two or three when I started going back to school. I went two to three days a week to school for a couple of hours. I took two or three classes at first. My mother-in-law watched him for me because I don't like day care and I didn't want to send him there. She babysat for me and then eventually my sister-in-law would do a little bit. That was a big, big help having somebody to be a support for your child.

Who at the university was probably the best supporter of what you were trying to do? Do you remember one or two particular people who said you're going to make a great teacher?

One of my professors that I had for clinical teaching did, he was great. You could always go to him and talk to him. He was really very supportive. Yeah, he was great. If I had time I might think of some more.

Did you begin to form a support group amongst the students you were taking classes with more than the administration?

Yes, I would. There were four or five girls and we hung out together. There were some guys in the beginning, but they almost all dropped out. It was sad because you knew they were going to be great teachers. But all of us girls would try to see if we could get our classes together at the same time so we could be together and help each other study. I had one friend who said she was terrible at math and always made D's. She knew she wasn't going to be able to pass so we had an hour in-between classes and I'd tutor her in the math. It helped me because then I really had to know it if I had to teach her. I really got a taste of what it felt like to be a teacher. She ended up making an A. It was great, that's how we helped each other. Teachers are busy and they don't want to give you too much because they want you to do it.

What I'd like for you to do is describe your experiences entering the classroom for the first time as a teacher. What were the thoughts that entered your mind?

I was hired to be a teacher's aide at another school. The superintendent said, "if you will be a teacher's aide for a year then the next year I promise I will bring you in full time." I said, "alright," but the superintendent did not know me that well. The principal at the school knew me better since I had interned there and I guess he really wanted me to have a teaching job. He knew a position was coming open and he said, "listen I don't want to get rid of you, because I want you here, but there's a first grade position at another school." I said, "great, I do want it." I came out here and interviewed and got it. I had about a week and a half before school started. It was the most tiring, scary, time that I can remember. I came in the classroom and it was a mess. The desks were piled to the ceiling and nothing was on the walls. It was filthy and I said, "okay, where do I start?" I didn't even know how to arrange the desks. I didn't know how to get started. My mentor teacher has been great she helped. I just started little bit by little bit. I think I lived up here for that first week and oh it was just scary. The first day of school I felt like it was the first day of school when I was in kindergarten. My stomach was nervous, all these parents are looking at you and asking you questions and you're thinking, "I have no clue but I'll get back to you."

You teach first grade?

This is first grade. It was a very, very stressful and scary, fun time.

When you were in college there were things you were taught about teaching. Examples that the professors gave about what your teaching experiences would be like. You do your pre-interning and interning and form some opinions of your own. The first day of teaching what were some things that came to mind that they had told you to expect and all of a sudden you realize it is not that way in real life? What were some specific instances?

Both times when I interned I found that they used a lot more ditto sheets than I was told and a lot more than I thought was necessary that we needed to be using. I really had it in my head that I was going to come in here and I would not be using worksheets. I find that I use worksheets more than I want to them and I feel bad about that. I have centers and I

have a lot of hands on activities. I try to incorporate as much as I can but as a first year teacher I feel overwhelmed so I'll resort to a worksheet to get me through something. Everything that you're going to use that is not a ditto sheet has to be made and that takes a lot of time. You have to think of it from that standpoint. There are some things out there that are not very realistic either. There are management skills that I learned in the beginning that made me believe that I would come in and these kids would just listen to whatever I had to say and they don't. They'll look at you when you ask them to come to circle time and most of them will come but it's always the same two or three that just can't seem to hear me say it. The management skills are definitely trickier. I always knew it would be a little tricky because they're kids but it's definitely a challenging part of the day, keeping them in control.

Did you have the idea that you felt you had to know everything when you came into the classroom, know how everything works?

Yes I did and you feel like the other teachers know and you don't. They'll be talking about things and I'm thinking, "I don't remember that." They usually have to explain it to me and then I know what they're talking about, they're just talking different. First grade was scary for me, even more so because you have to teach them to read. I knew that when the school year ends everybody's going to be looking at my kids saying, "can they read, well, she's not a good teacher if they're not reading." The thing is and I was trying to tell my mentor teacher and principal, I'm supposed to decide whether they go on to second grade. How do I know how much they're supposed to know at the end of first grade so that I can make an intelligent decision about whether they need to go to second grade or whether they need to stay here? That is a huge, huge responsibility. We were probably not three or four weeks in to school and we're doing progress reports. The first time I did them I was clueless. I am concerned about their progress, are they doing great, well, I don't know, I'm just guessing I'm winging it. At the beginning of school you wing it because you just don't know a lot of these things. I'm a little more comfortable with it now but I'm still struggling. I'm thinking, "do they know enough to go to second grade, or am I holding back a kid that really could go to second grade or am I sending a kid to second grade and the second grade teachers are wanting to send them back. That is just a huge, a huge concern at this point.

What were your interning and pre-interning experiences like and what grade level did you work with?

The very first pre-intern I did kindergarten. I think that was one day a week for so many weeks. It was the same way for the second pre-intern I did it was in preschool one day a week for so many weeks. When I went did my full internship I did two eight-week sessions, I did kindergarten for the first eight weeks and then I did first grade for the second eight weeks. They make early childhood majors do a half-and-half interning so you get to experience two age levels of children. I never got to see a steady progress doing eight weeks you see some and you just want to see how it goes farther. I did kindergarten first, then I went to first grade. Well the students were already in their second eight weeks of school. The teacher had already figured out how to get them reading and was on a nice little schedule. I never got to see how she started the year.

Was that a double disadvantage? Yes it was a double disadvantage for both grades because I started kindergarten in the fall semester. When I went to first grade the teacher had already formed her reading groups and had her procedures in place by then. I had

missed eight weeks of preparation with her of figuring out how to start them in reading, which is a big thing. I got to see how we started kindergarten because I was with her for the beginning, but I didn't get to see how she continued on the year in kindergarten either. Is the school situation similar to what you are in now? Yes it was also a rural school.

What kinds of things faced you in assessing students other than what you said about knowing if they should go on to second grade? What are some ways that you assess kids? It depends on the time of the year. In the very beginning of the year I went through to see if they knew their alphabet, did they know the sounds that go with it, do they recognize them and could they do their sounds? How far could they count? I assessed to see what they knew. Then as the year goes on I look to see if they know their site words, how many they know and how is their reading fluency. A more experienced teacher might say, "oh, they're fine for first grade" but I might think they're a little stilted. Assessing is hard. I assess throughout the year with whatever we're working on. We do Saxon phonics and math and they have an assessment sheet for the phonics and the math. If we were doing a science project and we were learning about habitats, different habitats such as desert, swamps or whatever, I would put them into groups would give them a variety of animals, plants and variety of scenes. I had them make a big mural of what is a swamp and what animals live in the swamp. I would go over there and look and listen to them arguing back and forth, "this does and this doesn't." By watching them I can assess them that way they didn't have to have a worksheet, so it depends on the project.

When you came in the curriculum was already decided that you would use. What thoughts entered your mind as you looked at the curriculum considering what you had been taught about curriculum in your undergraduate work?

I felt a little restricted. The Saxon phonics is something that I have to do and I don't enjoy doing it because it's hard on them. It's just very, very stressful for the kids. For one reason they hate to sit there and do the flashcards, the stack is thick they're at least three inches at this point and take us for ever. They don't like it and for some of the kids the coding is meticulous and boring. If I tell them, "try to decode the word," and they do and can sound it out with their coding they are okay, but most of the kids don't. They don't use coding when they are reading the books that they have. They so it's a lot of stuff I'm teaching them that they can't or won't use there is no carryover. I think it's a waste of time and I have just so little time for stuff like that. The only things that they had given me were Saxon math and phonics and SRA science, other than that I'm on my own. That in it self was scary because they want you to teach, but my mentor teacher has helped and I followed her lead she has helped me tremendously. In the beginning I went to her and said, "okay, what are you going to do?" We did our plan books together but I don't have to do that now. I might go in and say do you have a good idea for a particular topic I am working on or whatever and we'll pass ideas back and forth. They really didn't say this is what you need to teach for social studies or such there was none of that. It was, "here's some phonics, go do it." There was no training on it. Luckily I had used it where I was interning or I think I would have been lost. So you're required to teach those specific things, but that's it? What would happen if you came up with another program or another idea to supplement or replace what they gave you? How would that be looked upon? I don't think they would let me do something instead of what they have given me. I think because the second grade carries it on to the next level they want them to know how to



code. But to supplement what I am required to do they would be more than open. I have a really great principal, she's very behind early childhood and she won't discourage your ideas. She might say, "why," and have you explain it and if you can and it sounds reasonable to her she's fine with it.

Have you had to research anything or look up anything that you wanted to change? I noticed on the board out front there are grants that the school district awards to teachers. Have you had to verify something using a research article with something that you're doing?

Not really, I did write a grant this year and was able to obtain a lot of little science books. I did end up getting that grant and the foundation awarded me two sets of each book. I don't have much myself and they provided me the SRA science but there's nothing concrete for them to hold and to mess with. I wanted some more science materials because I like science. I got the books and next year I'll write another grant to try to add some things to go with the books. It is hard for a first year teacher having materials to teach with because you usually have nothing. Do you spend a lot of out of pocket money? Yes and you do it on that giant salary we get.

When you were talking about assessment, one thing that I thought of was, different schools have different ways that they validate the state's objectives. How much are you required to teach the state objectives or have you found that they have helped you with your assessing kids?

I hate to tell you this but the principal does not require us to use them at all. I look at the objectives myself and try to make sure I stay on course. But the principal doesn't require it. Does your district have their own objectives? Nobody has given me any, if they have them I haven't seen them.

What you're going by for assessment would be like the grade card or the check sheet?  
The grade card, yes.

When you think about students going to second grade what do you look for to see that they're qualified?

I try to see how good a reader they are. Are they able to get through the readers that we're using or are they struggling? If we have a phonics sheet and I ask them to read it will they read it or will they cry. I watch their maturity level closely and watch their frustration level. Are they able to get through all of their work every day? Is the work difficult for them or do they just whisk through it and ask me for more? I check their math to see how their progressing with that but I would say the biggest part in assessment has been the reading and maturity level.

Have you talked with second grade teachers to see what they expect from first graders?  
I had a meeting with my mentor and my principal to talk to them about it. The principal said she would set one up this just happened a couple of weeks ago. I wanted to have a meeting with the second grade teachers to see if we could pinpoint what second grade is hoping a kid knows when they come to them and what are the things they want them to know? I was very concerned about that, that's why I had asked for that meeting but she hasn't set one up with the second grade teachers yet. I told her that I was worried about that. They're going to come let me know next year aren't they!

Describe a typical day's schedule and what the kids are doing throughout the day.

When they first come in they have about a half an hour to write in their journal and draw a picture to go with their story or whatever they're going to tell me about. At this point in the year I require at least two sentences, which most of them do more than two. I'll be checking to make sure they've capitalized the first word and that there are periods. With the spelling, if it's a word that I feel like they should have been able to sound out then I'll ask them to check their spelling. If it's something harder or it's a sight word that really sounding it out they wouldn't know, I just let it go, I don't say anything. So they do their journals for about thirty minutes in the morning? Yes they work on their journals then after that I'll have a student of the day. The student of the day will lead them through the calendar such as the month, the day, and just different things. When we finish the calendar they sit on the floor over there and we'll do social studies for a little bit. Right now we're talking about the different states. I have a little book that I read facts and something interesting about the state and see if they can remember when I point to a particular state. I'll tell them the state's capital and see if they can remember that and they do really well with it, it's amazing. After doing our social studies we come back to the front of the room and I'll read them a story. I do this because we have kids pulled in and out during the morning. I'm having to wait for the last child to come back to start phonics, which is what we'll do next. When the last child does come back I'll finish up whatever I'm doing with reading and then we'll start phonics. I'll do a little lesson here on the floor with them with the phonics and then they'll go to their desks and they'll have a phonics sheet to do. At this point in the year they pretty much read it and do it themselves. When they finish their phonics they can go to wizard's wall, which is what I have up there right now. It has different jobs that they have to do and they change every day. They are able to go through those jobs at their own pace and whenever they finish one job they go to the next one. During that time there are kids everywhere it looks like a zoo, for about another hour. When that's over its time for recess, they come in and clean up the room, take a bathroom break, wash up and we go to lunch. When we get back to the room in the afternoon they do DEAR time and I let them read for about twenty minutes sometimes longer if they're really reading and they're enjoying it or sometimes a little less if it just seems like they're just talking and not reading. After DEAR time they come back to the front of the room and we'll do a math lesson. I'll go to the board if I need to, if not they'll just go straight to their desks and do a math sheet. The schedule changes a little bit depending on if we have library or counseling. If they don't have those two things and finish their math then go back to the wizard's wall to finish what they didn't finish in the morning and go to centers. Most of the time they have completed the jobs in the morning but sometimes they don't. I have two computers over there so they can do work on science just whatever. By then the day is almost over and they have specialties which could be either going to art or PE. When they come back from specialties they get their stuff and it's time to go home.

You said kids are pulled in the morning? What are they pulled for?

I have some that go to Title I reading and we have JOM reading [Johnson O'Malley for the Native American kids]. I have some kids that go to a special county counselor who comes and sees the kids here at school. I have several kids that go to speech. I think those are all my pullouts. Though each person only takes three or four I'll always have kids coming in and out for a good hour and a half in the morning. I have to do things that they

don't have to be doing at the same time. Does that get kind of tedious? Yes it's hard because they are being pulled out and sometimes somebody will come and say, "you know I had to change the schedule today I'm gonna pull them out right now." I'm thinking, "okay I'll have to rearrange my schedule." It does get difficult.

Would describe your class to me? You mentioned some of the types of students but would you describe the ethnic makeup, abilities and types of learning styles that are represented?

We have a pre-1 class and in the spring we test the kindergartners. I've not been involved in it so I don't know what all happens, but they go over and test them. They score them, measure them and they parents talk to the teachers and get some advice from them. They rate the children based on who has a need to go to pre-1. They start at the top of the list talking to the parents. If the parents don't agree then they send them on to first grade. Those children that were recommended for pre-1 and the parents didn't agree are supposed to be divided up among the different first grade classes. Somehow when I started this school year I ended up with sixteen kids and eleven of them had been recommended for pre-1. Nobody knows how that happened mind you but it did. I have a lot of immaturity in my classroom. I have one little boy who I've been saying this whole year has something wrong with him and wanted to test him. They have done the regular testing and I keep saying, "he's smart he just can't get the work done." He just does bizarre things. Finally they had a specialist come and they described him as emotionally disturbed. I could have told them months and months ago that that was probably the problem and now the school year's almost over and he's gotten no help. We got together with the counselor and special director. When he moved in I knew he was smart and probably could have been in third grade or higher. I gave him every reader I had and he whizzed through it so I went to the second grade level and ended up putting him on chapter books. I had to have a whole different schedule for him. I have another little boy come in that couldn't tell me his numbers. He couldn't tell me anything so I had a meeting with his mother, and she cried. It was horrible and we ended up putting him back in kindergarten. We have a half-day kindergarten program, we said because school was so late that maybe he could do the morning and afternoon session to try to catch him up. He just got a progress report and the mother came to school to show me. She was so thrilled and she hugged me. The report said, "he's on level and doesn't need to come to both morning and afternoon sessions anymore." Now he's just half-day kindergarten and he'll be fine for first grade next year. That's great! I have two on Ritalin. I have two girls who cannot stand each other. I tried putting them at opposite ends of the room and it was horrible then I put them side by side. Their desks are next to each other now. I said, "you're going to love each other now or whatever, but you guys are together." So I have a huge mix.

Have you had many move in and out during the year?

Yes about seven. I've had kids move out and I've had kids move in. I've had bizarre things happen such as one little child was in another first grade class and was a total disruption there. He was violent, stealing, and causing total chaos in the teacher's classroom. He left and went to another school, came back and guess who got him. He is an angel in my class. The teacher came to me when he moved back and was placed in my room and said, "I am so sorry." She is an experienced teacher she said, "I am so sorry, if I could have taken him from you I would have." No he's not a problem in his academics

he's behind having been moved around. How long was he gone? Oh only a couple months. When his other class is out on the playground there'll be conflict between that class and him. I think it must have been the situation I don't know but with the switch of the classrooms he's fine.

What about the ethnic background of the class?

I have mostly all white and some Native American children. Do you have any children in a second language situation? I don't have any of that. I have parents that are illiterate, which is hard when you're trying to teach a kid to read. I think we have only two African-American children in the whole elementary school. Since it's just a small country school, it's just that way. I don't have any Spanish children at all. I have some that have some from Native American background but that's as far as it goes. They all look the same.

What about your relationship with parents being a beginning teacher? How do they perceive you as a beginning teacher?

They've been great they've been really great. I don't have as much parent support as I would have hoped. I was always real active with my kids and I would go to the teacher and say I want to help you with this and just let me know what you need me to do. I got none of that from these parents. When we have parties or whatever, I would have to get on the phone and call and say, "can you be there, are you going to help," because I don't have a homeroom mother none of the parents signed up for it. When we have to collect money for stuff, my class is the last one always to send it in. But the parents have been really kind to me as far as that goes. They've all been nice and I haven't had any difficulties. Have any of them asked you about being a beginning teacher? That has surprised me. Sometimes I wonder if they just don't know that I'm a first year teacher? Do you live in this community? No I live in a larger town close by so I don't know if they just think I was hired from somewhere else and that I'm a regular teacher, I don't know.

How has being a parent yourself influenced your teaching?

I think it has. Having children of my own I can relate to the kids because I've had them through this age already. I can also relate to the parents and the stress level with homework and notes coming home. I have to remember and I understand because I am a mom and it's on that level for me. They send homework home at this school but I don't send it on Wednesdays because I know a lot of kids go to church on Wednesday nights. That way they can have a little break. I don't send it on the weekend because they need time to be kids. I just don't send a lot of homework. We have spelling tests they have to study for and I send home reading every night even on weekends that goes home. I don't know how much of it gets done but at least I send it. With phonics and math, if we had homework on Monday, Tuesday's and Thursday's I sent it home, but now that the school year's winding down I sent a note saying, "it's a busy time we'll do it in class, no more homework but do the spelling and reading. So that has helped. Being a mom and knowing the stresses I don't have unrealistic expectations of the parents and that they're all going to be reading to their kids thirty minutes a night. I know it's not happening.

If you were to give me an analogy of what it's like being a beginning teacher. What would you compare it to?

This is tricky. You'll have to give me a second to think about this. It's a little bit like when you have your first child and bring them home. You're looking at them thinking,

“oh my gosh this is a big responsibility, I don’t have a clue about what I’m supposed to do, but we’re going to do it together.” Hopefully you have a spouse to support you. I guess the teachers and the administrators are that for me, but it’s just like that. They cry in the middle of the night and sometimes you think, “why did I do this, why did I have a kid, why am I a teacher.” It’s very similar. There’s no step by step book that says okay, at this time you’re going to feed them and now your going to change them. With these kids nobody says, “it’s day one now you’re going to do this, day two you’re going to do this.” They just say, “here they are and by the time you’re done we want them ready for second grade.”

What’s the most important thing you’ve learned about being a beginning teacher that will change how you will do some things next year?

I’ve learned management skills a little bit better. I think if I had known what I know now I would have a little more organized classroom than I have. They’re pretty good and everybody says that my kids are great, but maybe I think they should be better. I don’t know we’ll see. I’ll have some management skills next year and I’ll start them off that way. They won’t get into the sloppy habits that some of them have that have gotten into because I’m just treading water. I’m swimming and swimming and every once in a while there’s a little foot that just pops my head under and someone says, “no you cannot take a breath.” That’s how it feels. Next year I’ll have a lot of things already made. I’ll have an idea of how the school year’s progressing and every time something new comes along I won’t be saying, “what’s going on?” I may but it won’t be as much though, please, I hope.

NANCY

Interview # 2

May 11, 2001

The second interview focuses more on the exact concerns you had as a beginning teacher. Would you define concern in relationship to teaching?

Concern could be fears, things that might frighten me about being a teacher. Concern might be things that I might feel inadequate about being a teacher, things I might not know, apprehension. Concern is that you're doing the best that you can for the kids.

Would you say concern is positive, negative or a little bit of both? It's both. It's positive because you care enough to be concerned you want to be good for your kids. It's negative too because it weighs on you and it puts stress in your life.

What have been the concerns you've faced as a beginning teacher?

I think I discussed some of this last time, but some of my concerns my first year had to do with expectations. Would I expect too much or too little of the kids? Each kid is so different, how do I address all of their needs whether they're gifted or they're a little slower. Some of the students I have excel in different areas so how can I strengthen their good points and pull them along on their weaker points. You just feel like you need to be everything to these kids and it's a big job, it's a big responsibility. So I guess those would be some of my greatest concerns. What other concerns do you have? Parent-teacher conferences, those are a big concern, especially my first one not really knowing what to say. Afraid, really afraid to say anything negative about a child. You don't want to but then shouldn't you tell the parent what you're really thinking? It's difficult in the very beginning to know exactly how to meander through all the niceties of the daily teaching.

You mentioned in the first interview that you had a concern about coming in and getting started with teaching. Would you want to say a little bit more about that?

How to start students into the programs and getting them from a non-reader to a reader was a concern at the beginning of this year. I guess that's what everybody's concerned about in teaching first grade. The rest of it [the curriculum] they want done, but it's really not the focus you know. The focus is, "can they read when they finish first grade?" Nobody yet has come to me and said, "we're going to take a math test and see how they're doing in their math," or "lets check out their science and social study skills, it just doesn't happen. They've been tested on reading and they want to know how they are doing it's a big concern how to start in the beginning to make sure that you get them to be a reader.

You talked about setting up your room, how you were going to arrange it?

I started them out in groups of four. They're desks were grouped, little pods of groups of four. It worked out in the beginning and I probably will try it in the very beginning of next year just so they get to know each other. But the talking and the playing is unbelievable, so eventually I moved them into little sections of two so they have a partner and they don't feel isolated but it does cut down on all the nonsense. To tell you the truth when I arranged them into two's I tried to put non-talkers with talkers so that the shy child might come out a little bit and the shyness of the one child wouldn't egg on the

other one. I tried to balance and it really has been working so far. They've become best friends really quick. I will probably start that grouping at the first of the year because I do want them to be friends. I want them to know each other and they're shy and it gives them a little support I think, but I'm sure I won't wait as long to separate them as I did this year. I was too chaotic.

What about classroom management, discipline, or parent involvement? Were any of those concerns of yours?

Yes, they were. With parent involvement I wasn't exactly sure how to get them involved and I didn't have much success with it this year. Parent involvement has been slim. We had a field trip yesterday and I only had one parent show up. They signed up to come, the kids said they were coming but then they didn't come. We went to a nature center that was right by a university close by it was great. Then we had a big picnic and the kids got to go bowling. It was a great day and I really have a great class so we didn't have any difficulties, but it could have been hard if we had. Classroom management was definitely was a big concern. How am I going to teach? They're going to be talking and playing and how am I going to handle that? It didn't take me too long to get a handle on it and I know some things that I'll probably do different next year. Teaching is I guess a live and learn forever thing till you get it so yeah, that is definitely a concern. I had a classroom management class, but it's just not the same. You put it on paper and they will test you on theories and what this psychologist had to say and what this one had to, but it doesn't mean a hill of beans if when you're with a six-year-old. It just doesn't. When it comes to dealing with real kids, it can be totally different! It's totally different, it is.

What roles have you found yourself playing as a beginning teacher?

Oh, gosh, I'm...mom, sometimes they occasionally even call me dad by mistake I don't know why, just a mistake they make. I'm definitely nurse, disciplinarian, and a little bit police checking it all out. I'm trying to think of any others. It seems like a lot of roles, and I am teacher too, I guess. But I'm mom a lot to these kids.

What kind of roles are you expected to fulfill other than teaching your classroom, in this school?

Do you mean like my duties? I'll do cafeteria duty in the morning where I make sure that the kids are safe and following the school rules. I walk around and make sure that there's no wrestling on the floor or throwing food, stuff like that. I do recess duty so I'm out there watching the kids again for safety making sure they're all okay following the rules. We have bus duty which is making sure all the kids get on the right buses, because all of our busses don't show up at the school at the same time. They come and they'll call the bus number and only those kids go out there. We stand out there and get them to the correct busses. We have little flags that we hold so that the kids can see, but you've got to not only make sure that you get your own students out there you have to make sure all the other kids get to where they're going. That could be a hassle with new kids coming in and out all the time. Yes, in the beginning it's hard, but as the year goes on the kids get used to it and you're all right. How often do you have to perform those particular duties? Oh, I also have detention duty, I forgot about that one. If the kids are in trouble they don't get to go out on recess then they come to your class and they have to either work or put their heads down. I have duties every day but not every duty every day. I only have cafeteria duty one time a week and I have bus duty approximately one time a week. There are six

of us so we rotate. Every six days I have bus duty and every day you either have detention one day a week or recess duty three times a week. It's kind of confusing at first. We have three teachers out there during recess and then you have one teacher who has detention and then you have two teachers who are free. How many recesses do you have in a day? One, we do our recess a little different. The kids have their recess right before lunch. Then they come in wash and get cleaned up and then we go to lunch. In the beginning I guess when they decided to change it they would have lunch and then recess, like normal schools, but I would say 90 percent of our kids are free lunch and get breakfast and lunch here. Sometimes that's the only healthy meal they get. The kids were either not eating or eating just a little bit and throwing their tray out so they could go play longer. Now there's no point in getting done because you're just going to sit at that lunchroom table anyway for the full time so they eat more.

Getting back to the concerns you've mentioned. Have you found that certain concerns have increased or decreased?

A lot of them have decreased. I would say most of them have. I'm still concerned, and I guess until next year and I find out how I did on my placements, I'm concerned about whether or not I'm holding kids back or sending kids on that shouldn't go. It's a huge concern for me, it really is. I think about it all the time. Have you had your meeting with the second grade teachers like your principal had wanted to have? No we haven't had it yet. It's rough so I'm just doing what I think I should be doing. I'll ask people about it and they'll say, "well you have a feeling about it." The first grade teachers want to know what lesson you got to in all your subjects. What's the farthest you got in your reading books, well it's difficult because not all my kids are the same. I put something down but that doesn't mean that all of them got there, or all of them didn't get there. Do they ask you for that at the beginning of the year? Where you think they will go? No, I just got papers recently asking me what's the latest lesson I got to so that the second grade teachers will know.

What kind of advice have you gotten from your mentor teacher about how to prepare the kids for second grade?

Not much, I've asked but I don't know it's kind of a mystery. I will know by next year whether anybody else knows or not, I will find out before I start next year what they're expecting.

Now did you say in our last interview that you test them at the beginning of school with a reading test?

We do test them, but we just test them on if they know their letters, do they know numbers, do they know their sounds. So it's not a standardized test? No. In kindergarten they give a maturation test and they'll go through that before they get to us. I honestly don't know if there are any tests for the other grades. I'm hearing a lot about testing, testing, testing. Do they publish test scores in the newspaper here? I think they do. Not my personal scores but overall for a school I think they do. Do you give standardized testing in first grade? No When do they start giving standardized tests? Third I believe. They take the Iowa. So they took the Star Reading test so they did take a test all of them. Then they're rated which is kind of iffy on that. They're rated by what they think the reading level is whether it is first year third month or whatever and given a percentage.



Is there a summer school for these kids?

There will be unless I ask them to be retained. If they are retained they don't qualify for summer school. I guess they only have so many slots. If I say they can go on to second grade but I think that they need some help then I have a list that I put their names on and they can go to summer school. But if I say you need to stay in first grade then they won't take them in summer school. They may be able to go elsewhere for summer school. It may have something to do with how much money has been allocated to them for that program. I think so and I guess they figure that the child's going to get another whole year in that same grade again and hopefully they'll catch up.

Can you think of some other things that you would want to revamp as a result of having a concern about it?

Yes, in the very beginning I was a lot easier on their behavior. I didn't want to be mean. I was really, really nice and so for a little while I didn't really like teaching because I felt like all I was doing was trying to get them quiet and get them in a seat. I caused it myself it's better now because I've got them under control. I wanted them to talk but they were talking a lot and not at appropriate times. It didn't take too long before I figured out that wasn't going to work, but I had already started that with these kids so I had to go backwards and I won't do that again. You pretty well spent time at the beginning of the year establishing a routine with the kids? Yes, the first twenty-six days we review alphabet and the alphabet sounds and everything. During that time is when we really try to go over the rules and behavior before we start into our phonics and reading.

What about classroom rules? Do you have some in mind already or did you discuss that with the kids when they came in? How did you go about determining the rules for the class?

I talked to them about raising their hand when they wanted to talk. When I was talking that they should raise their hand and we talked about different kinds of voices like inside voices and outside voices. We talked about that. There weren't really a whole lot of rules. What are the rules for your class? There aren't a whole lot. I just expect them to work. When we have our working time or when we do our wizard's wall they can talk with their friends, but they need to use a softer voice than their normal. We're not supposed to run in the class really there's not a whole lot other than those. I have one shelf over there, one cabinet that has fun stuff in it and that they can only use it during inside recess, that's it. They're not allowed to turn off the computer except for one child. I've taught him how to shut it down so he can back out of everything and shut it down but the rest of them are not allowed. At the end of the day I'll ask him to go over there and turn off the computers. How do you get them to remember the rules? I just remind them. If they're going to put up their papers and they're running, which they do I'll say, "walking feet" and then they'll catch it usually. Sometimes they don't. Something I do if they're all milling around and I need them to get in they're chairs I count down starting with either five or ten depending on how chaotic it looks and how long I think it's going to take. I'll count down and I'll do five-four-and when I start to do that they'll all, you'll see them all start trying to get to their spot. If I say crisscross applesauce they know this is where they need to be. If I get down to zero and everybody is exactly where they are supposed to be I will cover my ears, that's the clue, they all get to scream blast-off, they love it. If they're not all then I'll say, "I'm sorry we don't get to do it this time." But by that time almost all of them are anyway except the ones that couldn't get it. At the beginning of the year I

would say, "you know everybody sit down, I could say "everybody sit down" for a while before everybody does.

What about parent involvement? Have you thought of some things that you could try next year?

Yes I have. I'm going to write more parent letters in the beginning and try to get them here in the very beginning when they're still interested. School is new and they're still happy and I want to try to get them involved in the beginning rather than wait till I really need somebody. My mentor had a committee of ladies but I didn't know to do now I do. I'll have a party committee. We have a Monday folder, which goes out only on Monday's. It has special notes that go in it. We have however many weeks are in the month and we tell what's going to happen each week. Any really special notes go in the folder on Monday so the parents know to look for them on that day. We do that school wide. With the Monday folder I could have set it up to get the kids' parents involved I just didn't and by the time I needed people it was too late. I have some that will come and help for parties and stuff, but we had a death last week of a parent so a lot of the people that I thought were going to come for our field trip ended up out the mother. The father was electrocuted on the job. He was thirty years old and had two kids it's been kind of rough. *[Nancy recently told me she set up a work schedule for parents this year. She has parents who have volunteered to work at a certain time every week. They come in and help her run the classroom and she reports it is working great.]*

Do you have a parent night school wide other than an open house?

Not really. I'll be better prepared next year. I'll have sign up sheets and "do you want to help be on parties, do you want to help with field trips?" stuff like that. I definitely will be better prepared for it next year. I will have to say about the kids is that anytime we have had a party they always bring stuff and we always have more stuff than we need. It's just that having the parents actually come to be a part of it. Kids really like to see their mom and dad or somebody here.

What are you going to do specifically to prepare your kids for second grade? What are some of the things you want to put into place?

Second grade is run a little differently than first. They sit a lot more than we do so I have tried to get them to sit a little bit longer each day than we normally do. I know that second grade does timed math tests. So I'm I want to give them a few of those so they know what to expect. I'm just trying to reinforce the material that I've already given them, the knowledge. I'm not really trying to teach them anything new at this point just reinforcing things so that when they get to second grade they'll have a real firm knowledge base and grasp on everything. Other than that I don't really know what to do besides make sure that what they have they really know. Do you get a voice in dividing up the kids for the second grade teachers? No, I don't. The parents can request a teacher if they want them if they don't request the principal does it. I do have a list where I put children that I don't think should be in the same class again. I have a couple of girls that I put side by side and didn't get along they're not going to be in the same class together, they don't need to be even though I have to say they've gotten along better since they've been sitting together. How many second grades are there? Four or five, five I believe. There are five first grades and a pre-first. Whenever the first grade does stuff we always include pre-first so it feels like six of us.

Do you rate your kids high, medium, and low with any special information for the principal to divide them up?

I did have to do a form similar to that. It was a form that had all their names on it and then it asked me that question, "were they high, medium, low in math, high, medium, low in um phonics? Were they high, medium, low in reading? Were they able to complete their work? Did they turn in homework?" All kinds of different little questions and then a spot for comments and so I did fill out something like that. That's strictly for second grade. They just want to know.

Does kindergarten bring their kids in here to see what a first grade classroom is like?

They haven't yet, nobody has told me they were going to. Sometimes, like today we went on a walking field trip. We have parents sign something at the beginning of school that says we can take them on a walking field trip whenever we want. We do a lot of walking field trips. Today we went and got flowers for Mother's Day but I didn't know it was going to happen. All of a sudden this morning someone told me, "Oh you guys are going at a certain time." I thought where are we going, I never knew, so there could be something with kindergarten coming here to visit that I just don't know about. It would have been. I talked with my mentor teacher for half an hour after school.

Of all the concerns that you've mentioned, if you were to put them in a ranking order, what seems to be the most prominent of your concerns?

Well, you can guess it now. Whether or not I'm sending the right children on to second grade or holding the right children back. Placement is my biggest concern. What would be next? How to get this room cleaned up for summer? You have to take everything down? Yes, it's going to be painted. Our walls are these lovely cinderblock and nothing sticks to them but hot glue. So we hot glue everything. We have to get hot glue off before you can paint it. So I have to scrape all the walls and get it prepared so that it can be painted. I've been working on it. I've taken things down already. My biggest concern besides placement, I guess goes along with it is did I do enough, did I teach them enough? Are they going to be well prepared?

Have you had your last entry-year committee meeting?

Yes, that was back in April. For all my committee meetings, every single one of the members for all three of the meetings rated me the best that you can get on everything. I had great comments and everything, but I still don't feel real confident. I guess I feel more confident than somebody who is struggling. My biggest concern has always been for the kids, do I do enough for them. Did I teach them enough?

Did you say that you wanted to work on a master's?

I have thought about it, but I know that it won't be until I get all of this ironed out. It will be a few years if I go back.

You will be off for the summer or away from school this summer. Do you plan to go to any workshops?

I had planned to go to Great Expectations at the university and that's for about a week. I plan to be off on vacation. I thought that I might go through all my units and try to add to them and gather things now that I know different things that we're doing and get them a little tighter.

Do you still plan to stay in first grade?

Yes, I do. I like science and if somebody came and said, "there's an upper grade science class." I'd have to think about it because I really like science. I've enjoyed first grade and I would really like to stay a couple of years at least and get used to the way things are run before I move things around. I think if I moved around and went to another classroom even second or third, it would feel like starting over again and I'm not ready for that. I need to get comfortable with one thing.

The mentor teacher is a first grade teacher also, and she will not be your mentor teacher next year, but do you feel you developed enough confidence that you can still go to her if you need to?

Oh yes, yes, we even talked about that yesterday. I told her, "now you realize that next year I'm still going to be bothering you all year long." She laughed and said, "that's great!" I have to say this school is really great. All the teachers come and give you ideas and will give you things and help you out. You can go to any of them and borrow from their libraries or whatever they're all very helpful. It's a nice working environment here. I really enjoyed it.

Do you feel that there would be classes or projects that could have prepared you better for some of the concerns you faced?

The only thing I think is that I know that we would have in-class time but when you're talking about classroom management. If you don't go to a classroom and actually experience what you've been studying you don't really know. I think if I took all my classes over again having been in the school already, I would learn so much more because now I would understand. I would have that point of reference to look back and think on, but when you're in the classroom it's just things you have to memorize, cram for a test, and then you forget it. Even if you make A's in your classes it just doesn't matter, but when you get into these classrooms, I don't think about what Piaget had to say anymore. I'm thinking about, "okay what do I do in this situation?" We need to have classes that teach you how to incorporate more hands-on projects similar to the workshops we go to after we become teachers. The classes we took had the students show each other what we came up with but most of it was not quality or useable. For example I once did a project for a first grade class that now since I have been teaching first grade realize it was at least two years above their grade level. It was totally unusable in the real world but I got a high A on the project.

Did you keep a journal this year of thoughts that you had and things you wanted to change or things you would rather do next year?

No, I never did. My plan book is going to be very helpful for me because I did jot down things that didn't work or maybe that I should add to it. Maybe that would be my journal if I had one, but I didn't make a formal one. It would have been helpful though probably. It sure would have if daily, at the end of a week, or at the end of a unit if I thought about it, "you know this didn't work."

I wanted to ask you about your photography. Have you been able to use any of that in your classroom?

In my science area I put some of my different cameras that the kids can play with and explore with. They loved them. I do take pictures of the kids in the classroom doing things like on field trips and different things, but I tell you what has helped me is when I

was a photographer I had to talk in front of huge groups of people. If I took wedding pictures I had to talk to everybody in that church and get them organized. If I took class reunion pictures or one-on-one personal pictures I really had to learn to talk to a ton of people in all sorts of groups. I'm just not afraid to talk to people now so it did help me when especially in school when we had to present projects to our class. It would be no big deal.

When we talked about concerns you didn't really mention curriculum. I know the interview before you had mentioned that there was certain curriculum you had to use and that you might be able to supplement it in some way. Are you going to be able to do any kind of changing about curriculum this year?

We'll still have the same things we have to teach but I'll know now more of what I should have been doing. I didn't start science until we were way into the school year because I felt like I was just trying to keep up with what I could do. I know that next year I'll start it much earlier and incorporate it much better, social studies too, it was much the same way. You know it was not mentioned here as to what they were taught in certain areas. I have a book but no books for the kids just for me, so I have to decide on how I want to use them. Because you don't give a grade for certain subjects? I don't give a grade for anything we don't give grades. We have a checklist. They are checked on progressing, mastery, needs improvement, those kinds of things. They get a plus or a triangle or check mark. That's hard for me because my mentor feels mastery means they totally didn't miss a thing. Well I know that when I see a kid and he's made a silly mistake, well I may mark mastery down because he knows it, but it's not really the way that they're doing it. I really wish as we get older because I have older children, I wish we would do away with A, B, C's and just go to percentage grades. Because there is a world of difference between a 91 and a 99 but they're both an A. They both mean different amounts of effort.

What did they choose to adopt this year, was it reading curriculum?

I think our science was new. I don't think they had that last year, I think they were all new books. But that's it, everything else was already here. I know that they were discussing the reading this year and that it was coming up so I don't really know. The only thing I could think would be the science because that's the only thing new that I got that actually came that wasn't sitting in my room already used. So they didn't really talk to us how they wanted us to use it. They didn't send you to training or anything?

No, I just got a big SRA book and some films and that's it. I had to decide how to use it.

How do you group your students for reading, or do you do whole group or whole class when you do reading and math?

Reading sometimes I'll do whole group. We incorporate reading all day long. When, I do have reading groups and I do put them in groups by ability. I know that maybe I shouldn't or, you know, but I do. I put my high readers together and I put my low readers together when I do groups. There are usually about four kids per group. Sometimes I'll separate them into partner reading. I will put a high one with a low one and they'll work together on a book or sometimes I find that the high ones just read it and the low one just sits there. We did a play and I put high, medium and low readers all together, four in a group. Each group got to be a part and they worked for about a week on the play. What I told them was, "your group is not successful until everybody in your group can read their

parts.” They had to work with their low ones and by the time everybody in the group could do their part they had really worked and struggled. We made little puppets and a backdrop and the whole thing. We did the play and all the kids got to do it. The low ones got to do it because they could actually sit there and read their part.

Were concerns in teaching presented to you in any way in your undergraduate classes that you remember?

I remember them telling us that our first year would be hard, it would be all consuming. Your life would be totally on teaching. I remember them addressing that and I knew that they had said that classroom management would be one of our biggest issues to face. Nobody ever talked about how you would know how to place students in the next grade or how to get started. They did tell us it was going to be time consuming and it would be a lot of work and classroom management would be difficult. But that’s pretty much what they said.

I wanted to end with this question, “What qualities would you say an early childhood teacher needs to possess?”

Patience, a strong backbone because you’ll have people coming from all sides telling you, “you need to do it this way, no, you need to do it this way.” I’m looking at them thinking I can’t do it all those ways. Parents will come to you and you’d better be able to stand up for yourself because if you can’t they’ll walk all over you. Early childhood teachers need to really be strong and tough and caring towards the kids and understanding that every day’s not going to be great for the kids or for themselves. They need to have a willingness to listen and to accept new ideas and to accept things from other teachers because they really do know what they’re talking about. You’re new so you better be able to swallow your pride and go, “okay I should have done it this way,” or otherwise they’ll hate you and you’ll drown.

NANCY

Interview # 3

May 24, 2001

The questions on this interview will have to do with your support systems things you might want to do differently as a teacher. The first one that I want to ask you is, can you describe a special moment during your first year as a teacher when you more fully understood what it meant to be a teacher?

Aah! That's a toughie but... You can take your time. I had a little girl who started out in here totally behind, really, really behind. We put her in special tutoring classes and worked with her a lot. She progressed so well that she became one of my top students and it really showed me what a change you can make in a child's life just by your perseverance and dedication to that struggle that they're having. Her grandmother and mother came in one day to hug me and tell me "thank you so much for the change in her." I thought you know what it's all worth it. Sometimes it's not a lot of things it's just one particular thing that can make a difference. As a whole you get bogged down with the daily grind of it, but you have those moments where someone comes in and gives you that little bit of feedback that you just need and it makes it worth it. About how far along in the year was that, can you remember? It was probably about two-thirds to three-quarters of the way through. I ended up pulling her out of tutoring and putting a new student that I had gotten in her place. I felt the new one of course needed way more than she did, so it was about then. I had called her grandparents and her mother they kind of all live together and told them that I was pulling her out of tutoring and they were thrilled and came in hugged me. Could you sense that satisfaction in the child? Oh, just such a change in her personality. The new one that I just changed places for tutoring came in from another school district. She had no self-confidence whatsoever. I would call the children when we were going to start a project or whatever by some silly phrase such as, "whoever has black shoe laces can come up." I'd look around to see who only has two or three or whatever so I could get them up in orderly fashion. At the very end thing I always say for the last few children that are left is whoever is an extremely smart child come on up and they all come up. They all run because they are so happy because they all feel smart but this little girl didn't come up. The kids were saying, "you're smart, you're smart." She would say, "No I'm not, I'm dumb." I said, "whoever in the world would tell you that?" "My other school they told me I was dumb." When I tried to get her to sound out words that she should have already been reading by the time she came to me she'd make like this little cry noise, she was afraid to even try, and it was horrible. I mean her, she was a closed in kid but by the time the year went on she was bubbly and happy and just reading not on level as much as some of them but had caught up so much. Even the other teachers said, "Gosh, what a change in that kid." You know that to me is what makes it all worth while. Sometimes it's not so much what we teach the kids but what we have internalized ourselves that passes on to those kids and makes a difference as to what they believe about themselves. Yeah, I told the kids that I get all the smart kids and she's like, "I'm not smart." Then I point her out to really smart kids in my class, "is this one smart, is this one smart?" Yes, yes, yes," then I say see, okay. I just trick em.

Where have you gone to seek advice or help your first year?

I have gone to my mentor teacher many, many times. I've gone to pretty much all the first grade teachers at different times to get resources or to ask a question so all the other first grade teachers have been a great help, too. I've gone to the principal on a couple of occasions and asked her advice on different situations that have arisen. I've gone to only one second grade teacher to ask her some questions on a child that I had gotten that was extremely bright and I didn't know where to go with him. Some magazines, some professional journals, I've also gone back to books that I saved from college. I've gone back to them to look stuff up. I get some advice on the Internet that has helped. I'll go on the Internet to pull up some lesson plans or ideas that kind of thing that's about it.

What kind of advice have you gotten from those different entities? What kinds of advice have you sought from teachers from the principal, journals?

Sometimes it's on behavior how to do classroom management better if I have had a very mixed group so some of them were pretty challenging. I'd go and seek some advice on how to handle the child. Did you seek that from the principal more than you did other teachers? Yes, and the counselor, I guess I didn't mention him. I went to him. He was a good source I'd have to say to help me with different things. We had a child in our room whose dad died so I had to go to him to ask how to handle that how to handle it with all the other kids and it was smooth. Mostly I guess my questions have been on curriculum, and lesson plans and how to go about something or we have a unit and pulling sources from the other teachers. They would come unsolicited too and just say, "hey I have this great idea we're doing do you want to try it?" I would say most of it was on curriculum and resources and because you just don't have a lot when you're first start out.

You had mentioned your mentor teacher, now she is also a first grade teacher?

Yes Do you know why that particular teacher was assigned to you? I know that she's only a third year teacher but her classroom organization is fabulous. I mean she just has it and she knows what she's doing. She is on the ball and the principal has a lot of confidence in her. Her kids come out turn out just great every year and she just has a lot of confidence in what she's doing. We had another first year teacher so another first grade teacher has her. That only really left one that didn't have somebody but my mentor was picked first cause I came first. I'm thankful that it was someone in first grade because everything she was doing I could just followed right along with her and it was very helpful. I'm glad they did not place me with an older grade because we're not even in the same hall.

You mentioned journals. Do you belong to any professional organizations?

No. I'm still in Kappa Delta Pi. Do you get journals from them? Right, I get those and I borrow from people here. What kind of journals do they have? I knew you were going to ask me that question. I knew it when I mentioned it. I know that the ones I've been looking at are dedicated more towards early childhood. Like Young Children and Childhood Education? Yes, Young Children.

What workshops have you attended? Or what workshops would you most likely want to see offered?

We had Linda Holliman come in, I don't know if you're familiar with her. At the beginning of the year she came in and taught us about centers and it was great. She was great and just had all sorts of different ideas on how to do hands-on activities with the



kids, tons of hands-on activities. I also went to a science workshop up in Bartlesville I went to that one this year. Then the week that school's out I am going to Great Expectations at the university for a week or four days, whatever. Those are the ones I am going to attend. I love science so I liked going to that one even though it was geared a little more to older students. It did give me ideas to come back to. I like those kinds of workshops so I will attend them they give me ideas but the early childhood ones are what we need and hands-on things.

Are you required to go the state teachers meetings in the fall and the spring?

No. I have not gone to any of those yet. This year was a little hectic. Just surviving day to day is a big thing and if you have a day off it's like, "okay, let's organize, let's get things back together."

What would you tell a beginning early childhood teacher about your experiences as a beginning teacher?

I'd tell them that it's going to take a lot of their time, dedication. I'd tell them not to be afraid to ask their sources ask other teachers for advice because what I found out is that they're more than happy to give it. They're more than happy to share but if you stay isolated in your room you're not going to learn everything that you could if you're too shy or afraid to ask. I would definitely say to seek outside sources and lean on them and they'll help you. That would be my biggest advice. Something that I've learned this year and maybe I'm jumping ahead, would be something I would change for next year. At report card time and conference time I didn't tell the parents as much as I think I should have. I was too nice and told them all the kids were doing great and your kid is sweet and everything's fine. I maybe should have told them a little bit more about what was going so that at the end of the year when I felt like, "hey, this one needs to stay." They would have been hearing it sooner than towards the end. I know that was a mistake I made and I would tell them not to make that mistake.

Every year you'll find yourself changing the way you do things based upon your experience and the students you have that's normal. What else would you think to tell them?

I would say to stay organized very organized or you will drown in the piles that will accumulate and you'll never come out of it. I mean when I came to this classroom it was like a tornado had gone through it. Nothing was where it should have been. Files were mixed together, things were lost, and things were gone. It took a long time to go through everything and something's have never turned up, so I'd say be organized and your life will be a lot easier. Don't stress about it. Whatever comes just let it come and then go on because you can just loose hours and hours of sleep thinking about every minute detail.

What kinds of advice would you give to administrators in dealing with beginning teachers?

I think I would tell them that they need to make sure that the beginning teacher's getting the advice she needs. I guess I spent the first nine weeks not really understanding my grade book. I didn't realize I didn't understand it and then I got my first review and I got great on everything. But I heard her say something like, "oh, we might work on this." She was looking at my grade book, but she never came back to it, she never said a word. I took my grade book to my mentor teacher just because I heard her say that, even though she never said it really to me. I went to my mentor and I said, "am I doing this wrong?"

She looked at it and she said, “she didn’t say doing it wrong, let me show you what I’m doing.” Then it clicked and I got it, but I didn’t know what to do, I didn’t realize I didn’t know. Double check with them and if there’s a problem make sure you follow up. I have asked advice about what second grade needs and I still haven’t gotten it. I just think that they should follow through and make sure that we’re getting what we need and maybe talk to us a little bit more. I’m not criticizing at all, because she’s a busy woman I’m just saying she’d come in and do her little interview but never really come in and said, “hey, how are you, is there anything that can be done? What advice do you need?” She’d just say, “if you need something go talk to your mentor.” Just giving a little bit of advice here or there might bring our teaching up a notch.

What would you tell instructors at a university about being a beginning teacher that they need to be aware of, or that they need to change in their program?

That’s a toughie. Well I talk to quite a few beginning teachers and we’re all scared because we feel like we’ve gotten the bookwork but we really don’t know what to do. Where do we start? You feel intimidated and they say, “oh, you’ll get it.” Your first day you’re thinking, “okay, what am I going to do with all these kids all day long!” Maybe they should have us map out what you are going to do. Give us some advice on day-to-day life with these kids. Give us a chance to try it out. I think we need to be in the classroom more starting in the beginning, not waiting till the very end and then you’re in there with one teacher. A lot of the classes should have more in-classroom time because I knew people that waited till the end and then they found out, “ooh, I don’t even like this.” You spend a lot of time taking classes and if you don’t like those kids you have wasted your time. I know I did early childhood but whose to say that maybe they should let me try junior high or spend a couple of hours up there, or you’re going to be in a lower grade. I don’t know, maybe I’d be great as a fifth grade science teacher, who knows. I never got that chance because I said early childhood. You lock yourself in and how do you ever know? I think the biggest thing I would say is more classroom time because that’s where you really see it happening you get a feel for it. I know that they have revamped the program and we have more interning experiences, you know one day a week or whatever that’s great. But if I’m taking a class on classroom management maybe I should go in for a couple of hours and actually that should be the focus. I think that’s practical and we talk about hands on learning all the time. There isn’t much hands on learning in the college classroom at all. We sit and take notes, cram for tests but we forget it. They need to be saying tell me about it let me go see if that can happen come back, let’s talk about it.

What about your intern experience would suggest any changes?

Interning is hard because when they send you out they really don’t know the type of teacher they’re sending you to. They don’t know whether that teacher is a hands-on or not a hands-on type or whether they’re doing what we’ve been taught in college. They don’t know. They’re just sending us to someone that may know absolutely nothing about what I have been taught. I found that to be the case they may be nice ladies nothing but not implementing what I’m supposed to be seeing. So I spend sixteen weeks with somebody not doing what I’m supposed to have been doing. I think that the internship needs to have teachers out there that have been checked out personally. I’m saying maybe they should go and observe the intern teacher at work before they send us out. Mine was okay but I have heard of some worse than mine and what a waste of time. I think if you had a really

super mentor that you would be really prepared. I you I didn't feel as prepared as maybe I should have been because they weren't doing what I knew needed. They were nice and they were doing what they thought was good for their kids, just not what I knew we were should be doing. You try to implement what you know you're supposed to be doing and that's difficult.

What would you share with a parent? What kind of advice would you give them about working with a beginning teacher?

I would tell them that they need to go to that teacher and talk to them. Most teachers are willing to talk about whatever problems you're having and then see if you can't work together as a parent-teacher team. Rather than having the parent against the teacher because the teachers usually just want the best for the kid. If you're having a problem or you think it shouldn't be done the way that teacher's doing, then go talk to them and see. Maybe the teacher has a perfectly good sound reason for whatever they're doing and can back it up. If they can't back it up then you need to find out why and see if maybe it can be changed. Just be open and talk to them otherwise you're never going to get anywhere. They're humans they're new and this is their first year they're trying their hardest, trust me. Go talk to them.

What have been some of the most important things you've learned about yourself? And what areas have you seen the most growth as a professional?

I found out that I do take a lot of this home, that I take it to heart. When the kids have personal problems it's hard for me to separate it. I find myself thinking about it at home and what can be done and a lot of times nothing can be done. I don't know if that will ever change, probably not you know, that's hard. My biggest growth as a professional teacher – I have a lot more confidence than when I started. I know I still have tons of things to learn and I'm glad that I know that. Next year I won't be as scared and I will know how a day goes and I'll be able to go right in there and but I'll feel better about it and I'll feel more confident in my abilities. I think my biggest growth is my confidence in myself.

Where would you like to see growth next year in yourself? What would you want to strive for specifically next year?

I think I'm going to really concentrate even this summer on working on teaching the reading skills and see if I can implement anything new to really get the strugglers. I got some of the strugglers, but I didn't get them all. I want to change that and see if I can't bring in more ideas because I know that some things work for some kids and other things work for other kids. I want to find out as much as I can to find something else I could have done, that would have reached them.

I think you said you were, you were still going to be required to teach Saxon phonics, is that correct?

Yes to supplement what I have to do. I have time throughout the day that I can pull kids out or do some group things. Even as a whole group I can do things, but I want to add to it. Do you do anything where the kids could go back and listen to books on tape? I have that. Yes, I have books on tape and a kind teacher whose retiring this year sent me a bunch of more books on tape so that was nice. I have been ordering my own you know how you do. I have lots of different little areas for the kids to go to work on their reading skills, reading is what it's about in first grade, so I've got to learn all I can. It's so hard

because when they go up to second grade they're not going to read their math papers for them it's so important to their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Are there any workshops available for you to go to?

Not that I know of at this point but I went to a Literacy First workshop.

What would you do differently next year based on what have learned this year other than changing your reading?

I'm going to try to enhance the other areas, too. I'm going to try to enhance science and I want to enhance social studies because both of those were definitely way back on the burner. Those two things I want to try to enhance get some more ideas for them and add to their curriculum and help with that.

What about grouping students, would you do something different with that?

I would have to think on that one. I don't know I did group by ability, I mean I did different groupings. What about room arrangements? Oh, their seating? This last week, which they loved it, I told them get by your very, very best friend. They did and then I moved all their desks, which we've changed a little bit so they all got to sit by their very, very best friend's for this last week. You know the last week you're not doing academics as much, they just loved that, but there's no way you can do that all year long. No, but they sure did enjoy themselves. I said we'll try if they were good, I might pair a high with a low and see if they can't help each other and see if the high can't try to pull the low up a little bit. I did that with two boys and I definitely saw an improvement in my lower child. The confidence of the higher child really helped improve the confidence of the lower one on that child. He started out really, really bad and then got so much better.

What would you use as a basis for that? Would you use a reading score or would you just think about overall achievement of the child? I think I would definitely do the reading and math also and, and pull those two together for their confidence level. Some kids are smart but have no confidence and that's sad. Some will be better in reading but very low in math, too. Yes, yes it's true. But again I'm probably thinking of reading. We do journals in the morning then we read and we do calendar. With the journals its helpful to have somebody who can help them sound out words and letters and stuff because there's so many of them. I walk around and when I'm over here there are three of them looking at me like, "please come help me." I can say, "ask your partner" which is what I did a lot "ask your partner, see if they can help." Then I'd go over there and see if I could help but I will probably do that try to pair up some of the kids.

You mentioned something about your undergraduate classes that there were people you that planned your classes together.

Yes. Do you think that's had a bearing on the way you sought support and help in the school? Did it build your confidence in being able to ask questions of people? Or did it not affect it? I don't know that it affected it. I think your personality has a lot to do with it. I talk to people easily I don't have a problem with it. I really don't have a problem asking people, "hey, help out over here" I just don't. Some people might be shy and have a little trouble with that. Maybe for them the support that they got at school would boost their confidence but for me personally I think I would have asked. I have to say they were warm and they were inviting here. If they weren't and were just kind of standoffish I might not have felt comfortable asking them after the first one or two tries. I went to a kindergarten teacher once when I was interning, she was at another school where my

child had been a long time ago. I asked her if I could get a copy of something she did for a mother's day tea, and she said, "no, we made that up, I'm not sharing that." Well, if I went to school with her or if I taught with her and she did that to me I probably would never go back to her again. Most teachers aren't like that they're kind and very warm and inviting so I felt very comfortable being able to ask them things here.

Do you keep contact with any of those friends from college?

I do some. One of my really good friends that we did we stayed together the whole time chose not to continue. She graduated, got her degree and everything, got certified and then chose not to teach. Somebody offered her another job that gave her more money so she went on. She would have been great, too, it's sad but that happened. Then I have another friend that teaches four-year-olds in a larger city near here. We talk and stuff but I guess I just get so busy that it's not the same and when they're not nearby.

One last question. Where would you like to see yourself in ten to fifteen years?

I'd like to be one of those old teachers that everybody goes to and they just think they know it all. You know has all the answers. That gets all the interns? Yeah, yeah, that's it. One of those teachers that has tons of confidence and everything and all of their units are just so fabulous you know every single one of them are deep and detailed and wonderful and the kids are just thriving in her class. I'd like to be that. I don't know if it will be in first grade. I don't know if I'll stay in first grade. I definitely know I want to um try some other grades.

What about furthering your degree?

Yes I've been talking to my husband, isn't that bad, I just got done and now I'm thinking about going ahead and getting my master's. I haven't decided in what yet. But I don't know I want to stay in first grade maybe at least another year and get more confidence in what I'm doing. I'm afraid if I bounce now to another class I mean another grade it would be like starting all over again because you have to get the routines all over again. They keep asking me are you staying, are you staying? Yeah, I think I'm staying I want to build some confidence in what I'm doing. I'm afraid if I bounce around now I'm just going to feel lost. Right now I'm making sure I'm ready for next year, making sure I have masters and getting files together for different units we've been doing and collecting and gathering and it'd be hard now to say, "alright."

You'd talked about going for a master's but you didn't know what area? Yes that is what I have been thinking is that I would teach a little bit and then maybe go back and try to get something in reading and maybe become a reading specialist or something. Once I have some classroom experience and can apply it definitely maybe something in reading because reading is so important. Have you thought about doing any presentations or any publications? No. I would encourage you to think along those lines because it not only helps you in building confidence but it helps others in understanding what to do to help. That's true.

Have you thought of any questions that I didn't ask or final things you want to say?

No, not really. I've enjoyed the interviews and it has made me think about my first year as a teacher. It has made me go back and reflect it was a good learning experience for me.

APPENDIX G  
Julie's Interviews

JULIE  
Interview #1  
April 17, 2001

This is Julie, she is a pre-k teacher and this is April 17, 2001. I'd like to begin by asking you a question, "How did you decide on teaching as a career?"

I fell into it actually. I originally wanted to go to school to get my degree in horticulture, and eventually own my own floral business and then when I worked in that industry for about four or five years I realized you never see your family. I didn't realize it was going to be the same way as teaching. I thought, "I want to do something different and I started working for a local craft store and ended up teaching classes. Everybody had told me for years, "you need to be a teacher, you need to be a teacher." I always put it in the back of my mind, "oh, I don't want to do that right now." I began teaching the floral design classes and really enjoyed how people figured out that they had hidden talents that they got to discover and I really enjoyed that. I went back to school and at that time realized I did not want older kids because of the mouths and the attitudes that they have and I just couldn't deal with that. I had a small child at the time I decided to go into teaching and get my degree she just turned one and so I thought I would do early childhood. That was just my perfect niche, I found out that's where I belong.

You said a minute ago, for a long, long time you had talked about teaching or you thought about teaching?

Others had tried to convince me that that is what I needed to do and I would fight it. I would try to fight it and say, "no, I don't want to teach, I can't handle being around other little kids, I didn't even like baby sitting growing up, I don't want to baby-sit other people's kids. That's how I perceived what teachers did now days. I figured that's what Pre-K was about as well. Once I got into my classes and actually observed what teachers were doing in the classroom with preschoolers and kindergartners I realized that's what I really want to do.

Had you, at any time growing up, other than babysitting, had opportunity to teach something?

I had worked with youth groups but it was mainly older children, young adolescents, and young adults. That's why I never thought anything about working with small children, young children. Did anybody in your family encourage you? They encouraged me in working with adults or young adults. Why do you think they did that? Because I couldn't stand being around little kids. They thought I should go into teaching and become a horticulture instructor because there were very few women in that field. There are still very few women as horticulture instructor in the state and it would be a wonderful market for me to jump into considering that's where my interests were. Why do you think other people told you that you needed to be in teaching? What did they see in you that made them think that? I like to be in charge and I think I'm a go-getter. I also enjoy seeing people discover what they didn't realize they could do and that's really neat. I would always be trying to help people figure things out on their own. I didn't want to do

everything for them. I'm a hands-on learner and that's how I teach is with hands-on learning. Things just fell into place.

What kinds of support did you get once you'd made that decision to get your degree in teaching?

My family was very supportive. My mother would watch my daughter while I went to school so she didn't have to go to daycare so that was helpful. My husband was very supportive. He worked two jobs to support us while I went back to school. All the doors were open. I'm very religious, and my Lord just made all the doors open I thought okay God, this is what you want me to do, I'm going to do it, be obedient. I got financial aide so I said to my husband, "okay, I guess this is what we're going to do."

You mentioned your mother and your husband supported you in your decision to be a teacher. Once you made that initial decision to go to school and the doors opened, how did you find that support continue? Who did you find support from?

I had trouble with in relation to the administration starting back to school. Everybody wants to pass the buck when you try to get questions answered. "Where do I need to start when I'm enrolling," I did run into some road bumps and speed bumps that kind of made me stumble. I finally received an advisor then I felt like I was at home. I could go ask them for any help that I needed and all kinds of questions and that helped. Two years into the program I felt like I was kind of wandering around and I would ask other people that had already been in the program what do I need to do. I got better information from the ones that had been in the program than I did from the administration. Was this your first experience with college? No, actually I went to a junior college and received my applied associate's degree in horticulture and then I decided to go ahead and get my degree in education so I transferred to a four-year college nearby. I'd had at least four or five years of college experience by that point so I knew what I was up against. I knew who I need to speak with, but they would always say, "well, you need to go here you need to go there. Communication gets broken down and I would just have to go straight to the main campus and get answers to my questions.

When you made the decision about teaching and went back to school were you mainly taking education courses and not necessarily general education classes?

Right, no general education classes all that was already covered. Let me add something. My dad was not supportive at first. Why? He did not want me to be an educator. For the longest time he has told me, "you're never going to make any money at it, and he has a bad taste in his mouth concerning educators. One thing was that my mother's father was an educator and he had a bad experience with him. You know being a father-in-law that type of situation was pretty difficult. He also had some bad experiences with college professors so he said, "you don't want to do this [teaching], you need to choose something else, go into business." I don't want to do that. He would say, "well do something that's more broad, something that's not quite so specialized where you can branch out and change. If you want to go into teaching you can still get a teaching certificate, but don't put all your eggs in one basket, so to speak." When he realized I was serious enough about it then he started to support me. I think he wanted to make sure that I was totally into it and not going to get into it and realize, "oh, I don't want to teach." I don't know if he was totally against me becoming a teacher or if he was just wanting to make sure that that's where I wanted to go. That was kind of frustrating at first.

I'm glad that you brought that up because a lot of times when I ask the question I have been looking more for those that really supported your decision. Did you find you had others that were trying to discourage you from teaching?

Other teachers were telling me, "don't go into it [teaching] it's getting harder now days to be in the classroom because of the increased teacher-student ratios and then lack of supplies and long hours especially early childhood. The teachers that were already in there and I had some teachers that go to my church. They were elementary teachers and they said, "don't go into early childhood, there's so much more work for you. You don't do worksheets and things where you can just send them down to the copy room and get them done, there's a lot more preparation time, you're babysitting." That's how the elementary teachers perceived it at my church. I was saying, "well, no" I don't believe that they had seen any really great programs. They'd probably been around poor programs. But they were saying, "don't do that." Had you seen any good programs at that time? At that point the only formal programs that I had seen were through the craft classes. That was a more positive environment and was specialized. It wasn't a typical classroom situation in a public or even a private setting but that's what had initially caught my eye seeing the kids working with the craft and art environment. Whenever I started my interning I saw this great program and thought, "wow, there's so much more to it than whenever I went to preschool." When I went to preschool I don't remember how wonderful you really had it.

Had you worked with the horticulture aspect in the craft store classes or had you worked with the art with the kids, or were you just an observer?

I was originally their head floral designer and did the floral design classes on the side. I took over their classroom coordinating position when I had my baby, so I would have more flexible hours and wouldn't be in the store all the time. I was in charge of coordinating the cake decorating classes, the art classes, the painting classes, the ceramics, I still did the floral design classes at that time, and including the kids club. Their kid's club group is usually kids from ages six to twelve, and they would come in on Saturdays. They would come in a couple of hours on a Saturday and they'd be in a classroom and create. So you got to observe some of that going on? Yes, and I actually taught some of those classes as well.

Describe your experiences entering the classroom for the first time as a teacher. You've had pre-interning and interning experiences up until this point. What do you remember about first entering that classroom as your own teacher?

I've had two different experiences. The first experience being a teacher was in first grade. That was as soon as I graduated. I moved into a half-year position in January and was teaching first grade. It was very intimidating because I don't feel like I had enough knowledge or experience behind me to teach kids how to read. It was intimidating and on top of that I was in a school where the parents as far as socioeconomic status, were living in two hundred fifty thousand-dollar homes. These parents were at home and had high expectations. They were in the classroom all the time and so it was very, very intimidating. On the other spectrum was teaching as a preschool teacher in a Title I school, I've been on both ends. I'd like to be in the middle some day. In the Title I school I didn't have as much parent support, but I felt like I was in charge. Coming to the preschool classroom, I felt like I had my act together and I could handle it all. There weren't any intimidating factors as far as what I was going to be able to teach these kids,



did I have enough background experience? I felt with the experiences I had from interning and with the experiences that I had in teaching first grade it was so much easier coming into the preschool. I had to learn a lot teaching first grade in that environment and coming in as a half-year teacher. They [the children] had already had a half-year's worth of teaching and I hadn't been with them to see how far they had come, I was having to get a feeling for the kids. Starting at the beginning of the year was so much better because everybody's starting off on the same foot and the kids are learning just as much as you are learning. It's not as intimidating as say whenever you start halfway through a year. They were saying when I was in the first grade classroom, "Oh, I'm getting a new teacher, well what's she going to be like, is she going to be like..." comparing me was really difficult. I had parents that didn't like me before they even met me because their child had gotten a new teacher that year. A lot of those same kids that were in that first grade classroom had the previous year while in kindergarten had two instructors as well because one had gone on maternity leave. I had walked into a situation where there were a lot of kids that had four teachers in two years and these parents were not happy.

You mentioned a couple of things I'd like to go back and ask about. You said you felt going into that first grade classroom you did not have enough experience. Are you saying that as a beginning teacher or you felt your program didn't prepare you or your interning situations were not at that grade level where you knew what you were going into?

My interning experiences were wonderful as far as how to teach reading, but that was only one semester in your final internship. If I had had more experience with my pre-two level that would have been awesome. I do not feel that there was enough preparation in the in the college coursework for how to teach reading. I feel like they required you to have so many classes and to get your hours but I still don't feel like I was prepared enough. I remember one of the hardest reading classes I had to take was the reading diagnostic class I took it in the summer and I felt like it was crammed. I wish looking back that I had taken it during the year and had more time to put into it. I wish that they had required double what they are requiring now, because I don't feel like I was prepared to go in and teach. My friends were all saying the same thing. They said, "how can you stand teaching first grade, you know you're going to have to teach these kids how to read, there are going to be test scores, and you are going to be held accountable right away. If you screw up everybody's going to know." You have that hanging over your head and you're thinking, "oh, no, was I listening in class enough?" "Can I remember what all they said," it was just intimidating.

What levels did you do for your interning?

My pre-one experience was in a kindergarten classroom, my pre-two was in a pre-kindergarten position, and then my final internship was in a developmental first grade classroom. I was also allowed the last month to visit other first, second, and third grades so I could get an idea of what to expect. At that point she [the teacher] had me teaching the whole year. I started off on day one in the developmental classroom teaching there were two of us in the classroom, she was wonderful. She threw me into the hopper and that's the best way you can learn. I wish that I had been able to experience more. I don't think its going to help a brand new teacher interning when they come in and they split it up half way in the semester. Your interning needs to be at least one or two more semesters of interning so you get a taste for it. I was lucky in that situation when I was able to intern a whole semester in one classroom. I got to know the kids, got to see the

whole process for one semester from setting up your classroom, getting ready before the kids got there, and going to the half-way year point. Some of my friends did half-and-half. They went half of a semester to a first grade and then half to a pre-K. Just when you get used to the kids then you're pulled away and you're having to learn all over again. I think half the process is getting to know the kids in your classroom before you can really concentrate on what you're learning while you're in the classroom, which is what you do when you get a teaching job. At that point, you're there to be learning about the teaching process. People don't like for me to say that there needs to be more classes, but I feel if you're going to be prepared you need to have the experience.

You're speaking from hindsight rather than foresight. You mentioned that you came into the classroom right after you graduated in December and your first teaching job was in first grade. What had happened with that teacher?

Her husband had been transferred to Arkansas. She was going to stay she was also a close friend. They had a very tight knit family at that school and she did not want to leave her job. She had only been married a year and felt like she needed to be with her husband. Eventually she came back the next year, which was kind of weird. I had actually been able to substitute in the kindergarten class in that building so I felt like I really knew all the kids in that early childhood wing. I felt very privileged to be at that school, I learned a lot.

Do you feel like the parents had good rapport with her and didn't want to detach themselves from her?

I think the parents had more trouble detaching from her than the kids did. The kids welcomed me, because they knew me beforehand since I had interned in the school. We had done field trips together, parties together, and I knew I had the position before she left. I had been in her room getting used to the kids and working with them so the kids knew me. The parents didn't know me that well and I actually got letters from parents and calls from parents saying, "well, do you know this about my child, and do you know that about my child." I know that they were probably scared they thought their child was going to loose out, and that's how they reacted. But that wasn't the case because if anything I knew those kids better by being in there with the transition than if I had just come in as a new hire and not been in the building. It was kind of frustrating. Do you feel some of their apprehension had to do with you being a first year teacher? Oh, definitely. Did that come out in the conversation? Definitely, when they found out I had just finished my internship they were automatically saying: "well, do you know that my child is above average," and "my child needs to be at this level in reading," and "how far are you going to push them," and "I need to see some improvement on their test scores from the fall to the spring." At the end of the year I did get one letter of recommendation from a parent of one of my students. He [the little boy] hated reading and this is what makes me feel like I at least succeeded in one role that year. He hated reading and would not pick up a book. He was not interested nor was he motivated. By the end of the year he said he was dying to go to the library and get books and the mother had never seen that much of a change and she believed it was because of me. I tried to tell her that it wasn't because of me, it was because he figured out how to do it on his own.

You said going from first grade to a pre-school situation you felt like you had your act together. Do you feel it was because of the experiences that you had in that first year, or because you were more familiar with pre-school curriculum?

I felt like I was more prepared with what I've been taught about how to apply lessons to their level. I also thought that I was more prepared with how to deal with student's families. I learned a lot on how to deal with parents. I don't think they train you enough for that in college but I don't think you can experience it until you are actually in the classroom. I learned a lot of don'ts because I try to please everybody. I learned I'm the one in charge and you [the parent] will have to wait until after school to speak with me about specifics. I had parents up there in my face when the kids were around me before we were put them on the busses to go home, it was awful. The principal latter on told me, "you should have said, please wait, right now my responsibility is these twenty children, and then I will be glad to speak with you." If I had known that, if they had a class on how to consult with parents it would have been helpful. They give you a little bit about them but not enough. Until you are thrown into a situation that was really difficult you just don't know. I actually use that advice now being in this setting. I've been able to take control and say, "okay, this is my classroom these children are my responsibility, I will be glad to speak with you, but it's going to have to wait until after they are gone." I can't let them [students] stand there and watch that. I've had to realize where my professional standards are and express those without coming across as not caring or putting the parents off.

Did you get any experience with parents built into any of your pre-interning or interning experiences?

I think we role played a little bit on how to do parent conferences and if I'm remembering right, we talked about how to talk to parents whenever you have behavior problems, but I don't remember. Did you sit in on any parent conferences when you were doing your interning? When I was interning, yes. When I did my final internship I was the second teacher and she wanted me there. They had a smaller class and it was a developmentally delayed class so you had parents in there that were extremely worried about the learning environment of that child. Since it wasn't a typical classroom you had parents that would say, "my child can do this, my child can't do this." They were all really concerned and they wanted to hear positive things, they weren't there to complain.

Explain a little bit more about the difference between the high socioeconomic and the low socioeconomic expectations of parents? Were there some other things that were different?

As far as the higher socioeconomic status of parents what I've experienced is that a lot of time you'll have parents that want to help, they're willing to be in the classroom or work behind the scenes, but they're also wanting to tell you how to do your job. A lot of them have an education already and they may even be teachers that are staying home now so they feel like they can interject and tell you how to do your job. Sometimes they'll do that and they're not offering advice to be supportive, it's because they have nothing better to do they're bored. With the lower socioeconomic parents I've experienced two different issues. Last year in this Pre-K Title I school I had a hundred percent parent participation, which is unheard of in Title I. Usually you don't have a hundred percent of your parents' show up for parent conferences or you don't have people showing up to go on field trips. Last year I had a hundred percent participation, I had wonderful parent support. If I had a

problem with a student's behavior in class I could call them [the parents] and they would be up here in an instant to take care of the problem. This year it's a totally different situation and I'm finding the normal type of parents that you deal with in a Title I or lower socioeconomic school. Either, one they're not around, or two whenever you try to find them they don't want to speak with you because they're scared you're going to turn them in for some reason. You know they're trying to hide something or that's just what they've experienced in the past that teachers are out to get them, that they're really not there to help them that's one pitfall I've run in to. I like to say, "I'm, I'm here and want what's best for your child and I know that's what you want too." Whenever they realize face to face that I love their child as my own, then they feel like, "okay you're not out to get me, and you're not calling me the bad parent." I never want them to think I'm sitting in judgement towards them, because they're doing the best that they know how. I've also noticed they [the lower socioeconomic parents] will send in anything that the child needs if they can. If they can't you don't hear from them or there's no phone number, or they've changed their phone number three or four times. I have seen both ends of the spectrum where you can never get them to leave you alone, which is wonderful, or you can't get hold of them when there's a serious problem. I've seen a difference in the learning styles. I know there's a difference in the age gap between pre-K and first grade, but usually my first graders would have complete rest at night or have meals before they came to school. Here at the Title I school we have breakfast at school so I do know they're getting a meal before we get started in the day. Half the time these kids may have been up at 4:30 in the morning to go to day care. They also may not have gone to bed till 4:30 at night because mom, dad, or auntie, whoever they're living with, didn't get them to bed, and they're operating on two hours of sleep. You never know what you're going to get each day so I've had to adapt my classroom for that. When I was teaching first grade I had my couch for my library center, but it was to sit on and read books. Now my reading center is transformed from a library center to a quiet center kind of like going to Switzerland. If they're having arguments they can go there to relax and it's neutral territory or just to get some sleep so they can cope with their home life and this is a safe place to come.

Do you have one set of children all day?

Yes, all day. From what time till what time? They're not supposed to be in the building until 8:25, but some parents are here at 8. We start putting them on the busses at 2:25 so we usually have kids up until about 2:30-2:35, or 3:30-3:35. Next year our hours are extending that's why I'm saying 3:30 we're extending the hours so that's going to be very interesting.

You teach four-year-olds?

Four-year-olds, they're four and five-year-olds. How many do you have? We have a class size of twenty this year. Last year I had a full set of eighteen and we increased our size this year to twenty but I'm down to sixteen. I've had parents move I've also had one taken out and into custody, which was very upsetting because I didn't see any of that happening. They always try to prepare you for that, but I don't think there's any way you can be prepared it. Mainly the students here are moving from school to school, have a high mobility. High mobility? Yes.

How many are in the school, do you know?

We have thirteen classrooms, twelve are regular education and one is a developmentally delayed class and I think they have up to ten kids in there. Are all the other classes around twenty? Yes and it's a full day program. Do you have anybody helping you, an assistant or anything? We're supposed to have assistants. Some people have lost assistants so we have two floating assistants where they can float from room to room to help take care of more classes. That helps get our teacher-student ratio down from twenty-to-one.

What about planning time?

We do not have planning time and that's against the law, we're supposed to have a planning time. [Although she does have time to herself when the children go to special classes she didn't seem to look at this as a planning time for some reason.] They're extending our hours next year where the kids will be here at 8:30. We don't have to be here till 8:15, so that's fifteen minutes without kids, but you know that the parents are going to be here before then. The kids are going to be here from 8:15 to 3:30 next year, or 8:15 to 3:15 and we go home at 3:30 so that's fifteen minutes before and after. All the teachers here are saying we better get our planning time this next year because there's no way we can do it.

Explain a little bit about your classroom, the make-up of your students. What types of students do you have such as developmental problems, levels of ability?

The ability level in here runs the full gamut. I've some in this room that still have trouble recognizing their name in print and I've got others that are reading. I have a wide range to teach with. The class is half-and-half boys and girls, we have eight boys and eight girls. As far as behavior this has been a very tough year. I have five children in here that are constant behavior problems. One has already been suspended for battery, a four-year-old suspended for battery. The other four basically bounce off of each other. When I can get two to actually do what they're supposed to be doing the other two are going off, so it has been a very difficult year. I think there need to be a lot more adults in the classroom when you have students like that. I'm hearing that from other teachers in the building that this has just been a very wild year with the types of students that have come in this year. Last year, I don't know if it's because I was pregnant but I had two on a regular basis that I would constantly have to have my parents come and get them. You just could not teach, because you would be having to take care of behavior problems all day. I don't feel like the kids have gotten the best from me this year because I've got the five kids to deal with and I just don't feel like I'm able to do my best. The first part of the year I was documenting all the time about the behavior. One particular student so we could get him taken out of school because he was hurting himself, others, teachers, and principal. The other kids would see him acting like this and think this was okay then they would start and it got worse. My fall conferences were not about academics, they were all about behavior and how I needed the parents to help me. If they didn't help their child wasn't going to learn anything and we needed to get this under control. I couldn't do it by myself that we needed a home-school connection where they needed to stand by me. For the most part, they were all very willing to do that because I explained to them, this is the beginning if they're having trouble now, it's going to get worse when they get into kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. They were going to have more serious problems latter so we needed to get a cap on this now and this is the best place to learn. I

think we're lighter on them because it's a four-year-old program, it's not like a typical elementary setting. We're a specialized site and once they get into a typical elementary school they're going to be suspended and they're going to miss school. I'm having a lot of problems with attention problems I'm seeing more of that. I am also seeing a lot of rudeness, not just impoliteness, but no respect for adults or any form of authority, cussing as yelling, it's amazing what these kids know at four years old it's also very scary. I've got a group of sensitive ones as well, that just you look at them and bat an eye and they're in tears and you've devastated them the whole day. They're the ones that I've noticed are very eager to learn versus the higher socioeconomic students, who are saying, "I have to be here I don't necessarily want to be." Part of that might have been just because they were first graders and they were tired of the way things were running. I can remember doing that when I was in first grade but they're all very eager when we do our screening here at the pre-K program and meet-the-teacher-day screening day, they are chomping at the bit to get into school. They want to be here with the big kids and they can't wait to play the games. They want to learn to read and write. That's always neat to see how they're very energetic and wanting to learn, yearning for it.

You mentioned you're a hands on person, do you find that most of the kids are oriented to that type of learning? Do you find some kids resistant to that kind of learning?

Most of the children in my classroom are hands-on learners, "gimme, gimme, let me do it first." I've got maybe two or three that have to sit back and observe but they're also my shy emotional kids and they just need to sit back and kind of take in their surroundings before they can take part. Usually they will you eventually join in. The first graders for the most part, that class was crazy, that was a bad situation for me to be in if you know what I mean. The kids knew how to play me so half the time I didn't know if they were really wanting to learn or if they were just trying to get past me. I had several that were in reading groups for reading instruction, which I don't agree with but that's how the teacher did it before. I was trying to accommodate what the teacher before had done, and to appease parents as well and make it as smooth a transition for the kids in the first grade classroom. I had a wide range from low readers to one that was trying to read on a fifth grade level by that point. Mom had home schooled the older children before she was a veterinarian staying home. She was also very supportive of me and she was always saying, "how else can I help you?" She wanted to come up and help in the classroom. I had the lower readers and then the higher readers were placed into the classrooms from their kindergarten classrooms. They placed them in classrooms according to their ability. I sat in with the kindergarten teacher in placing kids for second grade and saw how they did it. They place children into piles according to whether their ability is high, low, or medium, or average. So you would have a regular range in first grade.

Do you have any students that have developmental problems, handicapped children or mentally retarded?

I did not have any mentally handicap or any MR last year. There are a few in here that I wondered if they have any form of emotional disability. Last year I had one that never spoke the entire year, never said one word and I ran into him a couple weeks ago and he's still not speaking. We tried to tell mom last year, and this is before we had a developmentally delayed classroom, that there's something not right here. She was in the nursing profession and she said, "I do not want my child labeled." We ran into a wall there where she didn't want him to get any help for him and he's still not talking. That

scares me because he's not going to be able to learn to read if he's not talking. That was kind of a scary situation and that's the closest I've come to having any children with delays. The first grade classroom we had a pull out program. One of the children in our class was MR and he would come in during story time. He was just included but I was not in charge of teaching him any specific curriculum. He joined us for certain things during the day but he had an MR teacher on a full time basis. Are any of these students [referring to her present classroom] pulled out in here? We have a new program with the counselors are pulling them out to take care of behavior problems and that's where some of my kids that have emotional problems are being pulled out, but they're not labeled. Will most of these kids go on to first grade from here, or will they have another year? They will go to kindergarten next year at their home site unless they been accepted into the magnet program. Most of the kindergarten programs are half-day some of them are full day, which is gonna be a struggle for the kids here because they're here all day. Some of these kids need [full day] because I think they have a lot of ability and they need to be pushed. A lot of times parents are telling them it's okay to slack off, and that's a problem I have with them giving excuses on how to cop out of things. I had one parent say, "well, she comes from a dysfunctional family and you need to allow her some space," I told her "Ma'am, all my children come from dysfunctional families." "There's no such thing as a functional family anymore, and we don't need to give her that excuse." She didn't say it again, but the child has learned to use that as an excuse and so she doesn't try to her best ability, and she's so smart. You just want to say, "Come on get your act together." I think people need to go through the Great Expectation training to help them with that [dealing with children and parents]. My school district put me through their training. I don't necessarily use the whole program, but some of the ideals such as "you've got to push them as far as you can push them," works! If you have high expectations of students they are going try to meet those.

When you were in the college classroom and you had some teachers tell you this is the way it's gonna be, you got to the classroom and you found out, "no this isn't the way it was, or is going to be." What were some of the highlights that stick out of what you were told it was going to be and it wasn't?

One of the first things that they drilled to us when we started going to Pre I and Pre II is "you're never going to get a job to begin with." I don't know if they did that to weed us out, the ones that really wanted to be teachers from the ones that didn't, but that's before we ever got in the classroom, "you're never going to get a job there are not enough jobs out there. I'm such a go-getter that I'm saying, "okay I'm going to go get a job right off the bat," and that's what I did, too. It was kind of funny. I remember them talking about the socioeconomic status, about how when you're in a Title I situation you're never going to have parents around then I had the wonderful experience of having a lot of parents around. I remember them telling us that you're going to have to put a lot of extra time and effort into it. But I don't think they put enough emphasis on that because I could easily work a sixty to eighty-hour week, no problem. On average I am working fifty hours and that's with me cutting back this year because I have a thirteen-month-old baby. I had to or else I wasn't seeing my son. I wish that they whenever we did projects in college that we did more for ourselves to keep than to turn in I think that would have helped. Let me see if there's anything else. Nothing jumps out except for them saying, "you're never going to get a job." That just irked me so bad.

Do you feel you got enough preparation for how to plan your lessons and that kind of stuff?

Yes, I feel like I was totally prepared for that. In every single lesson plan that we had to turn in for any of my early childhood classes you had to list all of the objectives, you had to list procedures, they had a huge list of what to do. They also included those things when we did our portfolios. That was the best thing they could have had us do was to make portfolios before we graduated because it helped you get it done in a gradual process instead of just throwing things together at the very end. We could put our lessons in with our portfolio. I remember coming into teaching first grade I did a much better job with my lesson plans than the teacher before. There was more emphasis put into what you had to place in there in case you were absent and you had to have a sub. That's one thing that they didn't tell you about make sure you're prepared enough for when you have a sub. I've always over prepared for subs because I don't even want them to have to think when they come in. I just want them to come in and enjoy being with my kids. I'll put down "at 8:05 the kids are coming in, at 8:10 you're going to do this, and at 8:15..." They probably don't like it cause I'm dumbing it down for them, but I just want them to be prepared so they don't feel like, "okay, what do I do." I remember subbing and coming in and there was nothing there. As far as lesson plans, I put a lot more effort into them because that's how they trained us. It was not out of the ordinary for you to do that kind of preparation. In the first grade classroom, you did your lesson plans on your own and the principal checked them off when you had an evaluation. She didn't check them every week. When I moved to the Pre-K program you had to turn in your lesson plans every single week. I didn't have a problem with that because I was doing it already but there were a lot of other teachers saying, "why do we have to do this?" It was so that the substitute would have something when they came in just in case for some reason you had to be gone. I feel like I was prepared in that regard, but my lesson plans are almost too efficient and I'm putting too much time put into preparing them and doing word for word what I expect them to do.

Another thing that you probably had to include in your portfolio was a philosophy?

Yes, that was difficult when they ask you to write a philosophy, I had no clue. I'd read other philosophies, but I had no clue what my philosophy was because I don't feel like I had established enough of my own opinion. Part of that may have been because I was young. If I had been an older adult going into education I probably would have had a lot more preconceived ideas about what I wanted in my classroom and been more stern. Going in glassy-eyed I felt like, "I don't know what I think about how children learn through play, okay, this sounds good." After teaching for the half-semester I would say, oh, I know what my philosophy is now. As far as the behavior, what my expectations are, what a child can do, and I never use the word can't because that gives them an out. After teaching for half a semester I knew what my philosophy was and I also think that it evolves. It [my philosophy] has changed so much from when I taught first grade to now and where I'm at teaching the second year in Pre-K. Are you saying your philosophy should change because you are changing? Not only your philosophy but your teaching styles. If you are truly going to be the best teacher that you can you've got to fit the needs for the exact moment. What irks me more than anything else is teachers that say, "well, this is how we've done it for years," and I'm saying you know the times are changing,



kids are changing and if something's not working you better fix it or don't complain if it's not working.

Being a teacher is being a learner?

You have to be a lifelong learner. I put a lifelong learner inside my philosophy. I want to be challenged professionally. I want to be able to go see what other classrooms are doing. I don't feel it's a good thing for the teachers whenever you're brand new to be observed by your mentor, it's great to be observed by people from the college. But you yourself need to get out and observe other classrooms of your peers and people that have been in teaching for years to pick up ideas. You don't see things when you're cooped up in your own little world and sometimes it can be overwhelming.

That brings me to another point, when did you do your entry year? Were there two different schools? Did you have the same supervising person?

I started my entry year in the spring at the one school and then the fall here. I did not have the same supervisor from the college. I feel like the first experience was a very bad one. The person from the college was very unprofessional and when everything transferred over here. I was told by the administration that I was going to get somebody new, because it was a new area and I was teaching another area and certain advisors were responsible in different areas. I thought, no problem, she was horrible anyway, so this will be good. I feel she was basically just patting my back, telling me, "you're doing wonderful." I don't feel like she told me what I needed to improve on and I want to know, don't stroke me, tell me what I need to do to change. If I don't have somebody telling me, how am I going to learn? You learn from your mistakes. The new one that I got was actually my advisor in college, which was very comforting because it was like having an old friend near you. She was very professional she was wonderful. She was always available for any questions I had even if I just had a bad day and I just needed to call and cry on her shoulder. I think that helps a lot. The previous one [entry year supervisor] was calling and harassing me saying, "no, I'm still the person that's supposed to be coming to these meetings." The people at the college were saying no and my principal backed me up by telling her she just needs to go do her own thing.

What about the teacher that was your mentor?

In the first grade it was a very unique situation because the one that I finally received as a mentor, had just received head first-grade teacher. The original one, who was the head first-grade teacher, left on maternity leave, and the other one left to go to Arkansas. The one that was my mentor was the head teacher of the first-grade teachers and had only been teaching three years. She was wonderful she would say, "I'm going through this with you too, this is what I've learned, the two years that I've taught. I wished I had more to tell you." She would tell me her experiences from the people that she had been under. I feel like she didn't feel confident enough to be my mentor. Being here my mentor has just been fabulous and she'd been teaching for eight years. The whole group of her friends and the faculty members converged on me and said, "here's this and don't make this, I'll make this for you." They've been very supportive, very supportive. That's good, it makes the biggest difference. Oh, and a great principal makes a big deal too. My principal last year said behavior problems belonged in your own classroom, "do not bring them to the office they have no place in here." The principal we have this year says, "come with me, let me help you, and we'll take the children out of your classroom so you

can teach.” Night and day difference. I’ve been lucky, some people have had said, “you’ve had three different principals, and had to move every year.” The year before I was in the computer lab, which was down the other hall so every year I’ve had to move my room. I don’t think that it’s been a bad thing because for one thing I’ve gotten three different perspectives. Every year you’ve got to pack up your stuff, you figure out what you have and what you don’t have.

That’s interesting. If you were to come up with an analogy for teaching, “Being a beginning early childhood teacher is like...? What would you compare it to, how would you describe it?

I can think of several. The first one just from my first grade teaching experience would be like putting an egg into a frying pan. I feel like I was just being put into a hot situation and then trying to develop and grow. I was like the yolk, and the parents were the egg white, and then, no, actually the parents were the frying pan and the students were the egg whites. That’s how I would describe that, but here I think, at this particular point in my teaching profession I would compare it to the weather, it’s the only way I can describe it. One minute you’re going to have happy sunny days and the next minute it’s going to be a rainy thunderstorm or it can turn into a windstorm or tornado and watch out cause everything’s coming at you. It calms and you get your rainbow and you get to see what your kids do and they’re my rainbows.

Good analogy. Can you think of some specific things that your kids have taught you?

That no situation is too difficult that you cannot laugh, laugh at yourself. It’s okay if you goof and that makes it so much better whenever you’re humanized. “Mrs Head goofs up, or Mrs. Head misspelled this, or oh my gosh I dropped the spoon in the batter.” Things happen so don’t take yourself too seriously. Learn from your own mistakes and let the kids see that it’s okay to mess up, they’ve taught me that. It doesn’t matter what you look like and it doesn’t matter what you smell like. It doesn’t matter what if you have anything wrong with your body as long as you show love and acceptance then you can build a relationship and then you can learn. If you don’t have that relationship there’s no learning going on because you will shut down and put up a brick wall. Kids are learning about life such as about being polite, about manners, about respect and authority. They are learning how to socialize by having a conversation with their teacher. They are learning what the world expects of them through my eyes, and that is a scary thought. That’s why I always have to make sure, “am I doing this for the right reasons or am I doing this because this is comfortable for me?” I constantly trying to do what’s best for them. It helps because I have a child, and that’s always been one of the biggest things that kept me going, is making sure that I do for them what I expect them to do for my daughter. It’s okay if I screw up and I’ve had to let myself realize that every once in a while you’re going to have “hiccups,” is what I call them or “speed bumps,” but that you have to move on, everybody’s human. I want them to be treated the same way that I would like to be treated and the same way that I want my daughter to be treated. That protective hedge you build around your children, I build around my children in the classroom. They’re my kids.

What is could you say about being a beginning early childhood teacher?

What is it like? Exhausting. Exhausting because being an early childhood you don’t have a whole lot of supplies built up. It’s very expensive to teach and I’m lucky enough that in

the setting that I'm in here we have a lot of big books that you can color, you can run off copies and color and make for yourself. I have made big books galore, I probably have fifty or sixty big books. We make our own games here there's just so much effort that goes into preparing for crafts and art. I try to make sure that they know the difference between art and craft. I don't want them to think we're going to do cookie cutter art every single day. They need to know that it's okay if your art looks like this and it doesn't look like mine. I feel like that's one of my weakest areas is art. I don't feel like I've ever been told that my art is beautiful even though I was a floral designer. I still remember in sixth grade art teacher told me I had no talent and what was the use of me even being in her class. And I remember that she told me that and I also remember that she was pregnant, she probably just didn't like me because she was pregnant. I also realized how that affected me in the fact that I thought I couldn't do it so I'm not going to try. When they come here this is their first introduction of formal education I want them to know they can do art and it's not going to look like anybody else's. It's just like my fingerprint, nobody else's art is going to look like mine. And so I try to let them showcase that and see the differences. How did I get off on that? Well, you're talking about beginning teachers and some of the things that beginning teaching required. You mentioned earlier that you spend fifty to sixty hours a week on teaching, being in the classroom and preparing for the classroom, and you've tried to cut down. That's for preparation that's not including looking up lesson plans. I do a lot of research on the Internet. That's been the fastest way because we have the Internet in our classroom. Before I had that option I had to go to the library and I would stay there for hours. It's not just the preparation for your classroom materials to do your lessons, but you're also looking at the preparation time of researching and making sure that everything you're doing is developmentally appropriate.

Coming in as a beginning teacher then you find that just coming up with the materials, coming up with the ideas, is very time consuming, very difficult?

Right, very difficult and I even thought each year should get better because I'm going to be building up a supply of things, but then you realize, "oh, I want to do this, I want to do that." I am doing as much this year as I was last year, only I'm just accumulating more. "I came into this classroom with maybe one bucket of stuff and I'm leaving with five." I've got the materials so if I ever had to go do something different, I feel like I'd have to start all over again. Right now if I didn't make anything else I could be covered for the first year. But before that I had to borrow even after being here a year and you're making all this stuff, there's still not enough time in the day to cover your documentation. I figured that was the hardest thing I had to do was documenting anecdotal notes and then transcribing it and putting it in their files and keeping portfolios alive and updated. My mentor here and my peer teachers have let me borrow their games and let me borrow their books so that their time was also put into this. But it's just exhausting as many hours as you have to put into Pre-K. First grade was time consuming, but I had teacher's guides and lesson plans and so all the research basically was done for me. Then I would add what I felt I needed to. That was easier from a first grade standpoint, because there was less individual preparation for each student. It was more of a class preparation. Here, in the Pre-K setting, it's an individual preparation for each child; "do I have enough for each child."

Do you have a basic curriculum that all of you use?

We have guidelines we have our report card. Basically those guidelines or objectives are an adaptation of the kindergarten PASS objectives. I also received, when I was in college, a listing of four-year-old objectives. I don't know if it was from the state, because when I showed it to the teachers here at this school building, they said, "no, that's not what we're getting." I don't know where they got those objectives from, but they correlated pretty close. The objectives I got in college probably had more to them and they were a little bit stricter than the ones that we do in this district now.

Do you get together as a group of teachers and kind of map out your curriculum for the year?

They do that every year and then each year they decide to reform the kindergarten. It's very frustrating. Basically they take just a couple of things and change a little bit on the kindergarten curriculum and that's what we do here. It's very frustrating. Teachers don't come up with their own plan as a group? We do, but they shoot it down in the administration of this particular district. All the teachers here every year have, well except for this year, come up with what we want for the curriculum, what our objectives are, what we expect to be done and how can we prepare them for kindergarten. Ours are usually a lot more detailed like the ones that we had in college. Whenever it finally gets down to the report card, and what we're responsible for sending on is usually just a reformed version of a kindergarten report card. We have complained and complained about it, and the powers that be, say, "no." I don't know if that's getting back to it being too expensive to go back and change all the report card papers or what, I don't know.

Is a lot of what you do, do you think, based not only on your experience but what you're seeing in the literature as to what's appropriate for kids this age?

All of it has to be developmentally appropriate. The teachers in this building expand on what is expected. We are an expanded day and we're a special site. We want the kids to go out with a bang not to just know what they have to know, which I think any good teacher would want for their kids. We have the report card as well as individual checklist that we go by. Those are the objectives that the teachers have worked on here and are the one's that students are responsible for passing. We do plan, yes we plan with the objectives that the teachers have designed here that go a step beyond the report card.

Is there anything else you want to add at the closure of this interview?

When you asked about what we felt we didn't get enough of in college I think they need to prepare you on how to hold children when they're having temper tantrums and how to deal with the physical side of temper tantrums and behavior problems. They tell you what to look for if there's any abuse, sexual abuse or anything like that, but they don't tell you how you're supposed to physically take care of children if you have nobody in there to remove a child from your classroom. How are you supposed to remove a child from your classroom without getting hurt yourself? If you're a parent usually you're going to handle it the way you've handled your own kids, but you need to know how to hang on to them. I was told my first year to grab them by the wrist and walk them down the hall if they wouldn't walk and you know at that point I was very naive and didn't know anything differently. They said if you're going to hold on to them you need to have your pinky and the other finger out that way so it shows that you don't have a firm grip. I wish they had told us that. I don't remember being told that. I wish that they had shown me how you are

supposed to get them to count to ten and take deep breaths. A lot of the brain research coming out is talking about how children are going to keep throwing temper tantrums. When they do throw temper tantrums the oxygen doesn't get to the brain therefore they cannot think correctly and they cannot get out of that mode. I wish they had taught more of that and how the brain reacts and how the emotions get thrown in and how you can help that child. Where would that fit in a curriculum? I remember the family and children class, what was it called? It was a behavior class where basically your looking at all the different situations. We had to watch kids and observe kids in different settings, like in a WalMart. I forget which class it was. Was it an early childhood class or was it taught over in the consumer science department? Yes, and we talked about improper responses to bad behavior. For example is the child acting up because you've kept him in a shopping cart for three hours and he needs to get up and walk. Is the behavior because of improper expectations from a parent's or a teacher's standpoint versus the child just being a typical 4-year old and has to move and cannot sit there that long. I wish they had talked more about, "this is what you need to do with a child." I was going through the brain research and they're telling you to count to ten and do all this stuff, but I've also figured out stress points through different workshops that I've gone to. You can help the child to relax, you've got to get them to step outside of that situation and go into a new situation. Or putting on sunglasses and acting real goofy and saying, "superstar" and just being totally goofy where they just totally forget why they are angry then you can address what the problem is. I've figured out all that stuff from going to workshops after I've already started teaching. It would have helped if I had had that before we got into the classroom. The big thing that got me was how to pick up a child that is throwing temper tantrums and be able to remove her from your classroom without you getting hurt the child getting hurt and any laws being broken. I picked one up this year knowing that I'm not supposed to touch him and I didn't violate any laws or anything, knowing how I was suppose to and I got hurt. Because I was protecting the child throwing the temper tantrum and not trying to hurt the child he could still beat me up all he wanted and that's not right. My assistant, in my classroom told me, "you need to hold him this way, and hang on..." how come the assistant knows how to do this and I don't? I wish that had been taught. It's something very little but very, very important. You don't want to leave out that detail.

JULIE

Interview #2

May 1, 2001

This is Julie and this is our second interview. Julie I am going to go over the three broad questions that I had last week and see if it jogs anything in your mind that you might want to add. The first one, how did you decide on teaching as a career; describe your experiences entering the classroom for the first time as a teacher. We talked about what you had learned in school and then all of a sudden you're in reality, what was the difference between the two and what thoughts entered your mind. The last one was what is it like being a beginning teacher in early childhood and I'd asked you to come up with an analogy of something you could compare teaching to. Have you thought of anything after we had had our discussion of something you would like to add?

No

Okay. We'll go on to the second set of interview questions. The first one is "how do you as a beginning teacher define concern? What do you feel strongly about?"

Repeat that. How do you define the word concern as a teacher? What does that mean to you? What do you feel strongly about as a beginning teacher? A concern maybe would be a worry or something that you don't feel like you're prepared for. Something that you think you thought you were prepared for and then when you got into the thick of it realized you need a little bit more information about whatever the situation is.

Do you see concern as something positive or negative?

It can be both it depends on your situation. You could have positive concerns for example, is what I'm doing best for the children. That's something you should be asking yourself everyday, which would be a positive concern. A negative concern would be more specifically about a child that you think may be abused or do you have enough supplies that type of thing.

Have you seen your concerns change from being a beginning teacher till now? I don't sweat the small stuff as much as I used to. I think I panicked over little bitty things like my bulletin boards aren't done right or things like that. Now I'm more concerned about what the curriculum is and how I can change it to fit my style of teaching and being concerned if it's developmentally appropriate. They're [school administration and laws] constantly adding new things for us to do which means more time with the kids and less time for planning and so concerns can come from that. So you have seen a change? Yes. How would you describe your concerns as a beginning teacher? What are they?

That's a good question. You can take your time. One concern that I have been hit with this year is making sure I can recognize neglect and any form of abuse. Another concern of mine is time, they have extended the time at our particular site and next year they are going to be here even longer. We want to make sure that our program is developmentally appropriate without turning it into a day care situation that's a major concern of mine this year. We've extended our time and we want to make sure that the kids get what they need but then you also have to realize what's appropriate for this age level. They're going to need naps or down time and we've got to get so many group times in every day.

Sometimes I'm worried are we getting enough of the curriculum in without all the other outside clutter. I'm not complaining because we've got our Waterford computer program, which is wonderful, but sometimes when you're in the thick of a middle of a lesson you just don't want to leave that teachable moment but you have to because that's your time to go. That's been one of my concerns and behavior management has been a big concern of mine this year, just because it's gotten dangerous in my classroom. I've had one student suspended for battery and that shouldn't be happening at this level. You want what's best for the children in your room, but when you're constantly having to document the bad behavior and only once in a while get to document the good behavior it's concerning. How can I address this problem and still be an effective teacher without letting the other kids just slide by who are having to wait on you while document or call parents or have conferences. The behavior has been a big concern and also parent contacts. This year has been an eye opener for me. Last year I had almost a hundred percent parent participation and this year it hasn't been as good. I've got some parents that are there whenever you need them and I've got others that we don't hear from and aunts and uncles bring them to school. So that's kind of bothersome or a concern.

Is there ever a problem of knowing who the child is to go home with or the child knowing who they go home with?

Yes, in fact I've had parents tell me that their child has to go home on a specific bus. We have our bus schedules all written out and we have bus tags all written up so that the child will have some form of identification. If for some reason they don't know how to tell the bus driver or whomever the adult is trying to get them home responsibly then the adult has a number that they can call it's basically a safety measure. Parents aren't sending that back so I have to call them. You can't get a hold of them because the phone numbers have changed. On top of that if they've said this is the bus the child needs to be on then they call five minutes before you get them on the bus and they say, "don't put them on the bus, I'm coming to get them." One of the children in here was taken by DHS. Her foster mother brought her back here so she could continue in my class. She was out for about two months and now she's back and will be here till the end of the year. We tried to get her set up with the transportation department but the transportation department had her written down for her mother's address. When you call transportation and they would always send it [notice] back to the school and then it trickles down to the teacher and you're like, "no that's not what we said, it's not what the foster parent said. I have my copy right in front of me saying where her address is that you're supposed to take her." Can you imagine if she'd been taken to the mother? We would have lost her. You've got parents who get angry that you put the kids on the bus because they're coming to pick up their child to take them to the doctor but they just didn't get a hold of you fast enough. You've also got the parents who are trying to get a hold of their child because they can't have custody. Our site's a special because almost ninety-eight percent of the kids here are bussed, they're don't walk and they're not parent pickups. I've got a small percentage of parent pickups but the rest of them are bussing students.

Can you think of any other concerns that you had as a beginning teacher?

Money. Explain a little bit more about that. I'm not complaining about our salary because I realize it's not going to change any time soon. We did get a nice raise so that was nice to see. Luckily the site I'm at we have a lot of supplies, but the consumables, like cooking supplies, and some art supplies we can't get through our warehouse, have to come out of

your own pocket if you want to do these certain activities. That's been stressful for me, or a concern. Did I plan ahead of time for this, "oh gosh I forgot, I have to go grab some milk." It might be a couple weeks before payday so that gets hard from time to time not knowing whether or not you're going to be able to have all the supplies to teach what you're wanting to. They give us guidelines on what we're supposed to cover and what we're supposed to cover for report cards, but in order to do that you're supposed to have certain supplies and they don't pay for those like the consumables. I know of other teachers, first year teachers that where they are working have to pay for their own copies. They're working with Saxon phonics where you have to do worksheets and that's coming out of their own pocket I don't see how they can do it.

I think you had mentioned something about time, the amount of time that you spent with teaching is that becoming a concern to you or to your family?

For my family it's a concern because I have a fourteen-month-old son and I hardly ever see him. My daughter goes here so I can see her after school. I don't see my husband very much either and he gets a little angry, because he says, "I thought your second year was supposed to get better, I thought you weren't supposed to be working as late." That's what I thought too but it's not necessarily true. I think it is a myth because I think you constantly want to be changing and evolving as a teacher and making yourself a better teacher. You find new things and I think if you don't you're going to get stuck in a rut and your kids aren't going to be getting the best of you. I look at it as its probably just part of the job. If you were an obstetrician and delivering babies you're going to have to get up in the middle of the night and that's how I look at teaching that its just part of my job. If I chose to teach smaller kids then that's just part of my life right now.

Can you think of any other concerns that you've had? You've mentioned money, parents, and management of behavior.

One thing that is a concern is proper screening instruments, instruments that are developmentally appropriate. I'm concerned about that as well as veteran teachers in the building. One of the screenings we give is the kindergarten screening for these four-year-olds, that's not appropriate. Other teachers have been on committees to try to get that changed where it would be more specific for four-year-olds. They get it all planned out turn it in and it gets lost in the breeze somehow and we're still doing the kindergarten screening.

Do you do anything with Gessell?

No, we do the PPVT, I think I said it right. Sometimes I transpose the letters and we do a growth inventory. The growth inventory is what most of us like because it just tells you what you really need to know about the child. This kindergarten screening is a joke. We've even had parents tell us or ask us, "why are you doing a kindergarten screening with four-year-olds?" And this will be back in the fall, pre-screening that's a concern.

What about assessing students? Has that ever been a concern to you?

The way we do it here, no, because I assess through observation. The only problem there is the documenting being able to make sure you get everything written down. Those three screenings we use help us to assess where they are and how much they've grown. We do the screenings in the fall and the spring. I'm not too worried about the assessment because we do enough here and it's pretty specialized.



Do they try to divide the children up so they are evenly distributed so one teacher does not get all the behavior problems or one teacher doesn't get all the slow kids?

I think they'd like to do that but we can't at this site because it's a one-year site so we don't have any previous history. We do have a developmentally delayed class so once they've been in your classroom and you can identify some of the behaviors then they can be tested and moved to the developmentally delayed classroom. We have one teacher who speaks fluent Spanish so she tends to get parents to request her, that's more of a parent request it's not necessarily that they decide in the office, "okay all the Hispanics need to go ..." they don't do that. It's really hard to separate them by ability or by behavior at this site.

There was one question that I wanted to ask, well there were a couple that came to mind as I was transcribing the different teachers' interviews. Describe your roles as a beginning early childhood teacher. What roles have you played?

Learner, having to learn the ropes around the faculty. Learning the games people play. Learning to stand up for myself. I think also a teacher from the stand point of I'm coming with brand new fresh ideas and I can help inspire the veteran teacher who maybe has been doing the same thing. That's the way they've done it for years. I know that we have a sharing time every two weeks in this building with several others. Two of us are fairly new, under three years teaching and then three or four teachers that have been teaching eight years or more. We'll get together and share ideas. We'll have ideas that they haven't thought of which is neat. You know they're trying to do everything they can to help you out here, which has been really nice here, but you want to be able to give back so that's been nice, I think.

What about roles with kids?

As a first year teacher with kids, I think that...does it have to be just a first year teacher or just a teacher in general? Yourself as a beginning early childhood teacher, what roles have you had to portray? I've been the nurse taking care of any health concerns in the classroom, whether it is ringworm, cuts, bruises or nutrition. Here we eat with our kids at the table. We're setting good manners and proper eating habits. I've got one child that refuses to eat anything but junk food and everyday it's the same story. He will wait till its time to leave and then throw away his tray because he refuses to eat. I've gotten him a couple of times to try things, which I feel is a victory because before he wouldn't try anything. I've had to play nutritionist with him and his mother and had to consult with the school nurse. I've been a counselor dealing with children's behavior problems with parents trying to give them ideas on how they can change or help correct their child's behavior and also appropriate expectations that they should have for their child. If they're expecting their child to be bringing home homework everyday when they're four years old, that's an improper behavior expectation. They need to be parented a little bit. Well, I guess I could also be a parent for the parents and a comforter for both child and parent. Sometimes when their child's going through a rough time and they're acting out the parents can't figure it out sometimes. I can see it from a broader perspective and say, "have you thought about this, have you thought about that?" What other roles have I played? Coach, trying to get the kids to stay motivated when they really just want to give up and keep them motivated so they keep going. I've also had to be a sergeant, I feel like I'm a drill sergeant in here because of the behavior. It sounds like I've got a really bad class. They're good kids they just loose their way sometimes and some more than others

their behavior also has to do with their home life so I'm also partly their caretaker. They have me most of the day and then they go home. I think I mentioned it last time you interviewed me the fact that some kids are on the bus at six o'clock in the morning and don't go home till 6:00 or 7:00 at night. They're not getting very much so I'm their comforter, their mother, I'm "mom" all the time during the day which cracks me up. I'm the art teacher that's one thing I struggle with in here because I want the kids to do something that's authentically theirs instead of cookie cutter art. They try to do the same thing but I think they fell into the rut of doing the same thing every year and some of it is cookie cutter art. It's kind of neat to try to defy and do your own thing. I remember as a child that I hated art because, I think I mentioned this to you too, my teacher was pregnant or something and got angry with me and said, "what are you even doing in here?"

You've mentioned home life that the kids come from. Do you feel like that's a concern of yours?

Oh, tremendous concern because you don't know how honest the parents are being with you about what's going on. You don't know how honest the kids are being. They have a great mind to pretend. I've had a child in here that when she'd go to the dollhouse she'd act out domestic violence. She'd even use those two words, domestic violence. A four-year-old should not know what domestic violence means and so automatically a red flag goes up. You don't want to bring attention to it because the child may get scared and not speak about it anymore. You also want her to know that it's okay to talk. That was a sad situation. The parents are working one or two jobs, they're doing the best that they can as a parent and you don't want to come across as better than thou or "I know exactly what you're doing," and "you could be doing better," because I don't live in their shoes. I do know what it's like to be a parent so I do give them some examples from my own personal life, just to see if that helps. That has helped this year especially because my daughter has been going here. It's been able to help a couple of parents when we can get a hold of them to do conferences.

What are some of the things that a teacher has to deal with before they can get children to learn?

You don't even know if that child's had breakfast. Luckily we have a breakfast program here. You don't know how well they slept the night before. You don't know if they got 1 or 2 hours sleep or if it was a restful sleep were their eyes popping open every thirty minutes because they hear gunshots going off. They hear parents fighting over in the next room and think that that's totally normal. They have older siblings and a lot of the siblings here have multiple families living together it's a large family. You've got aunts and uncles living together they've got their kids and then those kids get married and then they've got kids. It's a large extended family, an enormous family tree and some of them may not even be related by blood but through marriage and they're taking care of each other. Those kids don't know how long they're going to get to stay there. "Oh we'll be here for a couple of months, we're going to move in someplace else." I had a child in here this year that's moved four times this year. Do you have a lot of mobility? I've had one transfer and not come back. The one that I was talking about that's moved four times, they still send her here. It's that special site again and they were parent pick up and drop off so they could do that. If that person had been a bus rider they would have had to go to their own school or their home site. Have you had a lot of kids come during this year?

Not as much as we have in the past, not as much. Why do you think that is? I think probably because they're opening up more four-year-old programs in their home site area. I know this is a really good program and they've gone here their kids have gone here, but when there's an opening in the school in their neighborhood, why not send them there.

We were talking about concerns you have of home life of children. Of the concerns that you've mentioned how would you rate the concerns you've mentioned?

One that I didn't mention is the emotional stability in the home. I think that would be probably number one just because I've got kids in here that are emotionally messed up kids. It starts when they're babies and you want to be able to go to those parents and say, "can I help you" you know without coming across as self-righteous. "Can I help you do this," just for your own kids, "do you remember what it was like when you were little, and you're doing it to your kid too." I'm probably doing it to my own daughter too. That would probably rank number one because so many kids either don't recognize their emotions or number two they don't have control over them.

Do you have a counselor here that works with kids?

Finally, we were supposed to have one at the beginning of the year and we didn't get one. We have two part time or three part time I think we got in about November-ish. They didn't stay past Christmas so we've got three new ones. You have to be able to build up a rapport with a student before they open up and have any kind of benefits come from the relationship and that's kind of a bummer. Do they mostly deal with just the problems, they don't come in and do lessons with the kids? They don't come in and do lessons. We send referrals on the kids that we think need help and we also do role-playing groups for self-control, anger management and other miscellaneous problems or concerns that the staff has expressed.

After emotional stability in the home, what would be next?

Probably the health because that would probably be an umbrella for nutrition, sleep, and physical activity. Sometimes they get too much sometimes they don't get enough. Does that relate to their behavior? It's a night and day difference on kids that have eaten too much. That attention deficit thing that's going around, so many people are saying, "they need to be put on medicine." I'm saying, "no, you need to stop giving him coke first thing in the morning that might help." The one that has nutrition problems in here his mom feeds him a pop tart with juice in the morning. "I don't know why he acts like that, I don't know why he's got all that energy, wish I could have some of that energy." Grab a pop-tart maybe you will too. I'm tacky. So that would probably be number two. Number three would be the fact that they move a lot.

Do you think your concerns would be the same if you were to be in another situation?

Probably not.

What about when you were a first grade teacher? Can you remember what some of your concerns were?

My concerns were that they were being pushed too hard that there was too much parental control over the kids. They would say, "you're just not doing this well enough, you need to be doing this, you need to be doing that" instead of telling the child what they can do. That would have been my first concern, stressing out the child. Let them be a kid. They

learn with play and fun and they have to be engaged. If they're constantly being told, "why can't you do this," they're already going to set themselves up for failure because they think that their parents don't believe in them. Self-esteem would probably go with that as well. I wouldn't worry so much about the moving around part because usually you don't see that much. There would still be a concern with the sleeping and the eating because even though you've got some well-to-do parents their nanny may be taking care of them. They might be sent to a babysitters just for the same amount of time that that child from a Title I school might have been in a day care too, because mommy and daddy are out making a million dollars. That and emotional would probably fit in there too but probably third down.

Where would you rate the concern of having enough materials, having to buy your own materials? Where does that fit in? On a scale from 1-10?

Well just from my experience when I taught first grade at that school we had plenty of art supplies and we had a pretty good amount of paper but all the other supplies that you would use for centers and games and group time activities would be on your own. So it would actually be more I think I'd have more expense at the first grade level because that's not how they're set up where I taught. They're a very traditional school and so it would all have to be on me. At the site where I am now we just got blessed with five hundred dollars spending money for next year. So we get to go through the catalog and order whatever supplies we want. Each teacher? Each teacher for Title I and you know I wouldn't have gotten that teaching first grade. Last year I got five hundred as well. We're not guaranteed it every year but because we have the funds they've allotted it out to each teacher because you're the one in the room and you're the one knows what you need and what you don't need. Games that kids have lost the pieces you can go and get the replacements or if you know there's specific things you want to do, like next year I want a better butterfly net, an actual net instead of a box. The kids can see all the way around it and it will be more viewer-friendly. I'll probably order a lot more science activity things or books on tape. I wouldn't have that opportunity at that last school I taught.

What about the concern about the amount of time you spent? Where would that fit in the scale?

I think I still spent the same amount of time when I was teaching first grade just because I never felt I was getting it totally right. There was always something else to be done even though they had the teacher's manuals, which would be basically, cookie cutter style to tell you how to do this. I couldn't do that I had to do my own thing and with it being a traditional setting I was still making up centers and so I was still putting in that extra time. But also the time that I wasn't necessarily using over here for cutting out materials and things I was grading papers. So it's a trade off.

Where would it fit in your hierarchy of concerns? You talked about emotional setting being number one and then you talked about some other things like behavior.

Time would probably be way down on the list. Definitely way below money because money would be a bigger thing than the time. Time would be low almost to the bottom.

Think of one particular concern that you've had. You mentioned the concern about emotional setting of the home. Can you think of a specific instance of how that has played out?

I have several in there that I started telling you a little bit about, but another one that I have a concern about is whether I am doing the right thing when it comes to parents. I've got a mother that is a single mother and apparently she got pregnant, didn't know she was pregnant, didn't tell the dad of the baby until after the baby was a year old. Then she decided that this child needed a father and wanted to let him be a part of her life. He jumped at the chance. He had never been married to this one lady. He had married and started a family and they took her in, totally open armed, and wanted to change the name on the birth certificate. How many parents are you going to find that are that willing to do that? They live in a suburb of Tulsa and the mom was a little frazzled, things were going on in her life. She was having trouble coping with being a mom, working and taking care of her child so she called up dad and said, "would you mind taking her for a little bit until I can get my act together, it's not what's best for her. She at least had enough sense to say that and so they drove her thirty minutes each day to come to school thirty minutes every day to pick her up to keep her coming. During that time she always had a backpack she was always well dressed, well bathed, behavior problems were nil. Then things started happening again when she would be taken back to mom. Step mom was picking her up so I was hearing both sides and getting caught in the middle. Mom would get jealous of the relationship building between step mom and the child and would yank her back. Just as soon as they got close she'd say no more. Even though they were going out of their way to help out and the whole point was that she have a relationship with her father and that was growing. All this was going on and in the mean time this poor child is stressed out because she wants to be with her mother. She cries because she wants to be with her mom so bad, but yet she's had something to eat she's had a good nights rest and she does so much better at school. She wants to see her dad. This child is in the middle making it like a twenty or thirty-year-old person's pick of the parent, which is not fair to that child. We had to get in the middle because there was a behavior problem and I had to notify a parent. Who do you call, step mom who she's living with now, step mom and dad who were the ones who came to conferences which is what really stirred this whole thing problem. Mom wanted to be at the conference but she wouldn't turn back in the form to tell me when she was available until the day before. By that point every slot was taken. I said, "how about after spring break?" She said, "no it has to be now." And I said, "well I'll be glad to do a phone interview, I can stay so much later than normal," but I was not going to put my own personal safety in jeopardy. In this part of town you don't want to be here too much later especially by myself with my child. She was very upset came up to our principal, told her I was a bad teacher, I was never around. Every time she tried to call me she couldn't get a hold of me. Although I had documented that I had called her back at certain times and she was either not there or we were playing phone tag. That was never brought up, it was, "I was a bad teacher, I was never around that my assistant was more of a teacher than I was, which really hurt because my assistants been gone more than anything.

You were talking about having to be a go-between, between parents.

Right, with the conference, she had complained to the principal and the principal was saying, "what's going on?" I said you know the situation with this student and parent and

told her I had everything documented and she told me, "well, I'm taking over." That helped to have a principal that was supportive of me in that situation. She just jumped right in the middle and said, "you know, this is what you can do. If she [the real mother] can't make it up here for this conference then you go ahead and do it with the step mom, because that's who she's living with, and we'll go from there." Mom never called me back. There was a division, which I don't like to have because that breaks down all forms of communication, and for about a month the mother did not want to talk to me. If she knew I would be absent because I would have professional development that day or I had to take my daughter to kindergarten clinic that's the day she would show up. She would make a big scene in the office with her new boyfriend about how I was never here. That was a concern because that was making me look bad in front of all these other people, even though I knew the truth. This poor child wants to come to school and she's hearing negative things from mom about me. I can tell the relationship is hurting her now so I try to make things a little bit smoother while she's here at school. Once we forget this situation is going on and it starts back up again. Her step mom called me one day and said mom called and said that we need to bring her back home. It was nine o'clock at night and they had just gotten her dressed for bed and she was in bed. They had to pack up her stuff and take her home and she didn't get home till eleven o'clock that night. The next day nobody picked her up for school. Could they not file for custody? They're trying but it costs money and they don't have the money. On top of that they [the father and stepmother] asked me before it got any worse if they could use me to help in this situation. I said, "if you need help just let me know, I'll be there. I can document and show you what I have documented, not a problem." Well then mom came up the next week and said they're not to have anything to do with her anymore, nobody can pick her up but a certain person named, so basically she was telling dad good-bye. He's still not on the birth certificate so she can. She went and got him to help her out whenever life was rough for her. How is this affecting this child? For one thing she's [the little girl] is learning how to manipulate people and she's getting very good at that, which bothers me. Another thing is she's finding out oh, I'm a toy. People can play with me and I really don't matter. She has a very low self-concept, and she's also out of control. She has no control over the situation. Her mother is modeling behavior and this is what the little girl's going to be like. I have a fear, I know you can't project anything in the future, I can see her as being one of these girls that hooks on to the first guy she comes along and sees, probably somebody substantially older, gets locked into a relationship and boom she's got kids. And you restart the cycle. Or worse, she gets beat up and she's in an abusive relationship just because that's what she feels like she needs, a man in control. I have seen her with guys in class she's four years old and she wants to date them. That's been one of my biggest concerns with a parent that I got caught in the middle, I got sucked into the vacuum basically. I'm trying to put myself out of it now at this point but you can't. The stepmother has called up here several times wanting me to return her phone calls. I've had to go to the principal and say, "what do I do here?" She tells me "you can't call her back." Then I feel like I'm letting the child down, because that's not what's best for her. She needs to be with her father and step mom.

When does the administrator get involved? Does she pretty well let you have autonomy within your class or does she like for you to go to her with everything?

She wants to know what's going on but she told us that she doesn't want to get a phone call saying, "this happened and I'm upset," and her have no clue. She's told us to document anything as soon as any problems arises and if I see it happening before a child goes home, I try to get a hold of her before the child even leaves that way she knows what is going on. If she gets a phone call after school she knows what is going on. She's very supportive, she will take the children that are being behavior problems that I can't get a hold of the parents, into her own office until they can calm down and come back. How many administrators do you see do that? She really cares, she's been a very supportive member of our faculty.

Can you think of any other situations where one of your concerns is played out that you'd want to share with others?

Last year I got so enthralled with wanting to be the parent's friends and working things out with them. I tried to be in communication with them about everything and I got sucked into another vacuum by giving my home phone number out to a parent, which I learned was a big mistake. At that time we thought sexual abuse had occurred with a child. We didn't know who was responsible and the parents were really worried. They were both very supportive and wanted to work with the counselors, which usually when you say anything about "sexual abuse" they automatically get scared and shy away, they didn't. They were asking to help and find out what happened. We later identified it as a cousin and so we were able to take care of it from that standpoint. This child needed help and the parents needed help, too. Some of their terminology they were using such as, "you're so sexy, you're so cute." You don't say that to a four-year-old but they didn't know that. We tried to help them realize that's not appropriate for a four-year-old. I was very caring and said, "well, if there's anything you need, I'm going on maternity leave, call my number if you have anything else going wrong." I had them calling me as I was driving to the hospital to go have a baby telling me not to put her on the bus that day. I tried to tell them I'm on maternity leave having a child right now, call the school!" I did not call her back for a good month or two. They called your home about being upset about something? Basically vented to me. I got the parent to calm down and realized that the child was okay. There had been a mix up in the office, and the substitute had no clue that anything was wrong. I brought it to their attention and they thought I had just taken control of the situation. They felt like they had done something wonderful and protected their child, which was good. It's good to feel like you've been a child's advocate and it gives you a little, you know a little notch on your belt, I'll say. When I talked to the substitute about it I said this is what's going on, and the substitute was totally helpful and apologized to the parents telling them, "I'm sorry that this happened." Then they realized the substitute cared as much as I did and it turned out to be a positive experience.

Have you ever been called or subpoenaed to go to court for one of these kids?

I've never been subpoenaed but I have been interviewed by DHS, which means I could be called at any time because a child had been withdrawn from the home. It could happen, it could be a definite possibility of me having to witness. Is that why you have to document so much? Yes ma'am. Not the fun stuff. No with the whole child with the "mother and dad not being married" situation I do know that when our principal talked to the mother, our principal asked her, "do you want his name on the birth certificate, do

you want him to be an active part of her life?" She said, "oh, yes, oh, yes," and so even then she admitted to the principal that she wanted him around she was basically playing games. If they ever called me I would be glad to tell them what's happening after school, but while she's been with me this is what's happened.

Does DHS ever come to school and take the kids from here rather than take the kids from home?

I have never witnessed that but I've heard that if it gets to the point of not being able to locate the parents then they will come take them from the school. They know if they're being investigated. When a DHS person comes and interviews the child the child's going to go home and say, "somebody talked to me today." Think about it, and then they're gonna put a red flag up because all the kids were interviewed in this particular family. That incident was on a Wednesday or Thursday I think and she [student] was here that whole week and then that following Monday she was not back. I got scared thinking mom had gotten scared and run off, but come to find out DHS had taken her and the other two children in the home into custody. Was it for an abusive situation? They could not tell me but the way that they questioned, it had to do with neglect, physical, sexual and emotional abuse. So I can't say what it was really about.

Have you found your background being a detriment to you in understanding types of things your kids go through?

You mean would I be able to understand their home life? Not necessarily, I don't think so I think I probably understand them better than the average person would just because of some of my life's experiences. I've traveled a lot growing up with my dad's job and so I've seen different parts of this nation and I've seen the different lifestyles where you've got rich, rich, rich money, lots of money down to poverty level. I've never felt out of place in either situation. I can talk to a person on whatever level that they're coming from because people are people to me. If they're coming to me and they need something to eat I'm there for them. If they're coming from a rich society area where they've not had the time, then that's there too or if they need just a hug. I think I can read people pretty good, I think that's just the way God made me, too. I'm probably more sensitive to people's needs. Some people don't feel comfortable like my mentor in my Pre I experience who was teaching in the other school district said she could never teach at this school that I'm at now. I asked her why. At that point I had not visited the school yet and I wanted to know why? She said, "because it's Title I and those kids are coming to school so nasty, haven't bathed and some of them don't have the right clothes on. I'm thinking to myself they don't have control over that, it's not their fault. When I actually came here because I had a preconceived idea from that one teacher I was scared to drive in the neighborhood. I was thinking drive-by shootings and everything you see on TV. It's a nice quiet neighborhood during the day you just don't want to be here after dark because there's gang activity around. I think you're going to have that in any big city you even have it in the small cities it's just how much you're going to open up your eyes up and recognize it. Some of it's going on and people have no clue that it's going on. When I got here I saw how these kids were probably more receptive to learning anything new and they wanted to be here. They don't want to go home. They don't want to miss. I would much rather be teaching kids that want to be here than the kids that are made to come here.



Do some of these kids because they don't come from the same backgrounds that you come from?

I've gone through GE or Great Expectations and I've also gone through some multicultural professional development. What I've learned is that with the different socioeconomic levels there are unlearned rules. The poverty level worry about did you get enough to eat, middle class worry did it taste good, upper class how was it prepared that's how they all view food. I don't have a problem with asking did you get enough to eat? Can I have some too? There are some things that I've had to learn in helping me deal with the poverty level children such as eye contact a lot of them don't make eye contact. That class clown usually clowns for a reason. It's not so that they can see how much they can get away with it's their security. When they stand in their group of friends they're actually the leader and they can act up in class and it's showing that they're the more dominating figure in that particular circle of friends. They're willing to go up against a form of authority. Kids from poverty see that as a role to follow some role to look up to and be like. When you have a class clown, I have four in here, they say don't move them across from you. You'd think that you'd move them all the way across the circle. No, you want them right next to you. I tried both ways and he always comes right back to me and that's where he's comfortable and I've just learned to blow it off. You know he'll quiet down when he realizes nobodies looking at him. Sometimes he is funny and sometimes I laugh with him and kids have to see that sense of humor in you. I think I've shown that plenty of times. I don't think that you can take some of your preconceived ideas, of say middle class because that's what I was raised in you can learn from everybody. They didn't teach that or I don't remember getting that from being at the college. I got this from a professional development class, several of them, because we teach in a Title I school. They [the speakers] came and told us a little bit about working with children from poverty and it was wonderful information to get. I think you can learn it but you have to keep reminding yourself because it's very easy to get upset. I do find myself every once in a while getting upset with the kids that are acting up. Thinking, "what are they doing this to me for? Why are they acting up? They know what, it's the end of the year, they know, it's this way all year long." Then I have to realize their still showing their dominance to their friends. I hate to say totem pole, but they're [the kids] high on the totem pole when they act like that and actually I am creating a great leader of tomorrow. So you, it's very hard to think that when they're acting as crazy as they can get and screaming in your ear, "Mrs. Head!" You're saying, "he's gonna be a great leader, he's going to be a great leader, he's going to be a great leader!"

JULIE

Interview #3

April 17, 2001

This is Julie and this is our third and final interview. We are going to be talking about support systems, the ways people have supported you, and ways you wish people had supported you. The first question is can you describe a special moment during your first year when you more fully understood what it was to be a teacher?

Probably I may have mentioned this before. When I was teaching first grade at the other school right before spring conferences. I had a parent who I was one the phone with constantly about her son who was learning to read, how he hated reading, couldn't stand it and couldn't get motivated to even try. He was of course was a poor reader and he just didn't have the motivation. I remember her coming in to me after spring conferences, because we had powwowed together with her husband about how we could help this particular child do better. When she came in and told me that day when she picked him up, she said, "you'll never believe it, we went to the library and he was picking out all these books. You've made it so much fun and I've seen so much growth in my son." It was like, "oh, I got through to somebody." It may have been one kid but I got him to love something that he didn't love before. That's my job to broaden children's horizons, help them open their eyes up to a brand new world. I was able to do that with him so that made me feel, "oh I taught him something, he got it." It was like "wow!" I'm hoping that he'll love it from now on. She said he hated reading and she was crying when she told me. I was crying when she told me that was a really tough semester to be teaching and for her to come up and tell me at that particular moment was so uplifting because I was really down at that point. I was ready to give up and asking myself why did I get into this. Then when she said that it kind of gave me a little perk. Have you had any of those kind of moments this year? Or since then where you felt you made a breakthrough? Last year there were two kids that were going through a really rough time in their family life. One child lived only with his father, which was quite odd. I had several in my class that were raised by their father instead of their mother in a single family and with a single income and all that. Usually you see the mother, but it was the father in this case. He was not a drop or deadbeat, whatever they say. His child was acting out every day in class about women and took it out on me. We found out his dad had a brand new girlfriend. It was a good thing for this kid but he didn't see it that way he saw it as something coming between he and his dad up until then it had just been he, dad and his grandmother who was sick at the same time. We got him about mid way through the year and we got him to the point where he would come into the room without screaming. He did not want to be there he would cry and he would beat himself on the lockers. He did not want to come in the doorway he'd block his arms out to the side so you couldn't get him in the door. Once he'd get in the door we calmed him down and he knew that I really cared about him then he would let down and learn and have fun. Every day it was a struggle. About mid year we got him to come in on his own and he just came in and we're like, "how did you come in here, we didn't see you come in" you know. That was kind of neat. Another one would be last year when I was pregnant. It was kind of odd because at least three other mothers

of students in my room were expecting as well. We did a unit on family. Behavior was getting a little out of hand when they found out I was expecting. They got mad at me, which I totally understand, because they just got used to me and I was going to be going away. They thought I was leaving them just like their moms or not going to be able to watch them as much. One of my little girls was a pill, just a little pistol, cute as a bug but would be just ornery and mean as you could possibly get but have the cutest little orneriest smile. It was hard to discipline her when she was like that. She was getting very angry and upset, too, because of her family life situation. Mom was expecting her third child. The second child had just turned one or was like fourteen months old so there were several babies in the house at this point. She had always been the baby so this was not acceptable. She took it out on me forever and then when I came back on my maternity break I came back to visit her behavior had changed. She wasn't taking it out on everybody. She had matured over the year. That wasn't one particular episode it was the growth of one year to see her change. Before I went on maternity leave she was so rotten and hateful I had to send her to the counselor and had to have mom go get counseling it was that serious. Now they're doing great as far as I know when I've heard people say that they've seen them. I haven't seen them myself usually my assistant comes in and tells me that she saw them. Every once in a while I might see one of my students. This year at the mall I saw one, which freaked her out, she was like, "you come to the mall, too?" That was kind of funny. Yeah, you mean you don't live at school? I did run into one of the disappointing situations I have had in teaching I'm sure you're going to get to that too. The little child I had last year that would not speak and we thought something's not right. He wasn't processing right and later figured out he was voluntarily muting himself. He didn't want to speak. Why should he speak when he's got a large family and they'll all speak for him? They let him sit there and play video games. His mother was in the nursing profession and it was so wild because we tried to get her to get him some help, "I don't want my child labeled." He might have spoken five words by the end of the year, five words! Now is this in first grade or Pre-K? It was in Pre-K. That's when I was gone, so I missed that. I ran into him January of this year and he acted like he remembered me but he still was so shy and introverted and didn't want to speak and I felt like, "he got away." You know that bothered me. If you don't have parents to help with that you're teaching with your hands tied so to speak.

Where have you gone to seek advice or help from the time you entered the classroom till now?

My mentor teacher or supervisor teacher, whichever you want to call it. Probably my principal but they probably say I ask too many questions. I'd rather get it right. No questions a stupid question is how I look at it. Definitely principal and other teachers that might be down my same hall. This hall right that I'm in now I have three teachers I go to. One of them is my mentor teacher from last year but the other two they all kind of do the same things. They've taken me under their wing and we work together. It has been a very supportive year. Last year I was in a different hallway so I didn't have that. If I were there this year I probably would not have had it again. I think it depends on where you're positioned or where you're located in the building. Sometimes it not as easy to see each other now here I can bang on the door and they'll see me. Probably the first year here at Pre-k I did call one of my professors she was my mentor from the college, but probably mainly the principal. I went to other teachers that I know at church that might have gone

through some of the same things that are veteran teachers, and they could kind of throw words of wisdom my way.

What were the results from some of these sources? Can you think of some specific things you went to them for?

Room arrangements, thematic ideas, behavioral problems and how to help cope with that. How to relax and chill out and not let little bitsy things bother you. I like to think I run a tight ship but in early childhood that's kind of an oxymoron. I run a tight ship when we're going places but in here they have their designated boundaries where they can still grow but I have to give them that or else they will be everywhere. This is a pretty large room. It's a very large room and we have a lot of transition time where we're going to computers, bathroom, lunch, breakfast, playground time, motor room time so there's a lot of up and down time. Even if you're in the room all day, we're having trouble with it now just being able to walk down the hallway without hurting each other. Let's see room arrangement, testing, screenings, "am I doing it correctly, am I following directions," Sometimes the directions on those tests are a little vague so it's nice to see somebody as an example. My mentor last year, the first year I was screening, would come in and model for me so I could witness her doing it with one of my kids. I could see how to question because you've got to be careful about not leading them. Let's see probably other things might be about daily schedules that they have here, what they've done in the past, and how we can improve on things, parent relations, sending notes home, making sure things get broadcast out to the public.

Who do you go to for information about parents more so than another person?

Mainly my mentor here. When I taught first grade it was a unique situation because it was where I had interned. I went to my interning supervising teacher for just about everything even though she wasn't my mentor. I just trusted her and she would tell me what I needed to know and not just fill in the blanks with whatever she wanted to fill in. At this site, my first year here, I didn't go to the principal a whole lot because she, I don't want to say tucked herself away from us, she said she wanted to help us but then she was not there. Now that was a different principal than now? That was a different principal than this year. She would be absent on days that big things happened. I don't know if it was intentional or if things just happened, you never can tell and I want to give the person the benefit of the doubt. We had an incident with a child that was left on the bus all day in the searing heat, all day at the bus yard. She was not in the building and she did not come in to take care of that. She called and told our supervising teacher in the building to get everybody out and I thought that was a little chicken way out of it. She should have been here to handle that, she wasn't no meetings that important and I don't think she was at a meeting, I think it was her choice to be gone, that's what I heard. You don't know but it just left a bad taste in my mouth. Then also at the beginning of the year she would say, "kids don't belong in my office. Don't bring them into my office for any behavior problems." Contrary to this year our principal is in the room with us. She's so awesome, she will take care of the problem almost so much that it hurts her. She's probably taking in too much but you know people have always taken advantage of her. I didn't get as much help from the principal last year as I did this year.

If you were to rank the order of whom you would go to first, second, and third how would you do it?

It would depend on the problem. If it were a problem with a parent I would not automatically go to the principal just because that's whom the parents would go to next. I would want it documented and I would want the principal to be aware of what is going on so if she got any phone calls she would be know. If it was classroom behavior and how could I modify my program then I would probably go to my mentors.

You mentioned that there were some people at your church that sometimes you go and ask questions. Is it easier to go to somebody outside the school or inside?

First I might need to know how we did things in the past then it would be easier to go to someone in the school because they would know. When it's a delicate situation or I disagree with what some of the mentor's are saying here, well then it's a whole lot easier to go outside and get an unbiased opinion, which helps. I also don't want them knowing too much about my school life because I'm trying not to take school to home, so does that answer that?

Yes. What would you tell a beginning early childhood teacher about your experiences as a beginning teacher? What kinds of things would you make sure that you got across to them?

That they're doing a very important job and don't let anybody tell them otherwise that would be the first thing. Believe in yourself and believe in the kids that you're teaching because that's what really matters. It doesn't matter what anybody says about what your job is or teachers are complaining about this, or teachers are complaining about that. With the job raise and all that was going on and I got tired of hearing about it. It's kind of like that commercial that's on TV now, "I told my dad when I grew up I wanted to be a teacher, and he said don't you want to be a doctor, that's a noble profession. And the kid says well, where will doctors come from if we didn't have teachers." So I try to keep that in the back of my mind at all times because there are times when you get down and you need to pick yourself back up. It's okay to feel good about doing this [teaching]. It's like being a parent you're not going to see the rewards of what you're doing. You might see it on screenings how they grew from the beginning of the year to the end of the year but you really will not see everything until the very end because you're helping mold a little person. The second thing, would be find support, find somebody to talk to, do not keep it bottled up inside. If you have a problem and you're stressed out or have any questions, ask, yell, scream, do your time out or count to ten, whatever you have to do to get out and tell somebody stuff is going on in your room. If you internalize everything you'll explode and it will burn you out. Also make sure you make time for your family because if you don't that will burn you out too. I think sometimes you really get into it gun-ho thinking, "I want to do this, I want to do that," and then you get right in the middle of it and it turns into a bigger monster than you expected it to be. You're in the thick of it and you can't stop the momentum it just keeps going. You need to set clear boundaries. This year I've stopped taking things home on the weekends. I've done it a couple of times, when we've had long breaks, but for the most part I if I do take it home, by the time I get home I just leave it in my car. Basically I'm not taking anything home because I don't work on it. I wish I had set a better limit about leaving at a certain time every day if I'm still here next year I'll do that. Make sure you have somebody to talk to and get that all out. I always strive to make myself a better person. Don't think that you know everything. You're fresh

out of college, "I know how to do this," because you'll find out really fast that you don't. I'm not speaking from personal experience because I always think I don't know enough. Here I am telling them not to overdo it but it's okay to get involved with things, but when you do make sure you can give a hundred per cent. Don't spread yourself out between five or six committees unless your principal tells you to, try to stick to one or two committees. I don't know how every school does it, but that helps because everybody's got to participate somehow that's what makes the school systems run is to get the teachers involved in things like that. Pick a committee that you enjoy something about because that helps to pass the time, if you hate what you're doing you don't want to be there after school for meetings. Go to as many professional development engagements that you can. Try to go any to any conferences and stay refreshed. It's okay like with our school district because they'll pay for you to go to professional development meetings. Some teachers say, "oh I feel so bad I missed my class." I'm saying I don't, I want to go, I want to get out, I want to get refreshed because if I don't I'm going to start hating it. You don't know what the most recent studies are and plus it helps whenever you do go to those functions and those workshops you get to talk to your peers and see how it is throughout your district. Whether it's an in-district or it's an all-state or a nation-wide whatever, go for it do it and don't let anybody talk you out of it. If they want you to be the best teacher then go.

One thing that I forgot to ask you, did you receive any kinds of support from university personnel or professors?

From my first year? Yes, you mentioned everybody but that entity and I'm wondering if you got any kind of support from them? One of my professors was also on my entry year committee was basically really the only one that I talked to. I didn't seek advice from them either. If I had sought the advice and didn't get it then it would be a different story, but I had enough around me at that point that I wasn't by myself.

What would you as a beginning teacher tell an administrator or an instructor in a university?

Well, with three different administrators to talk about I guess I'm lucky. From the aspect of support, what would you want them to know about how they could best support a new teacher? Be receptive to new ideas as well as inviting to welcome in somebody brand new. If you're in a faculty meeting you might ask, "well what do you think about this," without putting the person on the spot. Make them feel like they're a part of things and where they feel like what they have to say counts. Be available for any questions. When I was at my first school teaching first grade my principal made a habit of coming by every room, every morning. Maybe this was for accountability or to make sure everyone was in their doorway by a certain time, I don't know. I really appreciated her coming with a smile on her face, "good morning, have a good day." That does so much versus walking around with a coffee cup in her hand, like mine did last year. She always had a coffee cup in her hand and was walking around or trying to hide from people. That just doesn't set well with me. Working in the commercial field when I was a retail clerk in customer service my managers would always hide when customers would come up with big problems and make me handle it. That's what that reminded me of. I thought they should be right here in the middle of this. Please don't slap administrating jobs on teachers, they've got enough to do. I know administrators have a lot to do and I'm not cutting them short by any means, but be professional, be friendly and supportive. I enjoyed the

greeting every day that was a pick-me-up. When you see one of your faculty members having a hard time it's okay to go up and ask what's going on with the whole picture, because you may be able to help just by listening. I know with the principal we have this year a lot of things have been going on such as having a new baby and everything. She would just say, "come on let's talk." That was so good because it may not have been a problem but in my head it was a huge mountain. Once you talk to someone about it that has no clue what's going on it lets the air out of that tire I can breathe now. It's kind of like sitting down and having a good cry. Yes exactly and I'm not saying being buddy, buddy with somebody. You still need to keep that level of professionalism between the two but be available and know that it's a person that's working with you and not just a teacher. I mean there's a whole person they're not just a number like the bank. What about them coming by your room? Sometimes that can make people nervous so I hate to say come by a lot. If they have the personality and they're engaged with the children when they come in and they're not standing there like an ogre with their hands on their hips saying, "what are you doing in here," then that's wonderful. I told our principal this year because she does that and she knows the kids by first name and all that and that's wonderful. I remember when I was teaching the first grade I felt so scared and intimidated when the principal came in with her clipboard. I just knew she was writing all these horrible things about me and how I didn't do this and didn't do that. My interning supervisor teacher told me if you ever get that nervous here's a tip for new teachers put them to work while they're in your room. I try to remember that it's kind of like staring at them with their underwear on that type of thing. I did that with my principal and this was before she hired me to finish out that year. She came in to observe me so she could write a letter of recommendation. We were doing art and she doesn't do art well, that's not where she's comfortable. That's what we were doing that day and I made her do art, but you know what it took some of the stress away. Give constructive criticism, don't go in there and beat somebody up verbally, that just degrades them and they don't feel like doing anything better anyway. Be honest and start off with something positive they're doing and then go in with something constructive. You're not going to go in there and tear somebody down cause it's not going to want them to do anything better. That's another thing that bothers me if somebody is supposed to be observing you and writing this down for documentation on how good a teacher you are and they're only in your room twice a semester, I have a problem with that. I don't think that's a valid survey.

What would you tell instructors? What would you share with them about being a beginning early childhood teacher and what they need to understand?

Don't take everything that your kids do, to heart. I wear my heart on my sleeve and it breaks my heart to see how some of the kids come in and the problems they have. That's why I didn't go into special education because I didn't think I could handle it. I had one of those kids taken out of the home, I think I talked to you about in our last interview, and I can't let that get to me. In the same regards you can't help but let it get to you because it helps you have more of a connection with that little human.

What would you tell the instructors as far as helping prepare beginning teachers?

I definitely would say the portfolio they had us do to keep doing that. Make them put more into it and be more detailed because you can never be too careful too tedious. That's something that you're giving the interviewer to tell them a little bit about yourself and it's has to really catch their eye. Some people were graduating with me and I was

appalled at the work they were turning in. It was acceptable but it was like they were not going to get a job compared to me. I'm not trying to sound like I've got a big head, but for them to not put an effort into it [the portfolio] shows me if they're not doing it for themselves to get a job what are they going to be doing in the classroom for those kids? That portfolio's about them and it is something they should care a lot about and present well. If they don't care about that then what are they going to do about these kids whom they don't know, you know what I mean?

What you would tell instructors and we were talking about portfolios.

Oh yeah, also with the lesson plans that they made us prepare to turn in, it helped to have group themes. I know one of our creative classrooms classes we had to work in groups and turn in one big theme. It was a huge packet and it was a lot of work, everybody complained about all the paper that we were having to use but I've used them [the thematic lessons]. I wish I had had more from that coming in because it would have been a little bit more to add to my pile before I even got into the classroom. I wish that we had done more of that because that's hands-on, it's something you can use in the classroom its not just philosophy. I think we need to teach more art and things about art because there's too much craft cookie cutter crafts going on. Art's not my favorite thing to do because I struggle with that myself, but I want to make it interesting for kids. I don't know if you've seen my masks back there but those kids did not want to do that. After I made up my mask and was goofy with them they went over there and made those by themselves. They decided what shape they wanted and that to me was art. I gave them a plate and said go to town and I wish I had more ideas for that so I go to workshops for that now.

What kind of advice about supporting beginning teachers, would you give a parent?

I had this conversation at the beginning of the school year. You can't always go by first impressions because that teacher if it's the first time that person has ever been in the classroom you don't know how they handle stress. It's a very stressful time and they have never done this before even when they've interned they haven't had the experience of being there the first day they may not quite know how to handle it. First of all give them the benefit of the doubt because it's the first day and they are just as nervous as you are. You can't go on first impressions because that may have been how they handle stress. Think of how you are when you meet somebody for the first time you want to put on your best face but sometimes little goof ups happen like having a piece of food in your teeth or something, things are going to happen. Be open and communicate. If you have a problem or if you get upset about something go directly to the teacher and if you need to then document it if you don't feel like something's being done about it. Have open dialogue with that teacher because if you go by hearsay on what the kids say, kids say stuff all the time and it may not be the truth. You need to make sure that that teacher knows that you're worried about that. Because I've had some kids in here say, "things have happened to me in the bathroom." I say, "why didn't you tell me?" They were scared to tell me because they didn't want to tattle and those they were one of the good kids that didn't want you to know, they were over sensitive and they didn't want to get in trouble. Immediately I took different precautions because I said, "no we're not having this." If that had not been brought to my attention it could have kept going on. I don't have a problem with parents calling me unless they talk my ear off for twenty minutes and it's time to go then I get kind of impatient. The point is that's their child and that's how I act



with my daughter so as long as they feel like their kids getting the most important thing then that's okay because that's the bottom line. You want to make sure that cause you're actually teaching the parent too. One teacher's kid that I taught about reading and says, "you never talk to me like my kid was just one of the twenty." She said, "I always thought he was one of your favorites." That made me feel good because that's how I want them to feel even though they may be one that is not my favorite. I know how I would feel since I am a parent that helps. If you don't have kids then you probably don't know where to come from for that. Be careful how you use your words always say something positive at first, because if that teacher's had a bad day and you start accusing that person of something that they didn't do you're automatically putting them on the defense. Go in with something positive and say; "I just have these concerns can we talk about it?" If you keep it as an open and on the table then it'll be a safe bet that you'll get it worked out, if there's any problems. Plus if you're talking and you have regular dialogue going on then if a problem arises then usually it will be taken care of faster because the kid knows. The kid knows that the parents are talking and they know if they [teacher and parent] are not getting along. "Oh well, I'll just use this to add a little bit of grief to my mother. I'll act up in class and act like an angel when I'm home or vice versus." I mean I've seen it happen with my own child so it happens. Kids know how to manipulate and if you don't make sure that you stay the adult in the situation you get sucked in and then people's feelings get hurt and you can never go back and change it. Keep the lines of communication open. Also I like the open door policy where they can come in but if they do they're going to work. They're going to come in and maybe play games with the kids, or do an art project so the kids aren't swarming around the parent. They will do that sometimes when parents come in and then you don't get anything finished. The parent feels awful but when the parent comes in and works with the kids you don't feel like the parent's watching every single move you make. And they know they're accepted. I don't want them to come in and sit down.

Can you tell me if you belong to professional organizations and what they are if you do?

I belong to NAEYC, National Association of Education of Young Children. I'm also a member of Friends of Early Childhood which I think they just changed their name. So I'm like maybe that's the name they just changed it to. I'm also a member of the state and district teacher associations and all the affiliates that go with those three big ones.

Do you get publications from these organizations?

Friends of Early Childhood send out a little newsletter I think and then their big conference is when we're off in October. I've heard from teachers in the past that they haven't been as good as they were this year, it was awesome this year. I had so much fun. The conference was little mini workshops and I learned a lot. I went to a Polaroid workshop and got a free Polaroid camera for our classroom, which was so awesome and I've used it. When you go to the state teacher's association meetings there are hardly anything for early childhood and if it is it's for first or second grade, maybe a couple kindergarten things. I join those other ones because there's more that's pre-k that's right in the middle of everything. I got to go to the NAEYC national convention in Atlanta this year our school district paid for another teacher and myself to go. I sprained my ankle the first day I was there but I really enjoyed being away and getting to talk to people across the nation about what's going on in early childhood. I didn't know that people in other states and countries thought about the same things people in our state do. It was really

eye opening. What did you learn going to the early childhood conferences held here?

They have it all, they have it all. The conference was held at a site where you could see everybody else's classrooms. I think that was the most fun to go and see how they do their room arrangements and what kind of bulletin board's they had that were interactive, how they stored things and just little bitsy ideas you could take back and help make your room more efficient. It was a lot more exciting and a lot more beneficial than going and sitting through a little three-hour conference, "okay, I'm ready to go and eat now."

What kinds of articles do you usually pick up to read when you find time to read?

I haven't been able to read lately any early childhood news. What are the things that attract you when you do pick something up? Brain research, I like the latest things with brain research. I also try to look up a little bit on literacy just to kind of keep myself informed on how they're changing things. I use the web a lot to get my information more than reading a journal.

I was going to ask do they have a professional library here at the school?

Not at this school but they have one at the learning center where all the professional development takes place. I get most of my reading material from the web because I can go to all the major web sites like NAEYC and Read Across America. Any time I look for any specific theme like we're doing things about the zoo I found all this information on what they were doing with schools across the nation on how they were implementing their programs with the programs in the school building.

Do you belong to any kind of list serves or mailing lists you can correspond with other new teachers?

No, but I've been approached by the Friends to do a workshop next year or this coming fall in October. Whenever we did our inservice the very first week of school that all of us got hired we had to go to the entire new teacher training and because we're all on email here we can keep track. I've got two or three friends that I met there that I didn't know before hand and so we kind of keep in touch. We make sure we go to all the same functions.

What have been some of the most important things you have learned about yourself and what areas have you seen the most growth as a professional teacher?

I could tell you a lot of things that's wrong with me as a teacher it's hard to say what I like about myself as a teacher. How have I grown? I think I'm less tolerant of some behavior. I'm harder nosed than I was before I think I've grown in that area when it comes to classroom management. I've probably grown, but I've got so much further to go, in what I was when I was teaching in that first grade classroom and then came in here. This is my second year here and I have zero tolerance now and I back myself up, "okay, I'll give you three warnings." In my philosophy I still say I think it's okay to learn from mistakes. They might have one or two chances at correcting that behavior but before I would be like, "okay, we can't do that now," and then say, "you were told!" Now I've got a firmer stance I've had to with this class. I've had to learn to be better about organization that's been one of my biggest downfalls that affects your consistency. Let's see I'm trying to find things to laugh at now. I think I've always liked to laugh at things but I think I've grown in that sense that things that used to bother me now I just, "okay, okay, you're funny," and blow it off. I think I've grown in that regard when before I would be like, "can you believe he said that to me, I can't believe..." I used to take everything

personally. The very first year I would say, "I can't believe you, you're doing that just to make me mad." I remember saying that and my interning teacher says, "you need to relax, he's not doing that to you he's doing that because he likes how you're reacting." Having kids myself now I know that, but I was taking everything personally. So that's kind of funny now that I can giggle about stuff. Probably the worst thing about it now is that I've got such a great sense of humor about it all is that when they do get in trouble I have a hard time keeping a straight face. Because I really want to say, "that was really good," or, "that's pretty good for a four-year-old," "You picked that up quick."

What else have you learned about yourself?

I try to be everybody's buddy and I need to stop doing that, you get hurt fast that way and it affects how you teach. When you try to please everybody in your building, whether it's the principal or faculty members, parent's, or kid's, somebody's going to get their feelings hurt. I'm the peacemaker so to speak. I've really been trying to keep the peace with everybody and it's not going to happen. I'm an in-charge person but I also want to make sure you feel okay. I might step on you to get there but "are you okay?" Let's see I've had to learn to let go of things where I was a perfectionist. This has to look a certain way and now I've kind of backed off and it's okay if the picture's not quite centered on the page, "they're four years old, back off." I'd always like to decorate their art work with like backdrops or you know little frame of some sort and they're like, "you're overdoing it you're stressing yourself out trying to make it, let it be by itself." I've had to learn to back off being a perfectionist when it comes to that.

What do you think are some of the most important characteristics for an early childhood teacher to possess or to develop?

Sense of humor of course, compassion, sometimes that can eat you alive though. Patience with capital letters, endurance, honesty. Endurance in what sense? Right now I'm looking forward to just eight more days of school. If I could just make it to break I'll be okay. It's kind of like the same thing if you're having a bad day the kids will be a little different story the next day and with one of my kids this year I got to the point where I knew she wasn't giving me her best. She wanted a lot more than I could give her and she needed to be home in bed, she needed go to sleep and get a good meal in her. Once she started getting in the bad behavior mode, it just snowballed. It was like she couldn't wake up and get out of it. She got in such a rut where she'd start by pouting because she didn't get her way at group time and she'd stand up when everybody else was sitting down, on purpose just to be different. She wanted attention and when I'd say go lay down on the couch that wasn't good enough it was just totally affecting the classroom behavior. The other kids saw this and it wasn't making their life any better, it wasn't making my life any better. I finally had to call up her mom and say, "you need to come get her, she needs to go home, she needs to get some food in her and a good nap. The next day she came back and she acted like a total super star, night and day difference. If I had not done that there's no telling what she would have been like the next day because she figured, hey this works. So it's endurance to get through the day as well as through the year sometimes? Yes, and don't take home stuff on breaks to work on. That's going to be my goal for next year, didn't I say I didn't take it home on weekends this year. I guess I should be more specific, weekend. I did on break a couple times; I'm being honest. Endurance, yes, let's see about another characteristic. Respect for the kids because if you don't respect them there's no way that they're going to respect you. You can say you respect them to their face all you

want to but if you don't really do it, the kids see past you. They see past the words they can look in your eyes and read you for what you are. Respect them and respect yourself it's okay to be proud of what you're doing. Don't let anybody tell you otherwise.

Can you think of anything that I did not mention in any of the other interviews that you feel like you want to contribute about being a new teacher beginning teacher?

We had talked about associations. Get active in something I don't care if it's associations or politics or whatever get active in something. Back up what you believe that's one thing I didn't do at first now I do and I'm wish I had done it from day one it gave me a little bit more confidence like we were talking about. When people see that you're standing up for what you believe in, they're gonna take you more seriously and take you for the professional that you are.

What about placing new teachers with someone willing to let them fail and learn?

The only way you're going to find out is if you try. Another thing I've been guilty of is when somebody gives you constructive criticism and you say, "I've tried that already." I got a slap in the face this last week with that. You have to try something for a long time before you can say it doesn't work you can't try it once. Try it with several different occasions, several kids, all the different little variables can turn everything one way or the other. Be consistent that's the big C word. I hate that word.

Do you think you would ever want to be, to be a mentor teacher?

I think I'd like to someday after I've been in it a while. Probably not till I've been in teaching ten or fifteen years.

APPENDIX H  
Cameron's Interviews

CAMERON  
Interview #1  
April 11, 2001

I was wondering if you could share with me how you decided on becoming a teacher.

Well, I guess, I actually went to school, went to the university thinking that I was going to be a business management major. I'd already decided I was going to open up a dance company and I was going to open a wedding shop. That's what I wanted to do since I was little. All of a sudden, it hit me. I started to teach at an ESL school, English as a second language school where my mother had volunteered. She said you know we really need some help with some of the younger children so I went down there. I thought you know this is what I'm supposed to do. This is what I was put on this earth to do to teach young children. I decided that I had to change my major. Now in the distant future, I may end up going back and doing something else, but if I do go back it would be for something in the field of education. But at that time I decided that that's what I wanted to do. Then it was deciding if I wanted to be an elementary teacher or an early childhood teacher. I asked around and at that time some teachers were having to go back and get re-certified in early childhood if they wanted to teach kindergarten or first grade. I thought, you know, I want to be in kindergarten.

Okay, now tell me a little bit about, was there anything in your background growing up, other than your mother being a teacher, that inspired you, or had something to do with this decision to teach?

My mother wasn't a teacher she was doing volunteer work at our church. Our church houses an ESL school and an ESL church. That's how she had gotten started. My mother's actually a receptionist, but hasn't any background in education. I grew up not really liking school. At first I said I'm not going to go to school at all. After I finished high school I said, "I'm not going to go back to school. I've spent enough years doing that why would I want to go to school for another four years." I ended up getting a scholarship at a university close by. My mother said, "if you don't go now, you'll never go back." She said, "you need a degree of some kind." That's why I decided on business management. I tend to be a more organized person and I thought that would be something that if nothing else would help me in my business. Once I got started with little kids, I thought forget organization, this is what I want to do. What age group were the kids that you worked with in the ESL program at your church? It was a very small group of kids and my mother had them all by herself. They started with bed babies, everywhere from just a couple days old until they finished kindergarten. She had to receive so many all of a sudden, that she wanted to split up the rooms. She took the bed babies and I took, I think it was three, four and five year olds. I probably had about, five or six, three, four and five-year-olds in a room. I liked reading little books, and giving hugs. I liked going over their homework. Some of the kindergartners brought work in because they couldn't read it. We had people there to kind of help them along. All though I didn't speak any Spanish, and still don't, I would go over saying this is red, red, and they would say red. I

think for me it was very uplifting to see them grow as much as they did. For most of them it was their first experience in anything that was completely English based and they just grew, and grew. I think that's one of the reasons why I wanted to get with children.

What were your relationships with parents during this time? Did that help make the decision for you at all?

Well, actually, because of the situation that we were in, most of them couldn't communicate at all with me at times that was very difficult. Now I'm still volunteering at the same ESL classrooms, and they're coming up to me and telling me they've learned so much and we talk. We talk about things that are happening at school that maybe they don't understand but they feel comfortable talking to me about it. Their language is kind of broken and we use a lot of sign language and we use a lot of pointing and trying to talk back and forth. They've, they've gained a trust. I'm so happy that I was there as long as I have been. I'm happy for my ESL students that I have now in my classroom, because I understand how hard it is whenever you walk into a classroom and you don't understand anything that a person's trying to tell you. It's a matter of trust. Do some of those same students that you work with there, are they in this school, or in a different area? We have one right now. The church is in this area. I'm lucky that some of them have managed to come to this school. Some of the other one's [children] go to different schools. We have people that drive as far as forty-five miles to come to the ESL school. Even if I could get just one parent, and the one parent translates for everybody else it really has helped. Now they can go till kindergarten, you said? The parents are there with classes and while the parents are learning English the children are there while their parents were learning English now it's a full school at night. We have bed babies all the way to adults. We have youth there and we have driver's education classes, citizenship classes, and then anyone that's wanting to learn to read, even if they're not an English as a second language. If they've never learn to read they can come there also. So how long have you been working in that program? I began working in that program I believe at the end of my senior year of high school. The program has been around probably about fifteen years and it has really started to build.

You mentioned something about when you decided on teaching you went back after you'd been working in this situation and you decided, "I think this is what I want to do." You mentioned talking to elementary and early childhood teachers because you weren't sure about the level you wanted to teach. What kinds of questions were you asking?

I would ask, "do you enjoy your job? What types of classes do I need to take, etc.?" I knew I wanted to work with younger students. I knew I didn't want to be in third grade, fourth grade, or fifth grade. I knew that's just not where I needed to be personally. From working with kids in the ESL program or just from being around kids in general? Just being around kids in general. I had done a lot of dance classes and I knew that that just wasn't for me. I knew that kindergarten, first grade, pre-school even, that age is who I wanted to work with. I'd ask questions like, "you know, if I'm certified, what do I need to be certified in?" What are the areas schools are hiring right now? Everyone told me go ahead and get your elementary and get your early childhood but I kept telling them, "I don't want to be in elementary, and if I don't want to be elementary, why would I get the degree because that's not what I want to do. I think that that helped me finally come down to the decision. A lot of people have talked to me about being in speech pathology. I had a terrible speech problem when I was little and they said, "that's what you need to

do, you need to be in speech pathology because you'll understand those kids." I said, "you know, I don't know if that'd be the best place for me, I want to be in a classroom, and I want to be with twenty, twenty-one little kids. I want to be there day-in-day-out, I want to be their security and I want to be their safe place. That's how I ended up here.

What kinds of classes did you take that you felt really sparked and helped motivate you even more in your decision to become a teacher?

Cognitive classes, understanding how their brains worked, understanding how they learn was very interesting to me. It really made me stop and think are the practices that are going on in children's education now correct. Children learn through creative hands on projects and I love stuff like that. That was another thing that really made me think that's why I'm supposed to be here. We dance, we sing, we make things, and we get the floor dirty. Those type of classes helped exceptionally well. The classes where we were able to go out and look at other teachers teaching being able to get out of a little university room and going out and seeing what other teachers are doing. Getting to work with kids any kids helped those are the classes that I enjoyed. History of education I thought was nice to know, but I don't know that it helped me as much as understanding how they're learning and the ways to help them learn.

You mentioned your creative side and what you said about dancing. How have you seen that aspect play out with kids? Have you been able to reach kids through creative methods that you or somebody else has not been able to reach otherwise?

For example, in our inter-session, in the one week I have kindergarten and first-grade mix, multi-age I had about twenty in the morning and twenty in the afternoon. We just danced. It wasn't anything very constructive, it was just dance, dance, dance. We learned sequencing, we learned patterning, we learned to listen, we learned to follow directions, but it was the kids that you hear teachers say, or parents say, "they just can't sit in that chair, they can't make a pattern because they can't stay in the center long enough." Those kids can make patterns because they did it when they were out there dancing. It's those kids that move kinesthetically, it's those kids that may not listen in class because they're thinking about the computer that's over there and its flashing stuff. It's those kids, that need the movement, big muscle movement, and the coordination skills and that's why I did the class because I knew it would help those kids. I made sure that those kids were in the class. It was like the difference between night and day and now those kids come back to me even the kids that aren't mine for the one hundred eighty school days. They come back to me and they say "Ms. Johnson that was so neat I go home and I practice every night and I show it to my mommy and daddy and." Most of our kids don't have a lot of time with mommy and daddy. If they go home and throw a fit about what they're doing, they may not feel good that they failed that math test on Friday, but they feel good that they can go home and do a box square. And besides that they know what a square is! And that they can remember it. Right, and they can remember it, that's when you know that you're reaching them on a different level and something that probably no one else has been able to do. Have you found that there's a difference with what they do creatively and how it affects how they feel about doing other things that you ask them to do, or the opposite? Have you found kids resistant that may have been good students, resistant to do the creative aspect? So far, no, after we finished dancing I would come back into the room and we would do a journal page. The only thing that I asked was that it be something that they enjoyed about the class so I knew what they would like for us to do

tomorrow. The sentences, even from my kindergartners may be only the first letter from a word right now, but they were able to attempt so much because they enjoyed what they were writing about and because they enjoyed what they were doing, they wanted to communicate that. Even my kids that were smarter, I got an email today from one of their parents and he said, "you know I told him I didn't want him to take that dance class, because he should take a reading class, but he cannot stop talking about that dance class. I think all in all it was probably one of the best for the kids at that time. At another time it may not have worked at all. That was your first experience doing that [dance]? That was my first experience doing that [dance]. That week it really seemed our discipline went down, our attendance stayed up. Even though kids didn't have to be here and parents didn't have to bring them in they still chose to be here.

That's great. What are the kinds of experiences since you started working toward teaching degree, other than the ESL school and teaching the dance class have you had in teaching?

Both years that I have been teaching here, every kindergarten teacher has not worked out. The first year I was an entry year I started out the year with a substitute next door to me. I had to take care of my class and then, I had to take care of her class and try to get her lesson plans done it was just a battle. I thought this year its going to be fine and we ended up starting the year the same way with a substitute next door with twenty-seven students in each class that was a struggle. It was a struggle but we made it we made it! It was buckling down and going back to what you know and remember and stopping and thinking, and getting organized and getting your procedures down. What works one year may not work the next year. That's good that you have that perception. It may not. Kids will be different, too.

What could you tell me about being a beginning early childhood teacher? You had perceptions from classes that you took and from internships that you've had to do. Then comes day one when you walk into the classroom, and now its your classroom. What was it like to take those perceptions into that classroom with you, what went through your mind?

I was scared to death scared to death, because all of a sudden it's just yours. There isn't anybody else. There wasn't anyone else to ask, "what do you do, do you put papers down so you know where they go after school? I mean weird things like that run through your mind, the little things that you just never had to worry about. "Does Johnny go to day care, does his sister pick him up, or does mother pick him up, does he ride the bus, and which bus does he ride? That was already established during your internship. It was already stuff that you didn't have to worry about that you just didn't think about until the first day of school the little things such as procedures. We started out having breakfast the very first morning that my kids were here. Some of them don't know if they wanted orange juice or apple juice, or if they're allergic to orange juice or apple juice. Parents are still sticking around and are crying, the kids are crying and it was just a BIG thing. You learn from that, and the second year you're a little bit more organized, and the third year you're a little bit more organized, too.



If I were to ask you to give me an analogy of being a beginning early childhood teacher is like ... what would you say?

A beginning early childhood teacher is like a person being pulled behind a car or a greyhound at a track, always one step behind the mechanical rabbit.

When did you do your interning, was it spring or fall?

I did it in the fall. I didn't do it until the second or third week of school. I missed that initial learning where the vacuums are, and learning how to go through the lunch line. My goodness kindergartners don't know how to go through a lunch line. I didn't realize that. I didn't realize that you had to show them how to go through a lunch line until you're there the first day and you've got like twenty little ones that don't know how to go through a lunch line and its time to go right then. Dealing with children in early childhood is kind of special in that you deal with a lot of problems that haven't been identified yet. You're dealing with a lot of ADHD, attachment disorders, bi-polar disorders, and students with MR that hasn't been identified yet. Here they do not identify until the first, no I'm sorry, the second semester of the first grade. So we just have them and if they're mentally retarded you're supposed to deal with them. If they throw a fit in your room and take their shoe off and throw it at you, which happened to me, then you just have to deal with them. I was not ready for that I was not ready for any of that. Some research is coming out saying we don't prepare teachers enough for special education. Oh, definitely not!

Do some of these kids come from a type of school situation, or is their first experience with school?

It's optional they do have a 4-year old program here which is an all day program, which is a wonderful program, but its optional. Some of our kids go, some don't. Last year I had a lot of kids that had not attended anything before and had never been away from their mother. This year I have a lot of kids that had attended a pre-school, some type of preschool. They were much more socially and academically ahead of what my class was last year.

In one of the interviews that is one of the questions I ask is, What was the difference that you saw in your growth, or in your approach to things? You mentioned scared, you mentioned talking about little things that you hadn't really thought about. Were there other things that frightened you, when you first started other than just getting the kids where they needed to be and doing what they needed to be doing?

Parents. I thought I was ready to talk to parents, I wasn't. The first time a parent comes in and says, "why did my child get hit on the playground?" and you weren't even out on the playground you have no clue who hit their child on the playground. It's a lot of conflict resolution dealing with parents that are upset maybe because of their child's grades.

What kind of grades do you give in kindergarten?

We give a plus, a check, and a minus. A plus is completes, a check is progressing, and a minus is an area of concern. I understand that every parent thinks that their child is just wonderful, and I love that about parents. But whenever I have to give a child a grade on something like "Can tie their shoes" either they can tie their shoes or they can't tie their shoes. It puts me in a corner, and that first year it just scared me to death. Parent teacher conferences scared me to death.

How soon did you have parent-teacher conferences?

We had one in the fall as soon as we begin school in August then we had one in October. A lot of times here our parents are concerned about their children, I truly believe that, but they're scared of school. They've had bad experiences in school and they do not like to come to school. About the only reason they will come to school is if you call them and tell them something has happened, that they need to come down here, or maybe a parent-teacher conference in kindergarten, because of that they want to come up here and see. Parent conference was about the first time that I had been able to meet some of the parents. I thought you know I'm going to call all of them, which you know only 10 of mine that had a telephone. I'm going to write letters to them and I tried that, and it was the not knowing and them looking at me and saying, "well how many years have you taught?" Exactly, how many years have you taught, and the other thing is because I look young is, "well, how old are you?" All the parents in my classrooms were basically at least my age or older to have a child in kindergarten. Or they would ask, "do you have any children yourself?" I had to say, "no," but it was just the stunned effect of not expecting that, not expecting them to be so on guard, and our parents are. They're very much on guard because they believe that if they're up here we're going to be after them and they need to understand that we're working as a team. We're not working against each other I want to be a team. For many of them this is probably their first experience with sending a child to school they've not had other children so its like they're loaded for bear and want to know how we're going to handle it. Parents were a big thing for me, especially the first year. I had a bad experience with a parent and it wasn't even my fault. Another sibling had gotten into trouble. She [the parent] came up here with her belt and she was ready to whip me. They had to lock me in my room and that was like the first two to three weeks of school. I can't believe I'm doing this [being locked in her own room]. What had happened with a sibling? I mean how did you get into it? It happened after school and the sibling had thrown a fit. The principal had taken care of it by removing the child. The child kept throwing a fit so the parent was called and by the time she got here I guess she was SO mad at ANYBODY she saw. I had the younger sibling. They were going to call the police cause she was so upset and she told them she was going to bring her belt. They said, "Ms. Johnson you need to go to your classroom with the younger sibling, she doesn't need to see this," which I agreed. Whenever I got in there one of the secretaries ran down to my room and said, "she's here and she's mad, and she wants her daughter and we're not going to give her to her. You're going to be in your room with the sibling. With her [the mother] with her belt it was just mass chaos and just scared the life out of me. I wonder if that was my thing about parents. Maybe I would have done much better if I hadn't been threatened the first three weeks of school. The child ended up staying in my room all year long then I had to deal with that parent all year long. Did things transpire more progressively, or do you feel like that parent was just not willing to let go? I don't think she was willing to let go. I think she was upset and she was going to be upset. Her daughter's a beautiful young girl who was very intelligent and I think we would have made a good team if we had been able to and she would have gone really, really far.

Has that helped you in your perceptions starting this year a little bit different?

I think it's made me realize that the first day of school that's when you've got to start. You've got to start talking and you have to use the word team a lot, I use it a lot. I don't every say, "my classroom" I say "our classroom" it's our attempt at the best education we can give our children. I think that it takes a lot, and I think I've learned and grew from the experience. I don't know if I still wish that it wouldn't have happened. I wish that I would still be somewhat innocent but I don't know, I don't know.

What about faculty and staff, what kinds of perceptions took place that first year that you can remember about being a beginning early childhood teacher?

Actually, this schools very unique. We go through a lot of teachers. The first year I was here the principal left and we had a brand new principal. We had almost a brand new early childhood staff. The upper grade teachers were mostly the same, but it has gone through a big turnover. All of us were fairly new, not new to teaching, but new to the building. All of us just had to accept each other and we all have different ideas about education. We all have different ideas about classroom management. We all have different personalities in general, but it all clicked. We play off of each other's strengths. My first year with the staff, the faculty, and with a principal and everything, I don't think I could have had a better first year as far as that was concerned.

Can you think of anything else that really stuck out in your mind coming from a university setting and hearing what it was to be like, having an internship and then all of a sudden teaching, is there anything else that stands out about being a beginning teacher?

The only other thing was when I walked into the classroom and there were some boxes sitting in the classroom, I thought what in the world is this, boxes! That was about it in the classroom. You walk into a classroom and there's nothing else but tables and chairs, maybe a teacher's desk, if you're lucky, and maybe some computers. I had nothing else, I had no book center, I had no classroom library, I had no pretend center, I had nothing except some boxes. So I started to go through the boxes thinking surely something's here and the only thing was Saxon phonics, which is the phonics we use in this school district. I received a hundred dollars to start school with and that was to buy paint, paper, construction paper or anything else for my room. Those things aren't provided for you. That was it. It took a lot of garage sales, a lot of begging a lot of borrowing from my church and every place else that I could borrow from to get the things that I had to have to make my classroom what my kids could do something with.

Was this a new kindergarten?

The teacher that was in it before had retired and she took all of her things. I didn't have anything, nothing, and everything I had fit in one little corner. I lived with my mom and dad through college and I was recently married I didn't have children's stuff. I didn't have a kitchen center around my house and so it took a lot to get a classroom that I felt my kids were welcome to come into.

Now was the early childhood lab at the university in place when you were doing your interning?

No, no it was not. I'm sure teachers had told me start going to garage sales, I'm sure they told me that. I'm sure they said "you know you need to start borrowing stuff you need to start looking for stuff." But I just had this idea that I would walk into a classroom and everything would be there, and it wasn't by any means.

What grade did you do your interning in?

Kindergarten. Did it have a lot of those “things” in it? It did, but it was a teacher that had taught for eight years and had been in kindergarten all those years in a school that is much different than this. That school buys a lot of things for their teachers. It’s a smaller school setting and they’re able to do that. Here it’s just impossible it’s too big a system. She had everything you could imagine just neat things. Whenever I walked into my room, I called my mom on the first day and said “there’s nothing here, there’s nothing.” I had asked how could I get the walls painted? They said, “we’ll give you the paint.” One weekend my mother, my father and I came up and painted the room. Did your intern teacher make use of centers or did she just have them there? She did use them. She was a very good early childhood teacher. So you got some experience using them? Right, she was very good teacher and she offered to make copies of any of all their units. I had a lot of cool stuff like that hands on stuff that my kids could do. She had plastic worms for the spring unit that her husband had used for fishing. She cleaned them up and I didn’t have any of that stuff. I used to kid around with my husband I think the first year I paid more for my classroom than I was paid and I probably was. It was probably close to it. That can be a real problem for a beginning teacher. Right, that’s what I stepped into.

Can you think of any other specific things that happened that stand out? If I were to say, “I want you to come and speak to some people that are thinking about possibly teaching,” what kinds of things would you share?

I would probably share a lot of more positive things than what I’ve shared with you.

Why? It’s [teaching] worth it, it’s worth it. It’s worth it getting up every Saturday morning early to go out and garage sale then bring it all back here and leave it in my room. It’s worth the parents that get angry and for the parents that send you letters and say thank you for helping my child. It’s worth it, and I wouldn’t do anything else.

Do you think if you had been presented with “when you get to the classroom you’re not going to have these” information, would that have made a difference to you as far as preparing you for that first day walking in the classroom?

I think that teachers need to understand that it’s not going to be all hugs and smiles and, and knowing everything the first year. They need to understand and they need to start preparing early as soon as they know they have a job. Preparing how? Their classrooms, themselves, just think of all the questions that a parent might be asking, and just thinking about what you could say to calm them down, to get back to what needs to be talked about. If you find something that you think I don’t want that or I’ll wait and get that whenever I find a job just classroom stuff go ahead and get it. They need to understand that if you get there and you have two kitchen centers you are blessed because it doesn’t happen very often.

What other kinds of things do you think you would tell them other than just the positive things and that it’s worth it? What are some other things that were worth it that make teaching something enjoyable for you?

Well, like today I’ve just introduced dimes. We’d already introduced pennies and I was sitting there and we were talking about how many pennies we had in our pocket and how many dimes we had in our pocket and how many cents that made. They had two dimes and one penny and we probably sat there for about five minutes and everyone was going, “we have thirty-cents in our pocket.” And I said, “no, we need to look at that again.” Just

going over and over it finally one little boy said, "I think we have twenty-one cents in our pocket." It was just that light that came on and I said, "yes you do, you have twenty-one cents in your pocket." It's those little discoveries and it's the child that you've worked with over and over and over again to write a letter or to recognize a letter and they finally go, "oh, its an 'm', my name starts with an 'm'." It's that kind of discovery that understanding how the world works. I have one little girl whose MR [mentally retarded] and scared to death of the dark. The first day that we made it through the day without her saying, "is it dark outside?" I went home and I said, "you know, no one asked today if it was dark outside." It was the most wonderful feeling. It's a very small accomplishment, but it's big for her. So you felt like she is gaining trust in you and gaining trust in the school situation? Exactly, because I told her I said, "honey, you have to trust Ms. Johnson and I'll let you know if you're ever at school and its dark, I'll let you know." For a while every day about every hour it was, "is it dark outside?" She's been with me since November, and it just happened about a month ago that all of a sudden she stopped saying, "is it dark outside?" She hasn't said it anymore.

Do you keep a teacher journal at all?

I tried to that was my goal my first year that every day I was going to keep a small journal and just write the big things that happened that day. I never did manage to keep it. By the time I would sit down to write, there's always something else. That's something I wish I had done. My mother said, "you have so many stories, she goes if you stay at this and keep doing this for years and years, just think of all the wonderful stories you could go back and look at." Keeping a journal is not always easy to do every day, but sometimes every once in a while a big thing that happens it's important for you to see the growth that you've made. That's very true, and I wish I had. It's never too late. That's something I always thought would be nice to have, and it'd be nice to see.

How do you approach parent conferences with your kid's parents?

We're getting ready to have another one for the spring. We have one for the spring, for retentions. I invite all of my parents. I say, "we're getting ready to end our year and I want you to come in and look and see how much your children have grown. We'll make something for the parents that day that they can take home with them. I plan on talking to them about things they need to do over the five-week break just little things. When will your break start? We will begin in the middle of June and then we'll come back in the middle of July. We go over things they need to be doing at home and if they have any questions, anything that I can help them with. I let them talk about some of the things that they've seen at home or things that they've done at home that have helped. Working on a computer or writing at night or reading their favorite book or anything like that. That's some of the things that I like to talk about. Any retention that I have we have to go over all that paper work. This year I only have one and its because he's ESL and he is a very, very, very young child. He has problems doing the simple things we do, and it makes him cry. Simple things like...? Like sitting doing our calendar knowing his shapes and colors. What about following directions? Yes, he's struggling and I know that our two first grade teachers are very strict. They expect seatwork and they expect a lot of writing. I know that if I send him on that he will be miserable and he will not make it. Is he a first child in the family? Yes, and his birthday is July 31<sup>st</sup>. He's one of those that just barely made it [the cut off date for starting kindergarten]. He still uses baby talk whenever he's talking. He has a younger sister now and I wonder how much of that is just them playing back

and forth. He's my only one [that she is describing as really immature] and the parents have totally agreed. So this isn't going to be a surprise to them for him to be retained? No, I've been talking about it [retention] since about Christmas. "We need to talk I was thinking maybe it would be in his best interest if we keep him in kindergarten just one more year. I mention it and she would say, "you know I was thinking about that," so she already knows. *[She wrote later that she kept him back and he is one of her best students. She felt it was a good choice for him.]*

You mentioned he was an ESL student?

We use interpreters. They do not speak English, you have to have someone interpret? His mother does not well enough so we use interpreters. We do have an ESL service here for our kids but they will not service kindergarten students. Interesting. Yes, we get everybody. The ESL teacher is willing to come in for parent-teacher conferences and after school meetings, talk to them on the telephone and any notes that I send home, he rewrites so that they can read my notes. That way, they feel like they're not left out by any means.

There is not a T1 or D1? Do they go from kindergarten to first grade? Did you say there were two first grades? Are there two of every grade?

Except for kindergarten, there are three. Next year I think they're going to have to move one of the kindergarten teachers up or hire another first grade teacher because there are just too many children. We have 61 kindergartners. *[She commented later that they kept all three kindergarten teachers and hired a new first grade teacher.]*

We're talking about parents, do you have the parent's coming to help with things like your Easter Egg hunt or something like that? Or do you not have parental involvement because they're working?

Either they work or they don't have transportation to school. That's another one of our big things. Some parents have younger siblings. I have one little girl in my class that's one of seven and they are getting ready to have their eighth. It's too hard on them to bring all the other little one's up here because they would have to walk from their home. I've asked for volunteers to hide the Easter Eggs, although I have not heard back from anyone yet and it's Friday and today is Wednesday. Last year I didn't have the parents come and hide the eggs. We ended up having our buddy classes, that's where we buddy with the older kids, go and hide the eggs. Last year I was with the third graders and this year I'm with a fifth/sixth split class. The third graders hid the eggs for us last year and that gave them the sense of being able to help with the little kids. It'd be nice to have parents come in for their parties. I may have one or two parents come in for a party, but that's about it. We just don't have parent involvement.

How do parents react when you send things home for them to do or do you send that much home for kids to do, like books to read or for them to read to them?

I developed something last year and I have kept it going this year, the Benjamin Bear Book Bag. The bag has a little stuffed bear in it, Benjamin Bear, and it has a book, a journal and crayons and pencils, because they don't always have those things at home. The book bag goes home with someone almost every night, except on the weekends. He goes home with me on the weekends to be washed. The bag seems be pretty good about coming back and forth. Snacks, almost never end up coming to school even if you have a snack calendar, those never end up coming to school. We do have something-called

Thursday folders. I keep all notes until Thursday. I don't send anything home except on Thursdays and they have to put all their things in their folder. The parents are supposedly supposed to look at everything that goes home in their folder. I do not send any homework home or anything that the child has to do its just notes, things that are going on. Sometimes I will save something that we've done in class that the kids have done really well on and I'll put that in there. On the other side in the folder it has a space for me to put their discipline for the week. I work off red stars, yellow stars and green stars. Green stars mean we haven't had any problems all day, but if we do then it goes to yellow stars or goes to red stars. This year I have a wonderful class and I've almost never had to change anybody's star for anything and that way the parent knows they've been fine all week long. They have to sign off on that [sheet] and return it. I probably get, out of a class of 20. I probably receive maybe 10 a little over half back. I start sending notes home, "could you please return so-and-so's folders so she can receive a sticker in class." You know how that type of thing goes. Every now and then I'll receive more than that, but usually not. Do you have to have those letters translated, too? I only have one. Only one? All three kindergarten teachers try to get together and do something for the kids that need the translation then we give it to one central parent. She's very good about giving it to the ESL teacher and he translates it for them. He also does the report cards and all those things, too. That [the folder] seems to work better because at least they [parents] know on Thursdays they have something they need to look at and they're not having to ask, "Do you have notes today?" This way it's just one day a week, and that seems to work fairly good for us. *[She later shared that they have an assistant in the office that speaks Spanish and helps with the communication with parents.]*

What about parents providing materials for you?

Most of our students receive supplies at the beginning of the year through different programs throughout the community. Other than that any students that have started in school late I usually provide them, its usually just a bottle of glue and some crayons are not going to break me. Its easier than having to beg a parent to go out and get glue and crayons for their little one that's what I usually do.

When you were in your undergraduate classes did you ever practice parent-teacher conferences, doing role-playing?

Now we did so something like that, but it was going into an interview for a job, but we never did do that for a parent-teacher conference I wish we would have. I really wish we would have. That still doesn't completely prepare you for what's coming down the pike. Exactly, but I wish there had been something like that.

Are there any other things that you've thought of since I called you originally that you wanted to ask or that you want to know about questions that I will ask? Are there any questions I asked you today that you would like to respond further to or that you want to make sure that we cover in the interviews?

I'm sure there's something. Maybe just that I just feel like I've said a lot of negative things and I don't want it to sound like that. I want these interviews to be what you think. Exactly. Don't worry about thinking you are being negative, don't worry about perceptions that I may have. I'm here to find out what your life is like. Right, and I want you know, but I don't want it to sound like all of our parents are awful, because they're not. I think that the communities are changing and, parenthood is changing, and kids are

changing. The needs of children change. Exactly, I think we have a good little school, and I think we're doing a good job with our kids. The change from last year to this year was a complete turn around for us, changing to a year round school. It was hard but we did it in five months. Oh that's another thing that I hadn't even thought of. Last year I was approached in February to be the inter-session coordinator, which means the kids come in for one week, it's like being the principal. You coordinate everything that goes on all the enrollment and everything else. I told the principal, "you're doing this to me because you think I'm the only one that's stupid enough to do it." And he said, "yep" and laughed. I've grown so much from that experience. The first two times that we had inter-sessions, I didn't teach a class, because we had plenty of teachers willing to come in to teach. I could go to teachers that had been teaching for 15-20 years and see what they're doing in their classrooms. It gives you new ideas, it gives you new learning opportunities and I've really enjoyed that part of it. I think that it was something at the time I thought I was crazy for doing but it has worked to my advantage, greatly. Its something I enjoy doing. How do other teachers react to that? As far as I know most of them thought she's probably the only one who would accept it. Everyone else seems to like having a teacher in that position because it is very non-threatening. The principal is still here and he teaches classes that week. He can go back and teach a history class, that's what he taught when he was a teacher. He's here but it gives me an opportunity, and it helps me to learn and I think the other teachers' respect that. I think they respect the fact that I work very hard to get our kids into the classes that they need. The teachers work very hard that week. We're only paid fifteen dollars an hour but we get our materials paid for that week but you know, if it changes one kid it's worth it.

One thing I didn't ask you that you brought out when you were talking about materials, is how much time do you feel like you invest in a day or in a week in teaching?

Last year, I tried to get here early and I tried to stay late but it didn't work I was getting tired physically and mentally. This year I decided I'm going to come to school when its time for us to be here and then I'm going to stay after school. I'm not going to try to burn the candle at both ends. I try to go to PTA meetings and I go to workshops to stay as current as I can on things. I usually spend probably every other weekend here, because I try to redo my room and try to make it look nice for the kids when they come in. The thing that's so unique about my situation is that at the end of nine weeks I have three weeks off then whenever you're ready to come back you're ready. The kids are ready and you have had a break, you've been away and haven't had to be there. This year it is better and I don't know if its because I'm not coming in early or if its from having the extra breaks. I guess they're not extra breaks it is just the summer broken up within the school year I think that has helped this year. Year-round education from what they're telling us reduces summer learning loss, which only makes sense and it also reduces teacher burnout because you get frequent breaks. We knew our teachers were tired. At the end of those long, long stretches you see more teachers taking off because of the fact that they're sick. We don't see that as much, our teacher absenteeism has gone down by ten percent and that's a big gain for us that's one of the big pushes why we went to year round school.



When you're day ends here do you take things home with you?

I try never to take anything home. I try to get it done here. My home life is my home life because I have a husband and I'm getting ready to have a baby in September. I'm so excited so that time is our time. I have caught myself telling my husband he's going to go to time out [we both laugh]! It takes me a while to downshift, but that's my time you know and its my time whether I choose to go to church, or if I choose to volunteer to go to ESL or if I choose to go to a workshop. I try to go to things that I think that I can pull from for my own life and for the life of my children to be and for these kids. I try to find things that I think would benefit everyone when I go to workshops not just that I'm going for school. I'm not just going for professional development points, I'm going for things that I need to learn about and need to know.

Cameron

Interview #2

April 23, 2001

Cameron, you said there were some things that you thought of looking over the transcript. Right, one of the questions was something that pertained to being ready for the first few days of school. One of the things that I thought about once I was reading the transcript was discipline. My ideas of discipline have changed greatly over the year and I think if I would have started out the way I ended the year it probably would have been a more successful year for both myself and my students. I think that was one thing that I just really didn't have any ideas about not so much classroom management, I kind of knew how I wanted my class to go, but it was how I was going to deal with certain things. What I was going to do if I said it I needed to do it [telling the kids] that was very hard for me at the beginning. If I say, "the next one that does..." you should never say that because always your best student that does it after that. You had to follow through and that was hard on me, very hard on me at the beginning of the year it lets kids know that they can push you and they'll push you as far as they can. At the beginning of the year there was always that power struggle and after we got over that we could accomplish many more things. I think if I would have started out the year a little different from that aspect it would have been better. That was the only thing that I thought of that wasn't on the transcript that I thought might have really played a big part in my first year.

That may come in as we begin to talk a little bit today about the actual concerns you had and what a concern is to you. One thing I failed to ask and I wanted you to describe was for you to tell me some about your growing up years. Could you describe as far back as you can what you remember about your schooling?

Oh, my, let's see, I had the opportunity of coming to the same school where I am now teaching that has brought back a lot of memories because I'm back in the same classrooms that I was in. I remember not liking school, I liked kindergarten, but it was a half-day program and I was going to a baby sitter's anyway. At that time I was in the first trial class with Open Court. That was the only structured thing that the whole class offered the rest of it was just like daycare was to me and I adjusted to that fairly well. First grade, I had a wonderful teacher but just did not enjoy it. I struggled and struggled at reading. I had a very bad speech problem so sounding out words using Open Court was just not for me. I had chronic ear infections so I couldn't hear the sounds anyway it was one thing after another and I just didn't feel successful at that system. It [Open Court] worked for a lot of the kids, a lot of the kids were wonderful spellers but that just wasn't me. That was all that they used and like I said it was a trial and they wanted to make sure that they were doing it correctly. First, second and probably even third grade it was a struggle to keep me in school. Anything that I could think of to go home, anything I could do to call or anyway I could make myself sick to go home I would try. It wasn't the fact that I was even going home, I'd still have to go to my babysitters. I still wasn't going home to mom and dad. I was still going to a baby sitting environment but I felt successful there I wasn't feeling successful at school. Finally I got into the fourth grade. All of my teachers have been great, I'm not saying that any of them were bad, they're wonderful

teachers I just wasn't feeling successful. Fourth grade is the point where they stopped teaching phonics and they did a lot of reading things that you'd like to read. All of a sudden it kicked in that light bulb finally came on and I really started enjoying reading. I had a father that read extensively and that helped a lot I believe. I started reading a lot then. I was one of the kids that was kind of quiet I didn't have any discipline problems therefore teachers didn't have to worry and so most of my reading and math problems really weren't identified until that point. As long as I was sitting down and I wasn't causing any problems it all just slipped by. That year I can remember that I had to work very, very hard and I was, I was always a fairly good student it was things like multiplication tables that I had kind of memorized and over summer forgotten. Spelling words have always been exceptionally hard for me because I don't hear the sounds. In fourth grade I started feeling successful in the things that I was doing and it was the first year that I went through without missing a day of school. I think it was the first year I ever went to school where I didn't cry every day. My mother would have to pull me into the classroom and just leave me and shut the door and I'd just sit there and cry. My poor teachers, I look back now and I think, oh my goodness, bless their hearts that's how it was and I didn't like it. After that I learned some strategies especially for studying that seemed to help a lot and I graduated from the high school here and I was in the top ten percent of my class I managed to overcome all that. Just because a child doesn't understand something doesn't mean that they're not intelligent it doesn't mean that just because they can't sound out a word that they don't have what it takes. I managed to put myself through school on scholarships and so any of these kids can do it even though they come from poor backgrounds, they can do it if they want to.

You mentioned a couple things that I remember from the first transcript. You were very emphatic about making children feel secure and safe and successful. Do you think that had some kind of relationship to what you went through in school?

Definitely, I have kids if they come in here and they're not secure then if nothing else that's what I'm here to offer, especially in kindergarten. They need that because a lot of our kids go home and they don't feel secure. If they get six hours feeling secure at school then that's what I'm here to do. I think you know that it was miserable for me coming to school everyday and crying, that's miserable for any child. I don't know if my teachers could have done anything except maybe make me feel more successful. At that time that wasn't what you did in a classroom that's just not what they were educated to do it's a different methodology now. Different philosophy? Yes.

There was something else, when you talked about not liking reading or spelling.

Right, spelling mainly. You said you had a hard time hearing the sounds and you had a hard time making the sounds, are there any other subjects that you remember really not enjoying that you spend a lot of time now trying to get kids to enjoy? I love science, I love history and I try to do a lot of history things. There really isn't anything that affected me so much in kindergarten although even now teaching kindergarten we're teaching more first grade things anyway. I do try to make things make sense. When we're reading I try to pick books that I'm sure kids like. I told a parent the other day, we don't teach children to read to say, "I like cats." We teach them to read because they want to learn about cats and you know it's that cognitive part of it that I want them to get. I don't want them just to be able to go up to a wall and read it I want them to be able to understand it. That's the part I've really tried to stress to my parents. I've tried to stress that to my kids

that you can read words all day long, but if you don't enjoy it and you don't understand what you're reading, it's not going to help you and it's not going to be enjoyable for you. I understand when I read fairly well. When I was younger first Billy would read, then Lisa would read, then Sammy, and I would be so worried about what I was going to read that I would try to skip ahead. I was smart enough that I could understand that in a couple more sentences I would have to read. I would try to skip ahead and I would lose all that meaning in the text because I was practicing those words making sure that I didn't say them incorrectly or that I could sound them out. If it was a sight word I'd sit there forever and try to figure it out and then when it was my turn I'd say my one little sentence even though I'd understand my little one sentence and would miss what everybody else had said. I think that's probably some of the problem. Our past affects the future of what we do with kids. Right. Did you go here through fifth grade? No, sixth grade it was a kindergarten through sixth grade program then. Now it's kindergarten or preschool through sixth? This year it is a kindergarten through sixth grade program again. It was Pre-K through fifth grade for a long time and they just switched it back this year.

Would you take me through a typical day of what you do?

In the morning we have breakfast in the classroom. I go to the cafeteria and get our breakfast, come back to the classroom and pass it out. We go to different tables and we socialize it is a social bonding time for our kids. We have breakfast and that's how we start off our day every day. After breakfast we um, have special classes our kids go to music, PE or library. They are gone for fifty minutes and that's our plan time. After our plan time we have what I call our meeting time. We do our calendar and go over our flashcards doing the date and that type of thing. After our calendar we do our Saxon phonics, oh yes, Saxon phonics and then whenever they finish Saxon phonics they have to go get a book any type of book and they have to read the book. A certain time after reading the book we all go to centers. The children go to whatever center they have put their name on when they come into the room that morning that's how I take attendance. They have to go and stay in that center. We have a bathroom break go to lunch come back, have a recess and after recess we sometimes go to computers. We go to computer lab three days a week. If we don't go to computer lab we just have a longer center time in the afternoon, and it's free centers where they get to choose whatever center they want to go to. Also at that time the games are out for them to play with if they want to play those. After that we have a language arts time which is when I use big books and questioning, free writing and journals. We have Saxon math in the afternoon it is mainly hands-on, which I like. We do lots of hands-on things with our math. We usually have time that we clean up, have snacks go outside again and then we leave. That's a typical day. Do they get a rest period sometime during the day? Right now they don't most of my kids are not resting anyway. At the beginning of the year instead of having the longer language arts time and the math time I shorten those times and they have about 35-45 minutes in the afternoon that we lay down on mats. It turned into from laying down on mats to laying their heads down and then from laying their heads down to not having a nap time at all.

I think that pretty well covers the things that I wanted to go back and review and things that I thought about afterwards that I didn't ask you. As a beginning teacher how would you define concern?

For me a concern would be something that you feel that either could be done better or something that arises that needs to be dealt with to me that would be a concern. I can't think of a better definition that might be something I might need to think about for a while. Thinking about what you just said, something that you would need to do differently? Yes, a concern could be something that is not going right, something that would need to be changed, something that you need to study more about to be able to deliver in a correct manner.

Thinking of it in those terms, how would you describe your concerns as a beginning teacher? What are some of the things that concern you now as a beginning teacher? And think about last year what concerned you then?

One of the big concerns I have in my second year, which I don't know if it just didn't dawn on me in my first year, or if it just didn't affect me my first year, is that some of the students that we have are not being served in a regular classroom. These are students that need some type of either special assistance outside of my classroom or some type of special education for me to help serve them better inside my classroom. We have MR, ED, we have ESL, we have operational defiant, bipolar but those students are not taken out of our room [referring to kindergarten classrooms] for any reason. They are taken out in first through sixth, but kindergarten is not served, because they say they cannot be identified. Although they have been identified in other school districts and in Head Start programs and they come in with that IEP. Somehow that is not taken into consideration and they are not served that is a big concern to me. I don't feel like I'm serving them to the best of my ability, I don't feel that, that's good enough. There is a concern about class sizes, which right now I'm at nineteen and it could be worse, nineteen isn't bad. But at the beginning of the year I started out with twenty-seven and twenty-seven, four and five-year-olds in a classroom is not feasible it is just not feasible. You can't do anything with twenty-seven. We started out the year that way in both the kindergarten classes. I attributed it the fact that we were going year round and having so many people wanting to get in on that program. That part is wonderful, but twenty-seven students for a month, with no aide is a hard job, it's a very hard job. That was a big concern for me this year. Right now nineteen seems like a picnic after you've had twenty-seven, but I would like to the class size to actually be smaller. Right now with cut backs and everything else it's just not feasible. An ideal number would be fifteen to seventeen, right in there. Just even those two extra kids makes a difference. I can handle nineteen right now, but at the beginning of the year it was impossible. It depends on the combination of kids that you have, too. Exactly, and that's another thing that we're going to run into, thankfully not this year because the four-year-old program been in our building so we knew the kids that were coming to us this year. Next year, because the four-year-old building is housed within itself we have no idea who is coming to us. Right now we're dealing with the fact of how do we split the students up if we know nothing about them? How do we divide them up between two or three classrooms, or however many we have next year, if we don't know the children? This year we did a fairly good job of knowing that you shouldn't put so-and-so and so-and-so in the same classroom. Or so-and-so would do better with a different type of teacher that type of thing worked out really well for us this

year, we each came up with a nice group of kids. I don't know what some of my other concerns were this year. I went to Great Expectations, which was one, probably one of the best things I've ever done it really helped because its like a mountaintop experience. You get fired up and you get ready to go. At first I was just going, going, going and then pretty soon I got burned out. My kids they like the positiveness of everything they like the praising, which our kids need. I think every kid needs to be praised. You know if you don't get a smile and you don't get a hug and you don't get a kind touch at home where else are you going to get it? I think that just makes sense, it makes sense for our kids to have that type of a teacher.

Now did you go to Great Expectations right before school?

Our school started in July so actually I went the end of May. I had a month before school started but in that month I worked very, very hard. I set up procedures for every thing I do in my classroom. I made up a book for my parents with all the procedures and everything that I do in my classroom that was stuff I didn't do my first year that I probably should have. You can say, "if little Billy wants to hand out birthday invitations to the class everyone has to be invited or that you need to invite them after school." It is just a lot simpler than having to go back and say, "no, now wait a minute." It helped me and made me think about when we do this how do I want to do it. Instead of it just being mass chaos and me changing my mind every other week like how it was my first year I knew ahead of time how I would handle things. You just have to try things I caught myself trying a lot of different things until I found what worked and then when I found what worked the kids didn't really trust me. I'm sure they thought she'll change her mind again, she does about five times, and she'll change her mind again. I kind of lost that trust. My kids this year trust me because they know that I've done the same thing from day one. Our day has been exactly the same from day one. I think that's probably what made the biggest change in my class is just that trust, those procedures knowing exactly what we're going to do day-in and day-out. Do they teach you that in Great Expectations, to set your procedures and that sort of thing? The class that I had we worked a lot of procedures and it made a big, big difference.

What other concerns can you think of that you may have had your first year, but not now?

My discipline which gave me some problems my first year doesn't seem to be a problem this year. If you have two different groups of kids you're going to have different kinds of years. This year I think they trust me. They know if I say, "you know that's it," that that's it, and they know that they've pushed way too far. I think it's respectfulness and they respect me for saying what I'm going to do and that's it they know that's as far as they can take it and they don't try to push any farther. Knowing especially the first few days of school what, what you need to do helps. This year when I came in I had names on the tables and I had little signs on the tables with exactly what parents needed to do with all their school supplies. I had an aide in my class for the very first day, which was my mother, bless her heart, she took a day of vacation to come and help. She came in and made sure everybody went where they were supposed to go while I was standing at the door meeting parents saying, "hi, how are you, open house is next week, I'd like to see you there. That helped me with my parents because that may be the only time you only see them is the first day of school. It was just a different environment this year totally different walking in and knowing that I had things that I could fall back on. That you had materials? That I actually had something in my classroom and knowing that I didn't need

to think about what am I going to do the first day of school. I know what I want to do the first day of school now and it's just a whole different world.

You mentioned last week, and I think about this as a concern of a new teacher or a beginning teacher, you mentioned the relationship with parents. Would you like to say anymore about that?

This year it is different. Like I said it is hard to compare one year to another because you have different kids, different parents. I still run across parents saying, "how long have you been teaching?" That's one of the big questions they want to know and they want to know how old I am because I guess I look young. Once they get over that they come in and I invite my parents to come in any time that they want to. This is their classroom as long as their kids are mine. We work together as a team and they can come in anytime they want to, to help, to read to a student, or to help me cut out whatever. They don't have to just sit and watch. If they want to come in with their child and sit and watch and listen to me read a book, that's fine. My parents seem to be much more open and to communicate a lot more through things that I send home this year. It's been a fairly positive year as far as my parents are concerned. Like I said last week we had parent teacher conferences. Out of nineteen students I had twelve [parents] come to the parent teacher conference. So it's been fairly positive this year and all of my parents are happy where their kids are or understanding why they aren't where they should be. It's not, "well my son can do this at home, and he's reading at home" it's none of that. They understand, and I think that came a lot from sending things home like the letter that said, "we're learning this, this week and giving them games that they can play with that letter or books that they can read. I send home a book bag. It's a different group of parents. And it's a different group of kids. Exactly, so it's hard to compare them but this year it seems like they are much more behind their children and much more behind me.

Can you think of any other things that have really concerned you as a beginning teacher? You mentioned there were other beginning teachers in the building.

Right. *[She shared later that they now have five new teachers in her building]* Have you gotten together and shared some about your concerns? Matter of fact today the other two kindergarten teachers are first year teachers and we were talking at lunch. Some of our concerns are things like what do you do with a child that just rolls around on the floor all day long? You know and we've got those. One of our kindergarten teachers has 30 or 40 percent of her class diagnosed ADHD. The parents would rather take the medicine than give it to the child. What do you do? I told them I said, "I haven't figured out the answer, I'm sorry, but once I figure it out I'll sell it and be able to make lots of money." You know I don't know what you do you just have to take it day by day by day and just remember that especially with those ADHD kids that they can't help it. They [children diagnosed ADHD] have no control over that and that's one of our big concerns right now especially for one of the other kindergarten teachers that has that high population of ADHD. Classroom management for her is just hit-and-miss. Some days they're perfect little angels and they do everything that she asks them to do and the next day they came in and they think they're a dog and are crawling around on the floor all day, there's just no controlling it. This has really put her in a corner because she is trying to do her first year and she is trying the best that she can. She's trying to do her entry-level committees and all that stuff and it's difficult.

Do you find yourself reliving your first year when you hear about their concerns?

Definitely, that's what I told them today. I said, "you know I don't know what to do." I said last year I didn't know what to do when I had one that sat underneath the table all day long and colored on the underside of the table. I still don't know what I would do. It wasn't that she [the child] was just trying to be mean it's what she did. I still don't know what I would do if I had one that did that I just don't have one that does that this year next year I may.

As you come to the close of the year, do you find yourself thinking about some of the things you just mentioned and coming up with a different plan of action of things you would like to try different next year?

Oh, definitely. I just finished reading a book called, I Teach Kindergarten. I don't remember who the author is I've got it here somewhere. It had some of the neatest ideas of things that may or may not work, but it had a lot of organization, assessment, and management tools that were really neat and child-friendly and teacher-friendly. I can't start with this class, because we're into our routine and we already know how things work, but next year that might be something that I might want to try. For example, there was one thing where you have assessments all through the year I think that there were four of them. The student had to draw a tree, and then it shows the developmental process of drawing a tree. That would be so much easier instead of trying to test every child on the letters that they know and the words that they can sound out and to me it's more meaningful. There are things like that I'm excited about trying next year and to see the progress. I think a parent can see the progress more in something like that than the probably could in a check sheet. Those are the type of things that I want to try next year.

I don't remember if I asked you this last time about the state objectives for kindergarten?

I don't think so. Do you use any of the state objectives as you plan? I have the state objective's handbook and I've read it. Last year, whenever I was doing my lesson plans I would sit down and I'd write every objective. I was so proud of that. This year I figure by about a month into school I have met most of state objectives so now I just have it noted and I just copy them off. As far as sitting there and, and studying and writing them down, the first year it really bothered me if I was going to miss anything. I was really scared that I was going to miss something that they were going to have to know. I think once you are familiar with all of them, all though they changed some of them this year, I'm more comfortable with the fact that I know what my kids need to know and I know what they're expected to know going in first grade. First grade is very demanding and they expect them to know a lot. I have to go way above the state objectives for them to be ready for first grade. I figure if I meet all that and I feel that they're ready to go into our first grade then I will have covered all of the state objectives anyway. I don't stress out as much as I did my first year.

Was getting them ready a concern of yours when you started teaching last year?

At the first of the year I didn't think it would be a concern. I'm not sure if it was a concern even at the end of the year. This year, whenever my kids went to first grade they had two different first grade teachers that really expected a lot and it made me very worried about the kindergartner's that I sent to first. I thought my babies, I don't know if they can do that we didn't work on that. The first standardized test that they had within the first week of school my little babies were coloring in all the dots instead of just one



dot. I didn't think about doing that. They test them in first grade? Yes, first week of school. So, I mean here are the first grade teachers coming back to me saying, "they bubbled in every single circle." I said, "I didn't know to teach them that." Then I started feeling really bad about what else did I not teach them that they're not going to be ready for. They're gonna feel bad about themselves because they don't know how to do something. I know the first grade teachers so well, one of them used to be the four-year-old program teacher here. We'd worked really well last year together and so I sort of know what they have to know and what I have to cover. I'm going to have to find some type of sheets that have the little bubbles in and talk about not filling everything in so the first week of school and my babies don't go up there and they fill everything in again. I didn't think about it and it was kind of insulting to think that they weren't ready. Do you think that it's not that they're not ready they're just not meeting somebody else's expectations? Right, I've really thought of my kids as being very bright I thought of them as being ahead of where they were needed to be. It hurt me that they probably just went, "oh, well, let's just fill in all the bubbles," and they probably didn't even think about it. It probably did not even dawn on them that they were doing it incorrectly, but you know me, it hurt. I think this group is probably just as bright as my other group, maybe even more. I didn't do any copying off the board last year I just didn't see any meaning in it. That's one of the first things they did in first grade and my little ones were just writing whatever they wanted to. Now I'm having to go and do handwriting off of the board, just so they understand that there's a time like in your journals when you can write whatever you want to. There's also a time when your teacher might want you to write something off the board. It's probably not age appropriate, not kindergarten appropriate, but I want them to feel successful next year that's why I do it.

Are there any concerns that you have related to your school changing to year-round?

Some of our concerns are not just for kindergarten but for our books. Upper grade didn't have their books and we didn't have our Saxon phonics when we started in July, we didn't have it until September. They ordered whenever the regular school ordered. Other than that we haven't had any concerns about year-round school. We have nine weeks of school, then the three weeks off. They're ready to come back, the parents are ready for them to come back, and the teachers are ready to come back. After nine weeks getting that break makes all the difference. I really think having a five week break this summer I think with that shorter time they won't loose as much over the summer. I think as far as I know there really haven't been very many concerns about year-round school. Our parents seem to be for it because at the last inter-session all the evaluations that we received back were positive. All of our student's evaluations and all of our teacher evaluations were positive. I think it's [year-round-school] been a real plus. Were there any concerns as far as your planning? There could have been because in all reality we gave up a month of our vacation and our pay doesn't kick in until August. There could have been some things that some of the teachers really could have had a little fit about, but you know all of us here, most of us I should say, are here because we like to teach. We're not one of those schools that get all the glory by any means but we didn't have anybody that had any issues with all that. Did it mess you up as far as what you wanted to plan for your kids and how you wanted to work out your schedule? No, not really. You can't look in a book any more and to see what they're doing, because you probably already did that by August. It kind of makes you go out on a limb, you're gonna have to go out of the box.

You have to find your own thing. I teach almost completely through units and I can do an ocean unit in July when I come in or I can do it in May when I leave, it doesn't matter. It's just switching it around but I'm so new that I wasn't really set in anything. Some of the other teachers it may have been harder on because they're used to doing this unit this month or this week and I just didn't know any better. I didn't know I was supposed to do it then so it really didn't give me any problems.

Cameron

Interview #3

April 20, 2002

This is Cameron's third and final interview. I'm going to go over one of the questions we had from the second interview Cameron because it didn't pick up on the tape and then we'll go on to the third set of questions. Have you thought of anything of what we've talked about the last two interviews that has come to mind that you'd like to mention?

I believe that we mentioned some things about discipline, especially the first year discipline. I think I was talking about not really feeling that I had the support system that I needed, whether it be from the university or within your building, just not having people around that have been teachers for a while that you felt like you could go and ask things.

We had talked about concerns that you had as a beginning teacher.

Right, I believe that as far as anything else nothing else that has jumped into my mind.

One of the things that I realized after talking to some of the other teachers is that I've never had you describe the roles that you've played as a beginning teacher. Could you tell me what roles you had to play as a beginning teacher?

Within the school, actually within the school setting? Yes. We started out with a substitute next door so I was the only quote, "kindergarten teacher that was here." This year we started out the same way. I wished that I had been in a position where I wasn't the teacher but could just be behind someone else and feel my way around for a couple months. I just had to go and do things and really wasn't experienced with a lot of things we had to do and didn't know any other way to do them. I just had to figure things out my own way. What about your role with kids? What kinds of roles have you had to play?

Mother, nurse, sometimes as a go-between. Go-between? Yes, a go-between with a mother and a father or a grandparent and a parent. This year, well last year also, I've had court cases that I've been subpoenaed to have to go to for a kindergartner so I had to play that role. I've had to play nurturer a lot of the time. I think one of the most important things that I've noticed especially this year, is that you have to be a stable influence. Sometimes you can't deal with what's going on at home. If you're stable, constant and they always know that you're going to be here, that your rules are not going to change from day-to-day, that seems to be one of the most important roles. So you have the role of being a consistent adult they know they can count on? Right.

The last question that did not pick up on the tape was to describe for me a situation that involved a particular concern you experienced. You mentioned several concerns, but can you think of a particular instance that exemplifies that concern?

I believe one of the most important ones this year is working with the children that I feel we are not serving. One of my little girls, and I have three right now that were considered MR or LD at other schools. One of them is getting ready to turn eight and she's in kindergarten. Socially and emotionally she's not on level and certainly academically she's not on level and she's just not able. She tries real hard to do what everybody else does, but she's not capable of doing it. It's hard for me knowing that I'm not serving her, knowing that there's somebody else in our building that could do a much better job and

that could meet her needs. When I've got twenty it's almost impossible for me to help one student all day long, and that's what she needs. Was she the student that had been in first grade and didn't stay in long enough to identify her there? Right, because we have to be in the second semester of the first grade year for them to identify a student who needs help. When they moved her back down here they said, "we did the paper work, everything. We did observations, everything and when we turned it in they said that they were sorry but even though she's eight years old, or getting ready to be eight years old, she is in kindergarten class so they would not test her. What's going to happen to her then? She'll go on to first grade and she will sit in the classroom for half-a-year and not understand anything and then they'll test her the second semester. Is there no place parents can go to request testing? Yes there is they would have to go to the board. The thing about that is most of the children we have in that situation, either the parents want to deny that there's a problem and they're not going to fight for it, or they're not educated enough to be able to fight the system. Would you say that this girl's parents were not educated enough? The mother isn't I don't believe, but I don't know that for sure, but I believe that she's probably not reading on a high enough level to even understand the work that is sent home the newsletters or anything else. That's how its going to have to be and I've been up to the testing center, our counselor has, our speech pathologist has, and they just won't do anything. That's something you have to go home and live with at night? Yes, and it's the feeling that I can't do anything, I can't do anything about it. I've had to tell the parent. She asked me, "she's not ready for first grade?" I said, "I know, but we're going to have to go ahead and send her on." I tried to explain but it's like explaining to a child sometimes that you know this is the best thing for us to do. We love her and we want her to be able to get the best help that we can give here and right now this is how we have to do it and so I hope that it is. I think bringing her back to kindergarten was probably the best thing at the time, because she needed the centers, which they don't do at all in the first grade, no centers at all. She needed a lot of the hands-on things that we do. She needed to be able to talk with her peers and start building bonds and socializing. She needed all that so bringing her back was definitely the best thing to do, but we thought we could get her help, too, in kindergarten and it just didn't work out. But you didn't you say she has a very good attitude? Maybe it helped her from getting to that point of frustration. Yes, now she does have a good attitude. When we first got her into the classroom, she was scared of everything and she thought everything was getting dark. Recently she hasn't had as many problems as she had before and she is growing and maturing.

Can you describe a special moment as your first year as a teacher or even this year when you more fully understood what it means to be a teacher?

Hmmm. Just take your time. I know last year there was a couple of times that my kids really did some things that I thought, "this is why I wanted to be a teacher." This year I think because I've worked so much more closely with my parents that I'm starting to hear things even from my parents. I have a little boy in my classroom this year and he's one of them I had to go to court about. His home life was awful and I ended up being subpoenaed and testify for his father in a custody hearing. After all of that happened he came in one day the boy came in and said that he loved being back at his house and that they went out that weekend and he got sunburned. I can't remember if they were fishing or if they had just gone out. He was outside somewhere and he said, "you know, I really

do love my daddy.” I said, “I know.” He said, “we eat together and we’re in the house together now.” I thought at that time you know all the reading, math, and all the worrying about that they’re going to know everything they need to know, and you know just him being able to be with his dad made a huge difference in that little boy’s life, huge difference. It was the difference of being sexually assaulted, living in a house where they were selling crack, and then was able to go to a home where he feels safe that’s going to change his whole life. That’s the moment that I thought that’s why I’m here. I can teach reading, and I can teach whatever else I want to teach, but that’s why I’m here. His father has come a couple of times and spoken to me and said, “you know, it’s made a big difference.” His attorney has come up even and talked to me and said how much of a difference it’s made. He’s not tired when he comes in, you know he’s had food when he comes to school. He’s not one of the little kids that wants everybody else’s leftovers whether it’s been chewed on or not that’s how it was in the beginning. There have been lots of moments I’ve thought, you know especially when that light bulb comes on in little kids, you know that’s wonderful that’s what you think, that’s why I’m here but it’s not. It’s being able to make those big changes like that in the life of one little boy. If they’re hungry, if they haven’t felt loved, or if they were up all night last night because the police raided their house you could do phonics, you could stand on your head and it wouldn’t make a difference to those little kids. It’s those basic needs. I think that was something I’ll probably remember for a long time.

We talked a little bit about people that you go to for support or where you might get support or advice. Where have you as a beginning teacher gone to get advice or help and what were the results?

Last year because I was in an especially unique position there was a preschool teacher that I worked next door to. Although our teaching philosophies were very, very different I still picked up a lot of things that I thought could help. Some of them worked and some of them didn’t. My principal was always very open to ideas and if I came in and I said, “You know, I just can’t make it through snacks, I can’t do it. We’ve got somebody throwing milk across the room or whatever you know. We just can’t do it.” He was always open to think of new things to try and help. Other than that, the first year I really didn’t have a lot of people to go to. My advisor from my college was very good. I felt it was hard because she was only there for so short of a time and I know they don’t have a lot of time it’s hard for them to get into the classroom. She gave me a lot of ideas as far as room structure things I needed to find things I needed to get. Other than that I read a lot. I belong to three or four different associations or organizations that deal with professional development and I get as many things as I can to read. I go to workshops, I love to go to workshops so I go to a lot of information like that. This year because the other two teachers are new they’ve had a lot of experience with children. It’s been nice to have someone else to bounce ideas off of or for them to say, “well you know, whenever my child does that” because they have children of their own. “Whenever my child was in kindergarten they did this really cool thing where...” and you know I just hadn’t thought about it. It’s nice to have someone to bounce ideas off of that’s helped us grow a lot this year to share information. One of us is a big computer fan so she’s always printing stuff off and stuff and saying, “did you see this?” I’d copy off my books for them so it’s just ideas like that.

What about people outside the immediate school?

I really haven't had that many other than in organizations and some professional development outside the school. I do have some of my friends that I graduated from college with and I think all four of us ended up being kindergarten teachers, which was nice. We have someone that we can call every now and then and ask, "so they do that exactly the same way at your school, huh?" So that's nice.

You mentioned some associations and memberships that you have belong to. Could you be specific on which ones they are.

I belong to Kappa Delta Pi and the Association for Early Childhood International and of course the PTA [Parent Teacher's Association, the NEA [National Education Association] and our state education association and district education association. I also belong to the Year Round Education Association. I didn't know that they had such an organization. Oh yes, it's wonderful. Do they have literature that they publish with that? Yes, and there's also a web site and the Year Round Association. They have an International conference and this last year it was in Las Vegas. My principal and I did a presentation in Las Vegas and we did a presentation in Spokane, Washington over our break. Over what topic? Year-round education. Year-round education with kindergartners? No, "Just Doing It" that was our title. It was how to turn a school around in just five months from a traditional calendar to a year-round calendar.

Interesting! Um, I know that ACEI has a journal. Do you find time or how do you find time to read?

I read at night I'm just one of those people who like to read so I read a lot at night. Now in my class, just within the past couple of weeks, we've been having "Drop Everything and Read" time, it's something that they do school-wide. My kids have their books and they drop everything and read, while I drop everything and read, too. That's when I have time I can glance over journals, through books that I've bought, get ideas for different things or looking something up that's usually what I do. I keep a book here or a book in the car while your riding, you scan it like a journal or whatever. Usually there's something there that catches my eye that I think, "you know that's right."

Tell me a little bit about that. If you picked up a journal when you went home what do you do first?

I go through and look at the pictures. Then I see if there's something that's relevant. For instance if I picked up a journal right now and they said something about closing out the year, or something about assessment or getting them ready for next year or something like that, that's really relevant to me right now, I would start with that. Usually if I know of something that one of the other teachers are wanting and I think, "that would be good" I start reading that. I've just got journals everywhere, I never throw anything away, but by the time I get the next one, I've pretty much at least glanced through everything. Some of it may not be relevant especially some of the things that they have about education other places, to me it may not be appropriate here so I just glance over it. Some of what they're doing in other places is kind of cool and neat but that's not something that I find that I need right now. Sometimes you find yourself reading an article and thinking about the situation that you have here and if it would work with your kids? Right. Not necessarily that it's a relevant topic that you're interested in but it would work? Right.

What kinds of workshops have you gone to recently?

The last one that we went to was dealing with the difficult child. It was working with ADHD, ADDE, and Operational Defiant children and that was through DHS in this district. All three of the kindergarten teachers went to that. Before that I went to the year-round school conference where they had different workshops there that you could actually go to. What were some of them, can you remember? One of them that I know I went to was working with difficult children, children that come from low poverty level families, which is basically what we have. We're 100% free and reduced lunch that's basically what we have here. Then because I'm inter-session coordinator, I went to a lot of the ones on Managing inter-sessions, or any inter-session ideas, that type of thing.

Do you get off for teacher's meeting since your year-round school?

Yes, anytime that the public school, the traditional calendar public school's out for professional development, we're out.

What kinds of workshops would you like to see offered as a beginning teacher? What are some topics of interest?

The one that we went to that the DHS offered was very informative. They had some scientific basis for what it is we throw around like the words ADHD. They helped me understand things like it's in the executive part of your brain and it's the organization, they don't have the organizational skills that they need. That was very interesting and I would like to have more things on that. Technology for kindergarten would be something else. They have technology but it seems to be for upper grades. Parent outreach, which is something that we have to have but you know you hear the same things over and over. I want new ideas on how to get parents into my room and get them involved and get more than five at a PTA meeting, I want that for our kids and for our school.

Do you do home visits?

No, and they do not require us to do them. I've done probably over the past two years done about five. That was because either I knew the parents or it was a special thing where the child had been out of school for a long time or they'd been sick, and I've just gone by. It wasn't that I was asked to go by or that I felt like there was a problem and I've always called or made an appointment.

You mentioned something about information that you get information from articles.

How often do you share this information you glean from an article or glean from a workshop with someone else in your school situation? You talked about seeing an article that somebody else could use.

Right, and for the three kindergarten teachers that we have here, we're very close so for us to just go into a room and go, "You know I thought about this," isn't a big deal. I probably wouldn't go to one of the first grade teachers and say you know, "I was reading an article and I thought about you." But we're all three fairly new and in the same boat and we're fairly close. We go out to lunch together and so I feel the communication is open for us to say, "you know what in the world happened today, you know I heard your kids..." We don't think that's a put down or anything but another teacher that I didn't know as well probably would have.

One thing that's kind of sparked my interest in some of these interviews, they've talked about the collegiality that they experienced on the college campus. Were you a commuting student?

Yes. Did you find a group of students that you built a relationship with? I did, but I'd already had the relationship with them from high school. There were three or four of us that went to high school together and then we went through college together. We even ended up having the same degree together. As far as campus I really didn't have much of a campus life. Well I was talking about building a relationship with any teachers, with any preservice teachers would do projects together? This group liked to do that because almost all of us commuted and all of us lived in the same town. It was very easy for us to get together and work on things, or study together. It helped us that we commuted back and forth together. Do you still keep in contact with them? Yes, we still email. All of us are within this school district, so all of us have Internet access to each other through email.

Have the results from the sources you have used been appreciated not appreciated, on target?

They seem to have been fairly appreciated, I think.

From your standpoint you feel like they were of benefit to you, the articles, and the people that you talked to, the workshops you go to?

I think you can always grab something from them. Even if you go to a seminar and think, "oh my goodness," you know most of it seems to have been not very good at least you can pull something out of it. Some of them have not been grade appropriate, but we have to take them anyway. If nothing else like the computer one, I at least learned more about the computer. If nothing else it helped me personally.

Do you get to visit other classrooms? Do you get to go outside of the district to go and visit classrooms?

Not really, right now they're having so much trouble finding subs. Today we did get to go to the four-year-old center. All three of us went on our planning period and we went around to different rooms inviting the children and their parents to come to the kindergarten roundup, we have to recruit. It was nice and was kind of eye opening. They are doing wonderful things and it was kind of scary thinking that parents are going to walk in and wonder if our rooms going to scare them? We have chairs and tables, which none of the preschool classrooms had and our decorations in the hallway aren't as elaborate. We were talking about this on the way back and we thought, "we're going to do a lot of cleaning for tomorrow." It was nice getting to see some because the teachers there knew should be going to our school they know who should be in this district. Because we're a year-round school, anybody can join us and get a transfer. We saw some faces and the teachers pointed out certain students, at least we'll maybe recognize a face tomorrow night.

What would you tell a beginning early childhood teacher about your experiences as a beginning teacher?

Sometimes there are some bumpy roads but just hang on it's worth it, every bit of it's worth it just getting through the first few years and enjoying it, loving what you do. If you don't love what you do maybe you need to find something else. With our degree there are other things you can do it's not a wasted degree. There are other things maybe a



classroom setting just isn't the best for them. There are going to be some hard times and it's like that with any job, but I think that sometimes in this profession you take things so personally. If you're one of those people who take things personally then its going be hard and its going to be emotional. But like I said whenever you have one of those life changing experiences, or you simply have one of those little light bulbs that turn on its worth it, every bit of it.

What would you, as a beginning teacher tell an administrator? What would you share with them?

I never really thought about that. Most early childhood teachers love what they do. We don't last very long if we don't their support is greatly needed. What kind of support would you ask for or request that they show their teachers? In my classroom we say everyone needs the magic triad, so do teachers, especially new teachers. They need the kind touch, the kind word, kind smile, they need that. They need to know if they're doing a good job. I always used to tell my principal last year if I'm doing something right, let me know. I don't want to be in the classroom all year and be doing something that you don't feel is right. I want to have the autonomy to run my own classroom because I feel like I understand my kids and I feel that I understand the early childhood philosophy, but if there's something that worries you I want to know. He was always open and would come in to ask me about something and very tactful about the way he put it he never to hurt my feelings but would be wondering about something. I think they [new teachers] need that support, they need to know that you know, if a teacher's having a problem that they can go down there and talk to them about it. If you know if they're having a problem in their classroom he or she [the principal] needs to be able to find them help them find the answers. It's hard especially if you're in a building without anybody else that knows any different there has to be a way for them to find some answers.

As a beginning early childhood teacher, what would you share about your experiences with a university instructor?

I wish they had told us more things. Like what? One thing that I just thought about it was my first year whenever I walked in and I saw that Saxon phonics, I thought I'm not going to do it. They [university instructors] told me I didn't have to do it. Maybe at the university they thought I didn't have to do it and children will learn everything they need to know. It was a strange couple of days, but you know, I wish I had heard about it. I know it's probably not the best thing for little ones, but it's something that I have to teach. I wish I had been trained about it. I hadn't even heard of Saxon phonics. I'd heard of Open Court, but that's only because that's how they taught me whenever I was in kindergarten. I would go to interviews and they would say, "What do you think about Saxon phonics?" I had to be truthful and say, "I'm sorry but I haven't had any experience with Saxon phonics, when another teacher, who might have had experience would have been able to elaborate on it. Even if I didn't believe in the system and least I could have told them something that I knew about it. I wish that we could have been in the classroom a lot more and I would have been able to try some of my things I wouldn't have spent half of a year trying different things before I found what was right for me.

Can you think of anything else that you want them to change or want them to include, to help you as a beginning teacher?

You know there's a lot of things I learned from being in class and from reading. I learned a lot of things from doing assignments but none of it really helped prepare me like being in the classroom. I just don't know how they could help with that experience. The university is doing a lot to make sure you're in three different classrooms for your internships. That's more than what a lot of other people get but sometimes you just have to step out of that box and dive in head first.

What would you as a beginning early childhood teacher tell or share with a parent?

About myself? Yes, about yourself and being a beginning teacher, what you learned.

Well, one thing I tell my parents whenever they ask, "you know how long have you been teaching?" I say, "I'm fairly new I've been here for two years and I did my internship at three different schools before I started teaching. I have a lot of fresh new ideas and we're going to have fun and we're going to learn." I think it's important for them [parents] to know they can either think of it two ways they can think, "she's new, she doesn't know anything," or they can think, "boy she's enthusiastic and ready to be in there." There are two ways of looking at everything. I hope that they understand that and I hope that my joy working with the kids rubs off and they kind of understand that when their kids come home. You know kids they will tell on you and I mean anything that you do. Just like when my kids are in their centers I can tell how their home life is because of the way they play and the things that they say whenever they're playing mamma and daddy. Kids do the same thing at home. Whenever they go home and play teacher I hope that they understand that we have a respectful environment for each other. As far as things that I would tell parents I would say, "it's been a wonderful two years." There have been bumps along the way, but everyone has grown and everyone has matured and everyone has learned.

What have been some of the most important things you've learned about yourself and what areas have you seen the most growth as a professional?

Coming straight from college, being married and coming to the classroom, I think I was kind of scared of how I would interact with children. I hadn't been around children that much and I was kind of surprised how nurturing I was because I really hadn't ever been in that role. I think as far as growth it was probably in my classroom management. I wouldn't call it discipline but my classroom management has really developed this year. I've always been a very organized person and my five-year-olds are just not very organized people. I've had to give in a little, last year it would just absolutely kill me whenever they left the room and it just looked like a tornado hit. This class is a little bit better, but I have to come to the conclusion as long as they're learning and as long as they're discovering and as long as it's organized chaos I can deal with it. I think that it's kind of changed a lot within me. I was surprised how nurturing I naturally was and I think of my kids in my classroom as my own kids. If anything happens or anybody says anything to them I take it very personally just like a parent would if it were their child. I don't think I thought it would bother me.

You mentioned classroom management as part of your professional growth and development. Would you say that one year has shown you more of where you need to grow?

Are you meaning like my first year? From your first year, did you find areas where you said, "okay this isn't going well, like I need to grow in this area?" Yes. This year has it been the same? After my first year, I really had to stop and think over the summer about how I needed to have more procedures and things that were more consistent for my kids. My first year wasn't [consistent] because I did a lot of trial and error, but this year when I had the consistency my classroom management seemed to really improve. After this summer I'm going to sit down and work and research as much as I can about parent outreach that's my goal for next year and just and take a little bit at a time. I started out with my most basic and what meant the most to me and that was my kids. Next year I can pull my parents in and that's going to help my kids, its going to help my classroom and it's going to help my school. I had to get the classroom management down first. I think it's a growth process and it's going to take me many, many years to get everything done and it may take me the rest of my career. I'm sure I'll find something every year that I think, "You know I can improve on that."

Where do you see yourself in ten or fifteen years?

Ten or fifteen years hopefully by then I will have gone back and gotten my master's. I'm hoping to do that within two years or three years and probably in early childhood education I can't imagine myself not being in the classroom. I like working with my kids, and having my own classroom, and I would never want to be an administrator that's just not me. I thought for a while that maybe counseling was more where I wanted, but I still think a classroom setting is probably the best for me. Hopefully by then I'll be on my 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> improvement in what I'm doing and be well rounded, still learning, still open to new ideas.

Do you find yourself in the future in a position of working with other new teachers?

I hope so. I think it's important that the teachers that have been through everything would still understand and still have the love that they did when they first started their teaching. I think it's important for those teachers to go back and help teachers that are just getting started or students that are still in college that are trying to decide if this is what they want to do. I think sometimes it ends up being the teachers that have just done it over and over and over and have gotten tired and burned out that get the new teachers. It's those teachers that need to go on and look at a different type of job within the educational system. That's scary thinking those new teachers are being exposed to teachers like that. I hope that if I am still learning and growing as a teacher that I would be willing to go back and do that. I know the three teachers that I had for my internship experiences were still learning they were still growing and gave me that boost that I needed. So you're saying those are the kinds of teachers that we need to be placing interns with and making sure the entry year committee has somebody like that on their committee? Right, I know one of my friends had a teacher for part of her internship experience I'm sure was a wonderful teacher, but she was just tired of what she did. That was her experience that's very sad. I hope that if I am at that position, even if it's just helping new teachers that live in the building, that I always keep the communication is open. Our school seems to be a very open school and I hope that it stays that way for a long time.

APPENDIX I  
Suzanne's Interviews

Suzanne  
Interview #1  
May 10, 2001

This is Suzanne and it is May 10, 2001. The first set of questions that I want to ask is in three broad questions. The first question I would like to ask you is, "how did you decide on a teaching, as teaching as a career?"

Well at first I didn't want to. First, my mom and dad are both teachers and half my family. I have an uncle who is a superintendent and I've been around it [teaching] all my life. I always said I don't want to go into teaching because I feel like that's all I've ever seen between my mom and dad and everybody. Then as I got into it [education] I did travel and other things like that before and as I got into it [education] more and decided on having kids and a family I thought you know that would be a good thing for me. I love kids I love, when I got into the school atmosphere I really liked it. I thought, "oh wow, this is really neat," and I started really anticipating it [teaching], so that's why I decided to do that [teach] and I've loved it.

Now did you do your interning here?

No. Where did you do your final intern? I did that in a city close by here. I live there and I was hoping to get hired there and I didn't so this worked out. I did work at the Kindergarten center for my pre-I I and the four-year-old program with pre-I but you only mostly observe and do three lessons or so that's what I did. Where did you do your pre-intern II? Wait no, pre-I was at the Kindergarten center then I did pre II with the four-year-old program. The full intern I did both in my hometown and I did third grade and kindergarten split.

Tell me a little bit about what you remember growing up in school yourself, experiences that you had as far back as you can remember.

You just want different experiences. Things you remember about your education. The only thing I remember in kindergarten was getting to play with the big parachute. That was my earliest memory. I loved those big parachute things where you got to move them up and down and go in and out. That was all fun, I don't remember anything else about that. I remember third grade we moved back to the town I live in now and still remember my teacher Mrs. Wallace, my third grade teacher. I remember I liked third grade but I don't remember much about it, what I did. Fourth grade I remember being my hardest year. It was really tough. Why? The teacher was old, she was a real older lady and few years from retirement. She was kind of bitter, hateful and didn't like me because my mom taught there and she didn't like my mom so she always took it out on me. She'd make me sit out in the hallway. If there were five or six kids laughing about something she'd pick me out and make me sit in the hall. Once she even told me, I'll never forget this, she said, "I hope your mom walks by and sees you sitting in the hallway." I will never forget it that has stuck with me my whole life. That's what made me realize when I became a teacher any little thing you say or do can instill on a child and they never forget it. That has been my worst fear. I don't want to do something like that to hurt a child or to

hurt their feelings or harm them in any way mentally where they remember that forever and look at me and go, "I remember when..." I don't want to have that kind of memory with a child it's a daily thing you have to watch everything.

What grade did your mom teach?

She was first grade at the time, but she's been all around. She's taught fourth, fifth and sixth now, she's done it all. She's been a teacher for many, many years.

After fourth grade, do you remember anything about any other grades?

Not much on up to eighth grade. School wasn't that difficult for me. I was an average student. If I would have studied more I probably would have done better but I enjoyed my teachers. I didn't have any others that really were terrible like that. In ninth grade I did have one who taught me algebra. She was a year or two from retirement also and she was hateful and did not like me either because my dad taught there. They really took it out on me if they didn't like me my dad taught at the high school and I was there and she just didn't make it [algebra] to where I understood it. It's [algebra] very difficult for me I just struggled and struggled and cried and cried all the time and had just a really hard time with it. After that year they made her retire. I didn't do very well in that class at all.

What were your favorite subjects?

English, I was going to be an English major but then I decided to do elementary. I love English and spelling, that was always my high point. Math, I got by in math but when it came to algebra and all that higher stuff I don't like it. I'm not very good mathematically.

What made the distinguishing decision about you going from English to elementary or early childhood, really?

I wanted to teach younger kids. I didn't want to do high school, or junior high. I had decided that I didn't want to teach anybody taller than me. They could be intimidating even though once I got into it I would be fine. Just the sarcasm, the innuendoes, the things they know and do and how they smart talk and stuff I just didn't want to mess with that. I just felt I was more of an elementary teacher. First grade, a little young for me I decided I didn't ever want to go that low. Second, third, or fourth at the highest that's really where I wanted to be. Why didn't you want first? They're babies. I have a five-year-old at home right now and I have them all day then I go home to one it's the same thing. They act the same, mannerisms are the same and you just get tired. First graders can't tie their shoes when they come in and they don't know what's going on. They cry a lot and some of them can't even write very well. They don't know where everything is in here because this is the lowest grade in our building and I just don't feel I'm a singsong first grade type person, even though I am an early childhood major. I don't know if I should say this but the main reason I did early childhood was so I could graduate through a particular university close by. At this university at that time you had to go through another college to get elementary education. The university that I wanted to graduate from did not offer those courses at the center close by so I went through early childhood. That's what they had at the time and I did that and I majored in early childhood that's how I worked around it. I want to stay where I'm at [referring to the school she is teaching in now] and hopefully stay in third and maybe move between second and fourth that would be nice.

Who were some of the people that had a definite influence on your decision to become a teacher?

I looked a lot at my mom and dad because I said I have my mom and dad, my aunt and uncle. I have three cousins, who are teachers and I really looked up to one of my teachers in high school she was my English teacher. I had her all four years in high school and I just liked the way she held herself. She was real proper and she just got the kids to look at her and listen just like that [snaps her fingers]. Just by the way she'd just give you the eye and she really knew what she was doing. She really worked hard at teaching and I just admired her and I guess maybe that was one of the reasons that I liked English so much because she really helped me out with that. I wanted to have an influence. I liked the teachers who had an influence on me they just stuck out to me. I want to be like that some day. I want to have some kids look up to me and say, "I remember when I had you in this grade and you did this for me and you taught me this when I didn't understand it."

It sounds like you've had some teachers that have provided a negative influence that made you think, I don't want to be like that as well as positive influence.

Yes, and that helped, that was a good learning experience because I thought I am not going to do that to a child. I just can't, I couldn't imagine doing that just because I didn't like somebody or somebody's mom I'm not going to take it out on a child. A lot of people do that.

Now were you married when you went back to school?

Yes, I was. Did you have any children at that time? I was pregnant with my first one, I guess I started that same semester then the second semester I had her. I was in pre I when I had her. I had a little bit of it [my schooling] already done, but I was right in the middle of pre I. Luckily my instructor worked with me I forget her name now, she was the sweetest lady. She worked my area and was really nice. She worked with us because she didn't have class for a few weeks anyway so it really worked out nice.

Can you think of some people that have not, not encouraged you to go into teaching?

Oh, yes, a lot of people. They'd say, "what do you want to do that for, there's no money in it." "You know you need to make money why do you want to go into teaching." My grandma and grandpa they mean well, but they would always say "why do you want to go into teaching because they've seen my mom and dad and everybody else do it. They said "those kids are getting so bad these days, you know the way things are these days with kids it's getting a lot worse and a lot parents just don't care. The kids come out not knowing much and they don't have any support. They said, "why would you want to do that, it's a lot harder than it used to be for teachers." This is the day and age I was born and that's what I want to do and I would have done it probably either way.

Have any of the people that you've had in your undergraduate program or people that you've interned or pre-interned with given you any kind of negative feedback about teaching?

Some, I mean like those little insights that teachers have and they'll just make comments or they'll tell you kind of the inside scoop on things of how it really works and stuff like that. You hear it all and I just feel like it's information that I could just feed in and keep and use later on. It's like, "oh I need to watch that or I need to do this." I just took it and if I didn't like what I heard or didn't think much of it I just kind of blew it off.

So your decision was already made it didn't really affect you? I sure wasn't going to get into it and go, "oh, I don't want to do this." I didn't really care for the classes much before I got in the classroom, but once I started pre I and I actually got to go in and do things, I enjoyed that. I didn't like all the paper work, but you have paper work. I have more now than I ever did so you get used to that. In third grade I'll have more papers than I'll know what to do with.

What about your husband was he in support of you? Did he understand what you were trying to do?

He just wanted me to have a job. I was in college, this is embarrassing, I was in college for probably nine years. I'm 29 years old. I could have been teaching already now for probably seven years. Like I said I got a degree in travel and I did other things and I worked for DA for three years. I was really traveling and doing things like that and then I finally settled down and realized what I want to do is be a teacher. It took me a while because I was dead set against it and I kept trying to talk myself out of it saying, "oh there is no money in it." Then when I decided to have kids and I love being around them anyway I've always wanted children. It's great besides if I didn't like my job I couldn't do it. It's great having the summer time off and you get the holidays there are those perks even though you don't get a lot of pay, you get the perks that go with it. You get to be with your kids and when they get school age, I get to take them with me and take them home. You can't beat that when you're a working parent. That was another part of my decision.

Describe your experiences entering the classroom for the first time as a teacher.

Scared to death. Like the first day of school is that what you mean? Your first day of school. The first week was hectic I mean I didn't really know what I was doing because I was still trying to get my boundaries to know what I liked and what I didn't like. I took all these ideas from everybody and I thought well, I have it all set up, but is it going to work? It was real stressful wondering what do I do? I made sure I had everything written down to a tee because if I didn't, if I had any silence in the air at all it was like they would just go bonkers. If they knew that you didn't know what you were doing that's when they would just get out of hand. So I always had to have everything written down. I remember the first day went well, they all got to know each other and they did what they were supposed to do and we just kind of flowed. The rest of the week – I don't really remember it. It just seemed to all just flow into place and my principal was real supportive. He would just come in just pop in anytime. I got used to that but at first I was just a nervous wreck. I thought what am I going to do if he walks in and I'm doing something I probably don't want him to see. The real thing was sitting at my desk but I really didn't sit at my desk anyway but he did not like you to do that. That was kind of nerve wracking but if I'm doing different things I'm always wanting to go up and explain what I'm doing. If someone sees me doing something they kind of give me a look like I have to go and explain it because, "I'm sorry, I'm doing it for this reason." I just never had any real major troubles. The only time I got really nervous was when people came to watch me nine times in one year. [This was for her entry year of teaching.] That seemed like a lot to me. I was a nervous wreck. I felt like, "I've got to plan this whole day to a tee because when I got in the routine I automatically knew what I was doing and I didn't worry about that." If I had a space here where there wasn't anything said or something in the air you had time to regroup. The kids didn't get out of hand they knew to wait on me.

But when you're being watched you don't do that so it was stressful but I loved it [my first year] I had a great year. I'm sure part of it for me being pregnant was exciting and I always had something going on something to look forward to and it was just a great year. I really enjoyed it.

You mentioned something about ideas, you had ideas from everybody. Who were some of the people who really helped you?

The other second grade teachers for sure. I had a lot of ideas from my pre-internships from every time I went to a classroom I'd be writing down things and they'd give me copies of stuff. My third grade and kindergarten teachers where I interned gave me a lot of stuff. The second grade teachers here, when they found out I got the job I went in and was there the rest of the summer looking at all their stuff and making things like they had them made. I pretty well copied how they were doing things. The other one [other second grade teacher hired] was new also. We were both new so we kind of did things together and gave each other ideas and said, "what are you going to do about this, what are you going to do about this?" We made it through together. Was she new to the school or was she a new teacher? She had been here for a year as a PE assistant then she got hired as a second grade teacher. This was our first year together our entry year together and we leaned on each other. It was great working the same grade having another new teacher. The one beside her helped us with everything, unit stuff, everything. We always knew what to make plus here we have aides that make everything for us they don't let us do our own copies. We just turn it in and they copy it all. They laminate everything and they make anything we want them to make. We just turn it in and say please blow this up and color it and laminate it, they do it all. It's wonderful, I love it. That's what I did a month ahead. I would get all the stuff I needed for the next month ready because they do a monthly movie once a month here. We let the kids watch a movie and we have two hours to work in our rooms. I'd just get all that ready before that day and have it ready to hang up. It was a hard year in that respect, but I made it through. It takes a good sense of organization to think that way. Yes, I had to be organized or I would have just lost it. I'm a very organized person and if you get me out of the organization and say, "this needs to be done by tomorrow" I'm asking, "why didn't you give me more time." "I can't just do this the day before." It has to be done like a week or two in advance. That's just how I am and that's how I remember things. If I wait till the last minute to do anything I'll forget about it.

What other experiences have you had before your undergraduate classes in working with kids or in a teaching type setting, like camps or something like that?

Before I started education? Really none, I went to camps but I was never a supervisor that I can remember. I'm trying to remember if I was. I taught a little bit at my church. I'd volunteer, I taught two and three year olds, which I don't consider that really counting much. I did teach a little bit, but I didn't teach the older kids.

Did you do any kind of babysitting?

Yes, I babysat all the time. I love kids and I baby sat up until I had my own. Then I realized I had my own now and I don't need to be doing that every weekend. I had had a little girl that I baby sat since she was a baby and she was like four or five years old and it was pretty hard on them when I quit watching her. I had her for at least that long before I became a teacher.



Now how many students do you have in the school? Do you know?

I'd say four hundred fifty to four hundred seventy, something like that.

Do you have an assistant principal and a principal?

No, just a principal and a counselor.

How many do you have then in your classroom this year?

I have twenty and it's gone back and forth, back and forth. I started with about twenty-two then I lost three and gained two, lost one, gained one now I have twenty. I got my last one [student] just six weeks before school was to be out. I haven't had her very long.

Tell me about your class. Describe what the kids are like, they're needs, they're backgrounds.

This year's been a tough year for my kids. This is the first class that I've had that really has had a lot of problems and a lot of extra needs that I really haven't had to deal with before. My first year I did have one that they thought he had Turret's Syndrome. He had the beginning signs of that, and that was kind of a weird thing to deal with the first month, the first year of teaching. The mom would just come in and rattle on about him and I'm going, "okay, wait a minute, I need some help here." This year I have one that is on a list for a kidney transplant because she has a degenerative disease. It hasn't really started degenerating yet but it will in time. Then I have one who is about ready to be labeled MR, he's nine years old and he's just now understanding first grade material. They finally got him tested and all that done. Then I have another one who has a kidney problem. He's had surgery this year already, but the parents are pretty much supportive on those kids. The one I just got has been in first grade two years already and doesn't even know all her letter sounds. She came in and I thought, "what am I supposed to do with her?" I said I'd like for her to do first grade again, and then get all the phonics and what we teach [in first grade]. They [principal and counselor] said she's had first grade twice we can't do that. Now we have to get testing for her. This isn't the one that's MR? No this is the one that I just got a few weeks ago. I have some other ones, I can't remember off hand now. I'm retaining two of mine and that was a struggle. I have one that decided they want to try to deal with her at home this summer and try to bring her up to where she needs to be, so they refused. I have two that said they would [agree to retain their children], which makes it nice when they agree with you and they don't think you don't know what you're talking about, because it really affects the student. There are others, too, that have things going on. I can't remember right off hand now. I have one whose borderline, I thought EDD at first. She came in a few weeks after school started. She came in just the sweetest little girl, I just thought, "wow this is a good one here because she's just sweet and kind." The first time I said everybody line up she just sat there. I thought, "uh, oh we've got a problem." I literally had to go and lift her up and walk her to the line. I found out after this that she lost her three year old brother in a car wreck a year and a half ago and they [the parents] never dealt with it, never got her counseling. She's so emotionally affected it's just terrible. We go through something every single day. It just wears me out; it's a daily conflict. This is this class that has it. I've never had this many problems or things wrong with my kids before this year.

I was going to ask have you had to retain any other year?

Yes, I have. My first year I had a little trouble with that because I tried to retain a little boy who just wasn't ready. The parent's were just totally against it and for some reason I

guess I didn't come across like I should have because they sent a note to the superintendent saying that we had a personality conflict. This was on my leave when I was gone they sent it so I really couldn't do much. I didn't have much of a defense but they didn't do anything about it that's just the parents. I don't have a problem with him, he's just not ready to go on to third grade. Then they tried to retain him in third and fourth, I found out so they know. He's an only child and he was babied the parents just thought he could do no wrong. They really had a hard time with him being retained. I think they're still going to send him on to fifth grade. Did they address that at all in your education courses about retaining kids? I don't remember much about it. No, it's starting to get kind of fuzzy now after teaching for three years. But I don't remember talking much about that. You learn of course when you're in the classes but when you finally get a job and you get in the system that's when you learn everything, it's not before. That's when I started learning about retention what to do in these situations when to say something, when not to say something. You learn all about inside stuff that you don't in the classes.

When you talk about these kids with all the problems you just mentioned, did they address any of that in any of your special classes that you had? Do you feel like it was addressed and it didn't mean anything to you at that time? Or it just wasn't covered in any extent like you felt you needed it?

I don't think it was covered to the extent that we could have used it because now with inclusion of the children in the classroom I really only remember one class that I had. The teacher was wonderful and I loved the class because she was so good at what she did. She really made us interested in what she was talking about. It was a special education class. That's the only class I remember having [about special problems]. I wasn't really paying attention one day probably not to the extent that I should have and she started doing something. She was working on the overhead projector and we were supposed to be writing stuff down on paper. She had transparencies on there and she always waited till we got everything written down, gave us plenty of time to write it down. One day she just kept on talking da-da-da-da like nothing had changed and she'd put one up there and about five seconds later take it off and put another one up there. She just kept on talking away and five seconds later she would change it. We're supposed to be writing this down and we're all going, "put that back you know," we're sitting there like, "what is she doing, what is she doing." She said, "are you all getting frustrated," and we said, "yes," she said, "how do you think a special needs child feels when they go into the classroom and you don't go slow enough for them and you just bypass them and go at a normal pace. Just think how they feel. "Oh," it clicked and I understood how they must feel. I will never forget that. It's just certain things that stick out.

Can you describe some of the problems that the kids have? What about their intellectual capacity's, the types, the levels of students? What kind of family backgrounds do these kids come from?

Definitely the ones that are the strongest students have a good family background they have mom and dad they're supportive, and the mom and dad's call me occasionally. We keep in touch and all my high ones that I can think of right now, I know their parents by name, they come on field trips and they're really supportive. I can tell just by the way the kids talk the kind of values they have and the things they say they give little hints here and there. The ones who are kind of *nyeeh* they're more average, you know the mom, the

parents care and they want to know what to do but they're not as high I guess socioeconomic, not as high in that area. You can tell that they're average students they're not below. Then I have some that are really below and there's a couple, my MR student's [mom] she's actually a teacher at the junior high. I guess she doesn't really do much to help him, which kind of floored me because she's a teacher, but she doesn't really do much to help him. There's a lot going on with him, but you know that's where the rest of them that are lower are. I mean they [the parents] try to help them but a lot of times they are just not developmentally ready. In first grade that's the case a lot of time.

Now is this first grade or second?

This is first. This is first, but you did teach second? After my first year I got moved down. This is my second year in first grade. Then you're going on to third? Right.

How do they fit as far as levels? Do you have some that are way up here, and some that are way down there, and a majority in between? Or are they pretty well split into groups?

The majority's in-between. I have a few that are really high and then about four or five that are really low and the rest just kind of fall in the middle. They're getting it they know what's going on some maybe in too much of a hurry, or some may just not care enough to really excel to probably what they could.

Do they pull out any students in first grade here?

Mmhm, just one mine that's going to be labeled MR is on an IEP so he goes out just for about 45 minutes in the morning. He was able to keep up with the math for a while. Next year he'll be having to go even more to that class but yes, I just pull out one.

Do they pull them out for reading and math and things like that in first grade?

Yes.

What kinds of things do you do at the beginning of the year to assess your students to find out what they know and what they don't know?

We do the Gates-McInity reading test in the fall that's just the pictures and the words. That tells us if they can read the words and identify the picture with it. That tells us if they need to be on a reading plan or not. That's really the biggy right there because we have to know if they're under forty percent and that gives us a really good idea of where they're at and which ones know they're letter sounds and which don't. We made up some other testing. I forget the name of this other one, but there are six different levels of it. It does beginning and ending sounds and rhyming, different things like that. It's something your school has put together or school system? Just our first grade, it came from Literacy First. We do several testings. We do what we call reading inventories, just all kinds of little tidbits to tell us exactly where they are because you need all these goals met before you can even start reading. We need to make sure they have all those before we can put them in a book. A lot of times it takes the first nine weeks before you can even get a student in a book.

Now do you give grades in first grade here?

We take grades we do S's, S-'s, and N's.

Not A, B, C's?

We do for art.

Can you think of something's that you really thought a classroom was really going to be like and it wasn't?

The teachers would always say, "well you know we can only teach you so much." They would say, "we can just tell you, give you what we can and then you're going to have to figure out a lot of it when you get in there. Because we can't teach you everything." They did say that you shouldn't be expecting to know it all. In a way I was hoping to know a little more, because you really don't realize what you're getting into until you actually walk in the room, just shell shock, it's wow! This is my room and I'm supposed to organize it, I'm supposed to get it ready and teach these kids and it's up to me to get them through that grade. It's pretty overpowering at first. It's a big challenge.

How long did you know about the job? How long before you had to start school did you get the job?

I worked all summer long trying to get a job. I didn't know until it was July, I think it was towards the end of July. I had maybe two weeks to get my room ready. I was getting really stressed. I had interview after interview and I hated it. I hated interviews. I didn't want to do them anymore they were just nerve wracking and it was terrible. I was just a nervous wreck. That's probably why I didn't get hired at first. I had another job offer for a four-year-old program and I'm glad I didn't take it. I like this much better, but it was the end of July when finally I got it. So I would have loved it to have had all summer to know which grade I was going to have and to get ready.

Most of the time it doesn't work that way.

No it didn't but it was worth the wait. I'm really glad I waited cause if I would have had a job offer earlier I would have taken it and I never would have been able to get this job. So it all worked out like it was supposed to.

Can you think of any other thoughts that entered your mind as you came into the classroom the first couple weeks?

I just remember I was real excited to be here. I loved it. I loved being called Mrs. Bernhart. I loved being a teacher and loved having the name, the spot I guess you could say. Through it all it was stressful because I was daily going, "okay what are we going to do tomorrow, what are we gonna do tomorrow?" Every single day it was planning for the next day. I couldn't plan for the week. How do I do a lesson plan – I can't write a lesson plan in my book I don't know what I'm doing every single day. That was hard. Getting organized was my main stress it wasn't the kids, it wasn't the classroom it was just getting organized having all my supplies and having all things ready to do what I want to do.

Did you have to spend a lot of your own money that first year?

Not a whole lot. I got two hundred dollars to start out. They gave all the new teachers two hundred dollars to go spend and a lot of it I made myself and then whatever extra I needed I had to buy myself. I have a friend who has a teacher supply store in my hometown. I know her personally and she gives me a discount. It's not as bad, but I still had to go buy some of my own stuff. I did it all the time because I'd need this, I'd need that, or oh I forgot about that. I was in there every month getting stuff.

Was yours an added on classroom or had somebody been teaching that grade and left or moved on?

Yes, someone had been teaching and they left. So there were some things here? Yes, when I first walked in she had had a bunch of stuff just sitting on the reading table. It was just packed with stuff that she didn't want or need any more. I went through every piece of that stuff cleared out every bookshelf, cleaned everything, it took me forever. I went through every piece of stuff everything she had and I kept it all just labeled it put it in a file because I thought, "I might need this someday." I've always loved where I'm at. I've never taken it for granted because I know how some teachers have it really hard and I wouldn't know what to do. I'm really spoiled, I don't know what I'd do if I had to go somewhere else.

If you were to write an analogy of what being a beginning teacher in early childhood is like what would you compare it to?

Oh, boy. Hmm, well I guess you've always heard, "like a duck out of water." You know you're just kind of thrown into it. In a way I felt like I was a little bit prepared but then, you know then when it was time to start like they just said okay, go. You know just do it and people would come by and say I want to see the new second grade teacher. They would just look at me like she's already, she knows what she's doing and you know in a way I felt that way also. Does that make sense? I mean at first I felt a little bit alone, like I had to know all this stuff myself, I asked a lot of questions but they already assumed I knew all that I was supposed to know because they had been teaching for so long. And a lot of them didn't give me pointers and things unless I asked them, so I felt kind of weird at first when I started. I can't think of anything else right now. Some have written like it's being thrown into a um, swimming pool and you're thrown into the deep end. Yes, that's kind of what I was thinking. That's pretty much accurate. That is true I mean it's very uncomfortable at first and then when you start getting comfortable to where you start getting everything together like you want it, the pieces start coming together. I just thought of one. This is true, pieces of a puzzle all spread out on a table. I have everything I need but it's all in different places. I'm going okay, "how do I put all this together to make it work." Perfect, that's me right there, I don't know why I think of that sooner, but that's exactly me. I had everything I needed, I had all the support I needed. I had all the supplies but I didn't know what to do with it what to put where. [I didn't know] how to make it work know what I'm trying to do. That was the hardest part and I'm still doing that. Next year I'm still going to be doing that all year long.

Hopefully you'll do that till you retire.

I don't know after teaching three grades in four years I'm ready to just stay where I am for a while. I'm tired of moving, it gets old.

You've taught two different grades now, have you found that your kids are reacting differently to what you're teaching?

Yes, some do. If they're not getting it or if they don't understand then I can't always teach the same way. They're going to react differently but if someone's not getting it here I know I have to revamp and do something different.

You use a task board, I just wondered how the kids reacted to that? If you had some that need more direction, one particular class that needed more direction on some things?

No, I mean first grade compared to second grade yes, a lot. We'd spend a week teaching one thing because you had to. If you just tried to teach it in one or two days and then try to tell them to go with it, you'll have all the kids coming up to your desk going, "how do I do this?" That drove me crazy. I can't handle this I'd rather spend a week of my time teaching one task then to have them doing that. I waited till they were comfortable with it we practiced it we actually did it and then I let them go. Definitely from first to second or second to first grade I did a lot more instruction that way teaching how to do something I'd spend a lot more time than I had to in second. Harry Wong says you know procedures. If you're going to teach it right, spend the first two weeks of school getting it right that way they know how to do it then go. If you don't you're going to have trouble from then on.

What was the reaction of parents to you being a beginning teacher? Or, even now parents not knowing you from last year, do they question you because of your experience, because of your age?

I think my first year they did. With the boy that I tried to retain, I think they did because I was a very first year teacher, didn't really know what was going on at first. I think that they did use that as part of it, "well, she's a beginning teacher, she doesn't really know, how all does she know who has to be retained?" I haven't had requests not to have me so I don't think that that was a real problem. I know now that I make friends easily and I'm more likeable than I was but I've more experience for sure. I have people actually now requesting to have me. That was a weird feeling because your first year nobody knows you and they're like, "put my kid in that class, because I know that person, and this person's new." I felt like such a newcomer I didn't like that but now I actually have friends and I have siblings coming up. I had three requests for first grade for next year and now I'm not going to be in first grade so I had to tell a mom, "I'm sorry I'm going to third." I have one girl that I had in first grade last year and she's going to be in third next year and her mom's requesting me for third grade. I guess I'm doing something right. They're getting something out of what I'm doing.

What have been your favorite subjects to teach?

Hmmm, well I really like reading and math both, and I know that's the most important. I focus more on reading and math and spelling than I do anything else. Reading in first grade has to be your favorite or you just can't do it right it's the main focus of first grade. I do like the units that we do. We do a unit every month and the kids love it. It really gets them interested. That's where we integrate our science and social studies because there's just no time to get in everything else that you really have to get in. I really like it all. There's nothing that I don't care for too much. I said I like spelling and I know it's important but it's not the most fun thing to teach because there's only so much you can do with it. You can do more if you have the time.

Are you required to teach certain curriculum?

Yes, pretty much Saxon phonics and math. We do both of those now. I really like both of them. I think the math sometimes gets a little bit too easy and we can kind of incorporate other things with that. The phonics doesn't get too easy if anything it gets harder all the way through and some of them really struggle with it. If they're not ready they struggle

but in second grade it's easier because they've already had it in first grade and then they go into it in second. I love Saxon phonics and math. It's all laid out for you they have all the manipulatives and it goes over the same thing all the time – I mean it reviews everything all the time. You don't just learn it one day and then it's up to you to keep it going. It's worked great and it's really made a great difference on the kids they're reading. These kids come in not knowing how to read and not even knowing all their letter sounds and they're reading when they leave first grade. It's wonderful. I had maybe two, I only had two kids out of all twenty that did not have to be on a reading plan because they understood the phonics they learned how to read and they learned how to do the comprehension. That makes you feel good? Yes, its wonderful it really works. I'm going to miss that part of it, but it's so much work. First grade is so much work I just I don't want to do this the rest of my life. I want to teach at the higher grade and that's probably the reason I'm getting out of it because it is so hard and so important.

Give me your, a run down of your schedule, general schedule.

In the mornings we start out with phonics. We do that for about an hour and then we go into reading and do that for an hour then we have lunch. Phonics and reading is all we do in the morning, we spend the whole two hours to two hours and fifteen minutes on that. In the afternoon we come back from lunch and we immediately go into math, get the main things over with. After that we do math for forty-five minutes to an hour then at 1:00 we usually do something different. That's when I like to do my computer and library and counseling times all the stuff like that. I like to get that out of the way between 1:00 and 1:30 because that's our free time. From 1:30 to 2:00 we do units. We had butterflies and chicks and all that kind of stuff. We spend a good thirty minutes if we have the time. If I still have to do more reading I'd do that instead of units. Then they would go to resources – music, PE or art from 2:00 to 2:50. After that we have twenty minutes left to get everything ready and go over the day, what did we learn and then finish up the work they didn't complete. That's pretty much we do all afternoon.

What are the hours that they go here?

From 8:30 to 3:15 and then the second set of the kids leave at 3:25. That's the way the busses run.

You mentioned the extra classes they go to like music, PE and art. Do they go to computers?

Yes music, PE and art we switch off every day. They'll do one of those twice a week or two of those twice a week. Then we do computer, library and counseling those three. We do computers once a week, we do library once a week and then counseling is in six-week periods. Six weeks here then off six weeks because she has to do the upper grades, she switches off. So they get all that in.

How many other teachers teach first grade?

Two. Two others besides yourself? Do you get together and have a time to plan anything?

We get together but we don't get together like we used to. We used to have to sit down all together and work stuff out, but they were already in first grade and they were the ones that helped me my first year then it was pretty much routine. We do the same things and we do the same units and we already knew what we were doing so we didn't really have to meet anymore. We don't meet like that anymore. We talk all the time and we kind of plan if we're standing in the hallway or something. We're always so busy. First

grade teachers don't have time to sit. You know you're busy all the time. We just don't want to waste our time doing that.

What about assessing kids? We talked a little bit about how you identify certain things at the beginning of the year. What other kinds of things do you use throughout the year to assess how your kids are learning?

We have different reading inventories we'll do those three or four times a year where they have to read this long paper to us. We check fluency and we check to see comprehension, if they understand what they're reading and to see if they're reading the words and able to find the digraph's and diphthongs and to see if they can sound them out. We'll do the same evaluations two or three times because if they don't get it the first time we check them again the second time, or the third time. We have the Saxon phonics and math and every five lessons there's an assessment to make sure they're understanding what they're learning. We also do the Gates-McGinity test twice a year and I can't remember the other test. We only do that one a couple of times at the beginning it's for syllables and beginning and ending sounds, vowel sounds and blends. I'm trying to think of anything else.

Do you keep any kind of anecdotal records on kids at all or do they require it?

They don't require it. I might do some for myself if I need to. I have a file, each of them have their own file and anytime I need to write something down I can. I have kept records before on some kids for behavior reasons if they did a certain something on a certain day and I thought I needed to write that down I would, a certain incident that happened I would or anything like that I would, not very often. Usually I can't make mental notes anymore because I forget. My mind has so much in it that I just won't remember it. I honestly feel like I have lost part of my memory. It's just gone, I do write down a lot.

I think a lot of people don't realize that teaching takes a lot of energy. You're tired and part of it's physical but it's also just having to be mentally alert all day.

Yes, and I wish someone would tell my husband that. I am so mentally tired I think you are just as tired as if you went and ran a marathon. I am so exhausted and that's why if I don't take vitamins and drink a lot of water and walk at night, I could not make it. I never realized that you mentally get that tired. I never realized that it would just drain your whole body. It's amazing that it does that. I think people that aren't in teaching don't understand that. But those that are in teaching can really empathize. That's why I wish people who didn't understand it would because then they would really know that we don't just go sit at a desk all day and have all the little proper students come up and hand in papers they have done perfectly. It doesn't work that way.

Do you have or have you had any connection with the university other than your entry year where people came out and observed you? Do you find yourself going back to ask questions or anything like that?

No anything I need I have it right here. I have a very supportive principal any questions I have he's always there. My colleagues I can ask them anything, get anything I need. There wasn't any need to go back. I know some people have because they get in schools that are not very supportive, they fight and bicker among each other. That's not how it is here. I'm sure if that's how it was I might need some other source to go to, but not here.



Do you think it's been a difference having kids of your own and teaching? Do you feel that has influenced your teaching in any way?

Mmm, if anything it's made me more aware of how children are and how their evenings probably go. I can relate to how my evenings are and what reading stories to them every night and bath and things like that and how the students might be at home at night and how their lives are. If I didn't have kids I would probably be like, "oh, why can't they get that done, or why can't they do this or that?" Does it help you in relating to parents?

Yes, definitely because I can say I've been there, or my daughter's just like her. You know I've used that before. I have a daughter and I have a girl in here that looks just like her. Blonde hair, pink glasses and acts a lot like her. Please no! But it's amazing I can really use that and I do. I use anything I can to be able to relate to parents in anyway I need to. If one way's not working I need to find another avenue. They're not as trusting, if you can't relate to them and get on their whatever their level is the way they see things, then there's no point. They're not going to care for your attitude or how you look at things or why you think their child should be doing this or that. So it makes a big difference.

Suzanne

Interview # 2

May 17, 2001

This is Suzanne's second interview the 17<sup>th</sup> of May, 2001. The last interview that we had mainly centered around three basic questions: How did you decide on teaching as a career; Describe your experiences entering the classroom for the first time as a teacher, what thoughts entered your mind; and What it's like being a beginning early childhood teacher. I had asked you at that time to give me an analogy of being a beginning teacher and you gave me the puzzle pieces – getting it altogether. Have you thought of anything different or anything to add to what you talked about last time?

Not really, I mostly thought about the next interview, I didn't go back.

This set of questions will deal with actual concerns that you had as a beginning teacher. The first question I'd like to ask you is, "How would you define concern from the teacher standpoint?"

Well concern I would say about the students and their welfare and how they're taught. You know concern for me is being concerned how I teach the kids whether they're getting what they're supposed to be getting in order to further their schooling and go on to the next grade. I'm really concerned about that. It's about how I'm doing, how am I teaching them what they're supposed to know, that concerns me every day. Every day that I teach and I want them to have what they need to go on. And that's why I'm a teacher. I want them to be able to learn everything they're able to learn and don't want them to say, "I didn't learn this because you didn't teach it or you didn't make it clear enough." That's my main concern as a teacher.

Do you think concerns are positive or negative?

Positive, you have to have concerns. If you're not concerned how your kids are doing or what's going on around the school or in the classroom then why are you doing it.

What broad concerns have you had as a beginning early childhood teacher?

Broad, let's see. I want you to think about the concerns that have faced you as a teacher. If I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing I'm doing the right thing, and I'm on the right track and my kids are learning what they're supposed to learn. Decisions I make, I'm concerned about that everyday, certain decisions like did I do the right thing, did I not? Did I react right to this situation? Is my discipline like it should be or classroom management? I've always been told I have good classroom management, but every day is a challenge. One day I could be great at it, the next day terrible. It depends on how good the kids are, so that's a daily concern. If you can't control the classroom then you can't teach. Those have been my main concerns.

What about parents anything with colleagues, anything specific about the school?

Well I'm lucky, fortunate about the school I'm in because I don't have any trouble with any colleagues. I get along with everyone. You know you have to be open minded you have to accept new ideas and try new things and you can't just be closed minded about anything. You have to be able to work well with everybody and listen to them, be a good listener mainly. With the parents you never know, I'm concerned about that a lot but I let

them know exactly up front how things need to be with their child and I don't hold anything back. I don't have any secrets. I let them know up front what's going on and what their child's doing and how they can help them, how I can help them. There aren't any surprises at the end. I think that's where some people get into trouble. If you have to retain a child or you know if they're not getting the concept that they should have gotten and the parent didn't know about it, I think that's when you get upset parents. I try to stay in touch with the parents and talk to them a lot, do a lot of communication. That has helped my concern with parents and I'm not as concerned about that because I know I'm keeping in communication with them and I've done all I can do. I want to say, "well I don't regret what happened or what I did because I did the best I could and covered my bases," and that is a main concern. You have to deal with parents all the time. You're working with their children and they get kind of upset if you don't do what you're supposed to do.

When you were talking about an analogy of teaching you mentioned that all the pieces were there, but it was a matter of getting them to come together. Did you see that as being a concern?

Definitely, that was definitely a concern. Every single day I felt like I was just scatter brained. I couldn't get it all together. I was going, okay what do I do here, what do I do here? I played it minute by minute.

You mentioned in your plan book that you didn't see about getting a week ahead you were doing it day by day.

Yes, my principal was saying I need your lesson plans for next week. I'm going "I don't know." How am I supposed to plan a whole week ahead I can't do it. Now I see now how you do it. Back then my first year there was no way. Those first few weeks I couldn't. It's hard to think back that far because I feel like I'm more in tune now and I know what's going on. Those concerns aren't anything now. You know "I can't believe I was worried about that."

That was going to be my next question. Have you seen a difference as you approach each year, other concerns that you have had?

Yes, I mean the concerns change a little bit. Like from being a first year teacher definitely. I think first year teachers have a lot more concerns than other [teachers] more than other teachers who have done it [taught] for a long time. Because I don't have the concerns of how am I going to do this center, what lessons, how am I going to plan this, like the format of it. You know you're already familiar with so many of those things and you just apply it to whatever grade level you have. Of course experience that helps a lot.

You had mentioned also in the first interview about working closely with another second grade teacher. She had been in the school the previous year, but this was her second year in the school. You worked together. Do you feel she had some of the same concerns you did?

Definitely, we both worked together because we always seemed to be frantic about something every minute. One time she'd be coming in here and asking me something or I'd be over there asking her something. It was pretty much like that the whole year. All of the grade levels in this school work together as a whole nobody is really out on a limb by themselves everything they do is pretty much together. They do the same units, same

types of teaching and so everybody has a support system. Nobody seems to be doing anything on their own so it's really nice because it's all team teaching I guess.

Now the grade levels go from first to sixth?

After two more years, I guess they're saying three years now they're going to have full day kindergarten here and the sixth grade will have their own 6<sup>th</sup> grade center that's being fixed up now or in the process of it. Kindergarten won't be here next year? No, it will be 2003 I think.

When you think about the concerns that you've mentioned and I were to ask you to rate them from greatest to least, what would be first? What would you feel is probably your greatest right now?

My greatest focuses on the students. Like I said I want them to get what they need out of the grade level I'm teaching. I want them to be able to understand what I'm teaching and make sure that they get it. That's my main concern and that's everyday. Every lesson I teach that's my main concern. Parents have to come in second because you work with them even though you're with kids everyday you still have to work with the parents. Every situation that comes up and they have a question, it seems like they're always calling or needing to know something or clarify something. I want to keep good communication with parents. Then three would be colleagues because you know you have to be able to like who you work with. You have to see them every single day and they can make or break how you feel about your job. Fortunately I haven't had any trouble so far. I like everybody I've worked with and I haven't had any trouble with anybody so I really feel fortunate in that area. That's why I guess it's not my number one concern because I'm sure if I had problems it might be up there a little higher but that's not a problem. I can go to anybody and ask questions or get anything I need everybody's real helpful. Then on down it goes to the curriculum, that's a concern but I know what I'm supposed to teach. We have the state objectives, everybody working together and the scores show that we're doing fine we're on track so I would rate that fourth. I guess I don't know what else I've got after that. I guess the room the way it's decorated the look of it. I want it to be inviting because they have to see it every day. You want kid's work up to where they can see it and feel like it's theirs. I take pride in my room, I really enjoy decorating it and fixing it up. And I don't know if I left anything out or not.

Do you feel the order of your concerns has changed from the first year, can you remember?

Not too much. The kids were still my first concern but when I first came in but I would say my main concern was my room, you know getting it ready. I was totally overwhelmed the kids weren't even a factor yet. That was my main concern getting it together, making a good show for my principal to let him know he didn't make a mistake in hiring me. That was really my main concern right there. It was a rough summer, but after the kids came the first day of school, my main concern was what do I do with the kids. How do I start this off because they always said your first year or the first day of school is the most important it can make or break you. If you're too soft they're going to know it right then and you've already lost what leverage you could have had. I've always heard "be tough the first week." You can always let down but you can't every get control after you slack off too much so your first day of school is really a tough one.

Have there been any concerns involving your family life, your life outside? Are there concerns there?

Not really you know my husband supports me he knows I love my job and he's always wanted me to get a job because I was in school for a while. He never had an argument or a problem with me being a teacher because he knew I would have my summers off. I'd be off at 3:40, 3:45 somewhere around in there and once they get up that age he knew why I wanted to be a teacher for them and also to have them with me every day. The only concern about that is if they get sick and I can't take off work. I don't like to miss work at all. I don't miss any more than I have to. It's very rare that I have to stay home with them. I may get off and take them to the doctor's appointment. It's always a concern about who's going to be in my room or what they need to be doing when I'm not here. So other than that we always work through it, a few more years they'll [her own children] be in here [her school].

Now I want you to describe some situations that have involved the concerns that you've mentioned. Can you think of specific things that have happened along the way these three years having to do with the concerns you mentioned?

With my students my very first year I think I mentioned this during the first interview. I had a student who I wanted to retain. I didn't think he was ready and he was an only child. His mom and dad just really doodled over him a lot and they didn't agree with me. They had written a note to the superintendent saying that we had a personality conflict so that was why I wanted to retain him, which wasn't the case. Nothing ever came out of it and he went on, they refused and he has struggled and struggled and struggled he's still kind of struggling. That was my very first I guess major incident and you know I don't know if they still hold it against me or if they are still upset with me thinking that I was just trying to do that to their son I don't know. That really bothered me because I thought I don't know what brought this on I'm just trying to help him by letting him know he's not ready to handle it. Did it cause you to stop and think is it me or just the parents? Did it cause you some disequilibrium? Yes, I thought about it, it did come up. I thought, you know the work here shows here he's not able to do it. He's not able to listen to me in the classroom he can't focus he can't keep his attention on me at all. I've done everything I can do and you go over everything in your head what could I have done differently? Am I doing this right or wrong and I would ask other people for their opinions because it was my first year. The counselor worked with me a lot and she even sat in on the interviews with me and [we would] discuss it all together so I wasn't all by myself. I had other people saying well, "you know you were doing this, you were doing this," nothing was said, they couldn't really say that I said anything that I didn't.

Do you have to consult with the counselor or principal before you recommend or suggest retaining a child?

No, that's not the format for it. We don't have to say I want to do this before I talk to the parents but he stays informed. He always knows about the students and we always say, "well so and so" and he usually knows about them before we even say we want to retain a student. He keeps up on all the students, which is good. We have a great principal. He already knows them personally so that wasn't a problem. He already knew that I was thinking about retaining him and why because I keep good communication with the parents. If I have trouble or I say so-and-so's really having a rough time, the principal knows-the parents know. So the parents had known that he was having difficulty? Yes,

but they wanted to bring it back on me instead of really saying, “my child has a problem he’s not ready.”

Another question I wanted to ask in conjunction with that is some schools require teachers, especially in the lower grades to do a lot of documenting when things come up. You had mentioned you keep a file on each child, what is the school policy as far as you documenting problems that you have with kids?

I don’t know that we have one that was never brought up. We have a black book that has all our policies in it. It’s this thick and I’ve never read anything about it that’s kind of something we do on our own I guess. You have to be able to prove it and I guess every teacher has their own way of doing it, but I would write down certain things I noticed in the classroom or if he had a rough day or really wasn’t paying attention I would document it. If he did poorly on papers I would keep those or make copies and keep in his file so I could show the parents.

How many parent conferences do you have a year?

Two. One, like three or four weeks into school. I didn’t know what we are supposed to talk about, that’s another story. What are we supposed to do we’ve only had the kid for three or four weeks. For some reason they have it real early. We have one then and then we have one in April.

You mentioned the state objectives. What kinds of things do you do with those and then we’ll get back to some of the more specific concerns that you talked about?

Hmm, well we just make sure we cover what’s in the State’ objectives whether it be a certain lesson we just make sure that we at least touch on it and go over it. With first grade we break it down. We have what we call first grade math skills and we have it listed on our own separate sheet. They have to get eighty-percent accuracy on those before we can actually sign off on it. That’s how we use the state objectives and then put it on that sheet. In phonics we cover everything by doing the Saxon phonics. We also do Saxon math and then in science and social studies we integrate all that into our units because that’s the only time we can get it in. We started something that was added for social studies in the state objectives and that was map skills your surroundings and things like that. We just integrated that into this last month going over maps and neighborhoods. That’s how we do it. So when you do your planning you have the state objectives there? Not usually, I’ll refer to them once in a while to make sure we’re hitting on everything but we’ve already gotten together before and done that we know what we’re supposed to do. Unless they change like they did this year, adding the social studies, we just keep it like we have it because we know we’re touching on all of them. Do you have to turn in any documentation at the end of the year that you’ve covered them if they were to come back and say something to you? In our first grade meetings where we cover all that. We have four a year with all the first grade teachers from all six schools. We get together and we have one person who types it all up and we talk about things and how we work all that in and there are certain documented things we have to turn in from that. I think all that ties in but not to our principal.

You mentioned a concern that you wanted to keep parents informed. Can you think of any other instances where you have made it a concerted effort to keep parents informed? Some of the types of things you do with them or where there's been a problem with that or something you've gone out of your way to make sure the parent understands.

I make a lot of phone calls if they need to know something right then I'll make a phone call to them. If I can't get a hold of them I'll send a note home with the student. There have been times that I've had some student that has been kind of truant [as far as getting work in] and I'll try to get a hold of them and you can't ever reach them. I just keep trying and keep trying. Finally you'll get a hold of them but you know that's all I do if I have a problem with a student or something I always just call them that day. We have what we call a home folder with a parent's side on one side, homework's on the other side. That folder goes home every single night and if there's anything for the parents they know to look on that side of the folder. Homework is always on the right side. If they don't check their folders that's their problem. I tell them at the beginning of the year when we have back to school night and I get out that folder and I show them exactly where to look and what's going to be in the folder. Every night there is homework for four nights a week. Every note that's gold that goes home is from the office, they better look at it because there's something important on there. Purple notes come from PTO and other things like that so they know right off. This is in the directory and we tell them on back to school night so parents are well informed and if they don't know it's their own fault. You still have to remind and remind and remind but you know we at least try to cover our bases on that. Do you find that the kids you have to remind a lot in here are the parents that you have to remind a lot? Yes, definitely, you can see where it comes from because the parents are just like them. They'll come up and try to make excuses and say, "oh, they're so irresponsible." And I'm thinking, "well they're first graders and it's your responsibility," I don't tell them this but, "it's your responsibility to make sure they have what they need and to get their folders by the door if they forget them." Or they'll say, "my mom didn't put my folder by the door." "Well, what do you do, you know couldn't you have put your folder by the door and picked it up in the morning?" We didn't have too many problems with that but yes, I see the correlation there, I really do.

Can you think of another instance of a concern that was down on the list you talked about? You mentioned your room, getting your room ready. What kinds of things have you been able to do with that that have been a help?

I copied a lot from the other teachers at first. You have to have your Saxon math meeting boards. Then with our units I'm always looking for stuff to go along with that because I do a lot of decorating for units and social studies or whatever. I do a lot of life cycle things and so I try to find things for that, informational things. We have nice big rooms and that's why I'm real fortunate because I know that a lot of schools don't have that. You said you had gotten a lot of ideas and things from other teachers? It's really not as much of a concern any more because I know what I have to have up. The alphabet, number lines, and things like that always stay up. Well going to third that is a new concern. If I stayed in first my only concern right now is putting up for fall because last year I had a lot of it already ready for school year to begin. Unless there's things I wanted to buy new, which sometimes you just keep so you don't have to purchase again. For third grade I'm already finding out what they start out doing so I can start looking forward and getting it already set up. That is a concern right now. I'm worried about the

format of my room how it's going to look because it's angled on a different side of the hallway now and the closets are on a different side of the wall than I'm used to so that's a concern right now.

I know in the literature they talk not only about beginning teachers and the concerns that they have but they also mention that a teacher changes grades, changes schools or when you come back after a time period being out, that they have similar concerns.

Yes and I can vouch for that because I've taught three grades in four years and it's like starting over every time. The only time I really was totally comfortable at the first of the year was last year when we started because it was my second year in first grade and I already had most of my stuff up. It wasn't hectic. I didn't have to spend most of my summer up here getting ready. I already knew what to do. I already knew what copies had to be made for the first week of school. I had my little file ready with the first week of school in it, so I already had it ready. For third grade I don't know yet. It's going into a whole new grade a whole new set of people to work with. In a way you're at an advantage because you've had first graders, you've had second graders and so you know what to expect and you'll see some of those faces again. That's true. I had a lot of them last year in first grade so I'll have a lot of my same ones, which will be nice. I'm looking forward to knowing most of the kids.

What roles do you play as a beginning teacher?

Lets see, I play mother, roles like that is that what you mean? You play mother you play nurse, or doctor, psychologist or psychiatrist one or the other, counselor and you could say detective. Detective in what sense? Oh, "someone took my pencil," well let's figure this out. You know the person sitting next to them took it but you can't really say, "you took that pencil, give it back." You can't just outright call them a liar. Also detective if you know one of my kids came in one time with a gash right here [points to face] and right here, come to find out mom threw a glass at her. You have to be a detective to figure out what happened, you can't just assume it's from falling off your bike or something like that. You're always on the watch, always looking always seeing if there's something that you missed. There's a poem I wish I had it with me right now but at the very end of it, it says, "and they expect us to do all this and not pray." I don't know if you've ever heard that or not, it's a wonderful poem and it talks about every little role that you play as a teacher, or a lot of people expect you to play. Then they take prayer out of schools and expect us to be able to be able to deal with it. It's just impossible. People don't realize what all the roles are that we do play. I could go on all day if I could just sit here and think of all of them, but it's true you deal with the hurts you deal with any little thing that goes wrong. One of my girls broke her sandals and I had to cut the straps off so she could have those floppy shoes or they're zipper gets caught. Mom, I have several of them that call me mama all the time you know just by accident, but it's funny. I had one call me grandma once too, they did and I said, "excuse me, I don't look like a grandma." That was this year sometime the one that just came in. I hate to talk about her, if there's one to give me a challenge it was her, all year long. She's the one that calls me mom all the time and calls me grandma. Her grandma and grandpa have a lot to do with her they don't raise her right now, but they have had her a lot. That's why I think she called me grandma one day. It's funny.



When you talk about being a counselor or psychiatrist, do you feel kids are coming differently to school than maybe when you were in your interning? Do you see a difference in how kids are coming prepared for school and the types of problems that they have?

Not really from my interning, I think when I was interning I didn't see a lot of it because if the teacher didn't really talk to me about it. I might see a little bit here and there and ask questions, but you really don't know the whole scoop when you're interning. I don't think it was any different then, that was just a few years ago compared to what it is now. I don't think it's much worse yet. It probably gets a little worse every year but I think you're more involved when you're the full time teacher. I think I just see it [the types of problems kids have] more than what I did when I was interning.

Are you more or less taught things to look for with abuse with kids, has that been a concern at all in teaching?

Yes, just like this year I have the one whose mother threw the glass at her. She [the little girl] has emotional problems a lot of emotional problems, well the mother, too. I had tried to get her tested for ED because she had severe emotional problems and it's [her emotional problems] just from a death in the family, of a sibling. They never got her help never counseled or anything and you can tell it with her. We're playing head games here. Every little thing she challenges me on especially if it's something she doesn't want to do. So, yes, I'm always talking to the counselor about her or trying to figure out how I'm going to counsel her. Did I make the right decision? Did I follow through with this like I should have? I'm probably going to affect how she looks at things and she's either going to hate me or love me by the time the school year's over with. It's sad and they do expect us to teach them, but I have some whose mom lives with a boyfriend and is pregnant and their mom and dad's fighting over them. It's all the time on and on and they bring it to school on and on and then the one's with the emotional problems and you look at mom and mom just had another baby. Then the child sometimes has to stay home and take care of the baby because grandma can't handle the little two-year-old and the baby. It's all the time and it's hard to get past that. You know if they haven't eaten breakfast they're not ready to learn. If they're tired, I get a lot of, "well we had a ball game last night or mom had to do this and I didn't get to bed till ten or eleven and it's not the child's fault. Yet they come to school they can't stay awake and they don't hear a thing. I'm talking about what are you supposed to do? I'd like to call the parents and say, "what do you think you're doing? You know your child can't even learn what's going on today because you didn't get them in bed in time and how responsible is that?" You have to have a set routine for these kids. Do these kids eat breakfast here? Yes. All kids or just some? Most of mine do eat, I think they do. They eat before 8:30? Yes.

Have you seen if your background experiences have had an influence on what you're doing in the classroom?

Sometimes I think that plays in a lot, the way your taught the way you see things and I think ties in a lot with it. Can you think of a particular instance? Right now I think I'm glad I'm getting out of first because sometimes I don't think I have as much tolerance as I need to have sometimes. I do have a five-year-old at home who acts just like them and this is no lie I've caught myself doing this before going [makes motion like she is going to swat]. We went to the zoo last week and my little one, the little boy that I've had two years I tripped over him on accident. I don't know what happened but I was getting the

kids together and he was in front of me or something. I tripped and I said his name and I about smacked him on the rear just playing and I went [made motion like she was going to swat him on the rear]. His mom's standing right there and I went whoops, cause that's what I do to my own kids, or to my nieces and nephews. I have to catch myself and that's part of the mom in me. I didn't used to do that then before having kids. You know I'm like, "oh my goodness what would I have done if I had spanked that child. I'd have been in so much trouble." So yes that's background, that's the main one right there.

What qualities do you feel an early childhood teacher should possess?

Let's see, they should be creative, loving, you have to love these kids if you don't, sometimes this is the only place kids get any kind of love or attention. They want your full attention and they want to be hugged. They want you to be just kind of motherly, you need to be motherly to them at this young of an age. Even, I guess in upper grades you have to but probably not as much as the younger grades. The upper grades don't usually come up and hug you and want all that attention. I think you need to be real creative and loving those are the main two. When you say creative, what do you mean? Like with the way you decorate your room and the way you set up things to be enticing to the children so they want to learn want to do what you have and stay focused. It's very hard for young children to stay focused on anything for too long. In first grade they come from half-day kindergarten to full day first grade. They're saying at 10:30, "can I go home," "when is it time to go home?" You have to be creative enough to get around that and keep them wanting to stay here without balling. They're going to tears and it's hard. Your mind's going all the time, ninety-to-nothing. Creative, other aspects of that are just like I said new ideas, you're always looking for new things to do with them. If one thing doesn't work and if they don't get it you have to find another avenue as to how to do that. You always have to change things around like task board and the different kinds of boards I have up. You always have to change and redo and redo and if you don't have creativity you're doomed. You can't be an early childhood teacher or if you are you're probably not very successful at it. Those are the main two qualities I think you should have. You have to love children for sure, you have to love being around them. Another reason I went into teaching was I liked working with children more than I liked working with adults. Sure you have your colleagues and you have your parents, but not all day long like you do here. You're not closed up in a classroom with a bunch of adults. You just have to love it, love what you do.

I wanted to understand what concerns you had, if your concerns changed, did your concerns increase? Do you feel like any of your concerns have increased the longer you taught?

One thing that has increased a lot is more of an emotional thing with me because I worry about the kids a lot. I see the problems, like I said earlier in the first interview about most of my kids here how I can go down the list and tell you the problems they have. I worry about them because there's nothing I can do. They go home to their parents, they go home to that situation they come back and just the problems they deal with I wonder, "what can we do?" Our hands are tied. That always makes me mad that a dog can be abused and be taken away from someone in a heartbeat, whereas a child if they're being abused and you say anything about it they never even get taken out of the home. They just kind of get by-passed or they're so swamped they [social services] don't know anything about it. That really worries me because it is getting worse the way the parents

are and the children are growing up and having kids and it's just an never ending cycle. And like all the preemie babies and having all those problems and then they get into your classroom. Twenty-five years ago you didn't have to deal with all that so that's a growing concern with me all the time.

Do you feel the preparation that you get to prepare you for the change in what's taking place is sometimes a concern?

All you can do now, once you're in the system and teaching is use your own initiative unless your principal makes you go to other classes learn more. You have to keep going you can't just stop and be dormant and do nothing you have to continue to take classes, continue to grow and learn just like your kids do. Stay open? Right, I've taken something, at least one thing, every summer and every school year some training in this area or anything just to keep up and try to keep going and learn new things. There's not much out there for abused children and things like that unless you get that degree. Especially something that's just mental physical's a lot easier to tell.

Suzanne

Interview #3

May 21, 2001

This is Suzanne's third and final interview. It is May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2001. Suzanne, before we start on the last set of questions, I would like to go back to one of the first questions that I'd asked you in the last interview, "how do you define concern." You gave me an short definition of concern and examples of what you felt concern about but would you be able to give me a more succinct definition of what concern means to you?

Concern to me would be caring about someone or something enough to get involved and do something about it, to help someone or something. Then you had also said you felt concern was positive rather than negative. Is that still true or do you feel that there are some concerns that are more negative? Oh, in that aspect I guess I misunderstood how you asked the question. Let's see. Do you view concern as something positive or something negative? I view it as something positive because you have to be concerned about things. If you care about something you're going to be concerned about it and want to do what you can. I think there probably are more negative concerns, more things, like concerns about your room or how it's decorated are positive things but concern about a child in need or things like that, that's a negative concern, I would think, something that's bad that you're trying to help with or whatever.

Alright, we're going to go on into the set of interview questions for the third interview. Can you describe a special moment during your first year as a teacher when you more fully understood what it meant to be a teacher?

In my first year? Yes, if you can think back that far. My mom's a teacher and she always told me that it was really neat when you saw the light click on and you could see their [a child's] face change if you're trying to help a student with a problem. I remember my first year there was a student that couldn't get it and one day I was just explaining something and it just looked like their eyes got real bright and "wow, I understand that now." That really made me feel good and made me think, "wow what I'm doing now is actually working. I made a difference here." That really made a difference for me there. Did you find yourself thinking back on that or did you find yourself remembering that when you're having a difficult time? I try to because if I don't I could get real discouraged sometimes I think back to the positive things like that then I go, "I want to see that again." I want to you know it kind of gives you the oomph to go on, to keep going. When you get discouraged it's good to remember things like that and sometimes I do. Do you remember sharing that experience with anybody? I don't remember I may have with the other teacher I was teaching with but I don't remember if I did. How far along into the year was that, do you think? Probably I'd say at least halfway into it. Somewhere around in there.

Where have you gone as a beginning teacher to seek advice or help?

I've gone to my principal a lot and a lot of the experienced teachers, the one's that I've taught with and have been in the school system, I've gone to them a lot. To my mentor teacher some, but not a whole lot because she was a fifth grade teacher and there wasn't a whole lot she could help me with when I was teaching second. I went to people outside of

the school that I knew who were also teachers. I went to my mom a lot and I had some other friends who taught other grade levels. I went to anybody I could.

Can you give me some instances when you went to your principal and what kinds of things you went to him with? What kinds of things you went to your mentor teacher with? What kinds of things you went to the teachers with whom you taught, your mom?

I went to my principal a lot for supplies and things I was short on. I would ask him if I had a question about a student or how do I handle this or about behavior or things like that. He liked to be informed about things like that, too. He was always real supportive. I don't remember anything else right now but it was odds and ends of things. I'm not ever really afraid to go talk to him if I need to but I don't bombard him with something that I can take care of myself or ask another person. Then other teachers, the ones I work with in the same grade level I went to them over lessons or how they're going to decorate this board or how they're going to teach this thing this way or stuff like that. I tried to stay on the same track as they were. So of course I was always going to them and asking questions and trying to see where they were on certain things, maybe how they graded this play or how they filled this little spot in or just odds and ends. My mentor teacher, I didn't go to her a lot I'm trying to think of what it was about when I did. Did she come and observe you at all? Yes, three times. I think she may have come in once or twice just popped in just to say hi and see what was going on. She would like to interact with the kids so she was more of a fun person. She would kind of do the same things they would do. She would sit down and do the paper with them and things like that. But like I said she taught fifth grade so there wasn't really a whole lot that we had in common. Why did they assign you somebody in fifth grade, that taught fifth grade? I don't know. Maybe she had been here a while and she had the time to do it. I'm not really sure.

You mentioned going to your mom and to people outside your school. What was the reason to go to people outside this school?

Just to get free stuff, information. I was getting information everywhere. I would say, "do you have stuff on this?" or "this unit" or "do you have any papers you're not going to use, anything you don't want give to me." I was crazy enough that when I was interning teaching third grade they were adopting math that year I took home every grade level, every book that nobody wanted. I just hauled those big old boxes out to my car by myself stuffed them in my trunk from first to sixth grade. I kept them all just because I didn't know what grade I was going to be teaching and I thought these would be great to go back and look on and use for a lesson here and there. I just couldn't see them throwing those away. I took them all home and I had a big mess. I remember finally my second year of teaching, I finally realized I'm not going to teach fifth or sixth grade. I'm going to stay down here a little lower and so some stuff I started tossing or giving to other people who might want to use it. So I got a little bit better.

What were the results from the sources where you sought support or sought answers?

I got what I needed from them? I think I pretty much did. If I didn't I would keep asking questions to clarify or ask it a different way. Yes, I always got what I needed.

What workshops have you attended or would you most likely attend if you were to go to a conference or have the opportunity to go for professional development?

The ones that I have gone to were on classroom management with Harry Wong and then I did Literacy First and Advanced Literacy First. I did one here it was over curriculum

instruction and effective teacher training that was required my first year here. I've pretty much done something every year, every summer. The Literacy First and the Advanced one was the most recent. They were in like your first year? That was this last summer and last year. I did one in the spring and then one in the summer. That was for K-2 and I'm going to do the Phase I and Phase II of that for third grade through sixth grade since I am moving up to third. I tried to this summer but it was already full so we're going to do it in the fall and probably in the spring. I'll get those and then there's another classroom management class that I'd heard about from one of the other second grade teachers that they're going to try to get into sometime. I'm always going to do something. I always find something that would kind of perk my interest. Now that I'm going to third I definitely want to look for other things. I would be apt to do anything go to anything that would help me at all. I am going to do Lead Teacher, which is the "Eighth Floor." I don't know if you've heard of that. It's called Lead Teacher training for the computers. We just passed a bond issue here and we're getting computers and phones in all of the rooms and it's called Lead Teacher and the "Eighth Floor's" the name of it. I didn't want to do it this summer because it's five days so I'm going to do it in the fall, that's coming up. And that will be during your school time so you'll still have somebody that will fill in for you? I'll have a sub, yes. It's hard to do in the summer I have two small children so I can't get away too much, but if it's only one or two days I can do it. Now these other workshops that you've said you attended, were they sponsored by your school district and were they held at times when you were going to be out of school anyway? With Literacy First they do it during the summer and in the fall and the spring, so whenever you can go you know they have all the dates for you. The one we tried to get into in June was already full. And those are held by your school district? No, that's actually at a university in the eastern part of the state, I think or they it at the Learning Center in a city close by so it's not our district.

When you go to the fall teacher's meetings where, what kinds of things do you go to and participate?

Well, the first of this year we went to another high school I can't remember the name of it. We had several speakers, two or three speakers and I don't even remember the name but it was terrible. Was it sponsored by the state teacher organization or was it early childhood? I don't remember who it was. It might have been the state teacher's organization but I can't remember. He just didn't know how to give a speech and we didn't really get much out of it. What was the topic? I don't even remember it was so bad I just forgot it. It was right before the very first day of school and it was bad timing. Usually we have that day before to get our rooms ready. We were listening to this guy speak for one or two hours and all I remember is we're missing out on all this time to get our rooms ready. We're listening to this guy that's not helping us one bit. It's not very often I don't get something out of a lecture.

When they have state teacher's meetings they're usually like in October. Do you get off for that or for teacher's meeting?

No, I don't usually go. I think it's just if you want to or if you're a member of it. I'm not a member of the state teacher's organization so I don't do anything extra. I figured I'm missing out on much if I'm not a member of that. Plus you have to pay fees and I don't need to do that I do enough [meaning she pays enough out of her pocket for other things]. I go to classes at the teacher stores around here. They have classes all the time on things

for units. There's always something to go to and I'm always doing something that I don't have to do.

If you were to go to a group of beginning teachers or students that were getting ready to teach what kinds of advice would you give them or what would you tell them about your experiences as a beginning teacher?

Take everything you can get your hands on. Don't say no thank you I don't need that. Don't tell somebody you don't need their help. Have an open mind always be listening and then you'll know what questions to ask. Make friends with the janitor because I was always told that they do things for you and they're really a big help. Don't look down on people because you never know when you're going to need them for something and just pay attention make friends. Don't try to say, "oh I'm going to come in and do it this way or I'm going to do it my way and nobody else's way." You have to be flexible very flexible and organized. You have to know how you're going to put things, where things are and if you're not a flexible person it's very hard to be a teacher.

What would you tell them to work on first?

Right before they get into the classroom or right when they get a job? Uh huh, either one. First would be the supplies you need to get started and to get your room ready. I would do just like what I did when I found out I got my job I started asking questions about how to get money if we got any money to get supplies what we needed where we needed to go. Then I started coming up to school and introduced myself to everybody and got started on my room. That's the very first thing that you have to do before you get your class list and then that's when you worry about the kids and where you're going to put them, and how you're going to arrange the desks. How many times did you arrange your room the first year? Oh, several times. I like changing the desks around and I still do. It gets boring when you leave it a certain way and they like to move too, kids love it. Then when I realize I've put two people together who talk too much I move them again. So I'm moving all the time.

If you were to speak to a group of administrators what would you tell them about your experiences as a beginning teacher? What could they do, how they could best support them?

Always be willing to talk to them when you get a chance. Don't just brush us off and say, "oh you need to go talk to so and so." Be willing to help them out if they need certain supplies or if they have certain questions that can only be answered by you. Be open and like my principal, he was very supportive. Every time I needed to talk to him he was there and he would talk to me and, and get me anything I needed. If I needed a certain thing for my room he would get it. He gave me money to go out and buy things I needed for that year, and he always backed me up. If I had a problem with a parent or anybody else he would always be very supportive and back us up 100% as long as we followed the rules that he had given us. You know if you don't follow the rules you are given then I can see where you wouldn't get the support you need. If you're a teacher who works really hard and is good with your students and you follow the rules and do everything you should, then you should get that same support. That's why I feel very lucky to be in a school system that has a strong administration and very supportive of their teachers. We have a strong PTO, we have an education association and then we have a very supportive principal. You can't ask for much more than that.

What about um, does he present challenges to you or um, kind of prod you to grow?

He expects certain things out of us, you know if you expect a lot out of someone you're going to get that. He has high expectations for all of us. He knows he doesn't have to do too much prodding because we're always doing our own thing. We're always looking for more avenues of ways to do things. We're looking for new classes to take and we're not just sitting by idle you know with someone needing to push us. Some of the older teachers you have to because they get set in their ways and get tired and think, "I don't need to do that, I'll save that for the young ones." They'll say, "well you all can do it." We don't mind but you know he doesn't have to prod us. I'm going to third grade and the reading program wasn't doing so well. They haven't had the phonics and the Literacy First and he is expecting me to show them what we've done and blend that in with the curriculum. I think he has high expectations of me because he's expecting it to improve. That's kind of stressful because I don't want it to be on my shoulders and I don't want anybody to be upset with me. I'm not out there to change the program and make them change their ways of teaching. I would say that is part of the reason he wanted me to go to third. So do you feel that that's probably going to be a concern of yours as you start out the year? Definitely! How has he related this fact to the others that you'll be teaching with, I'm assuming there'll be three others like there are here? There's two others. Yes, we have three teachers for each grade now because every year it's [student population] gotten smaller now fifth grade's going be down to three and then sixth grade will be down to three, because that set of kids is gone. We're down to three teachers in each grade now. He's talked to them but he hasn't talked to them along with me so I'm not sure exactly what all's been said. I know that he has told them that he wants the reading program to change and that he wants them to learn how we've done it. You know he likes groups vs. whole group, which is what they do in third grade [they do whole group]. I'll keep groups because that's how I'm used to teaching and I know it works and I want to do it that way. I don't want them to think I want them to change their whole ways of teaching and how they've done things all these years. Because that's just going to cause bad feelings and I don't expect them to do that. I've never taught third grade. I'm going to go in there wanting them to teach me, or show me what they do and how they do things. It makes me kind of nervous I'm friends with one of them anyway. I'm just going to sit down and say, "now look, I'm not planning to change anything that you do. I'm just going to do what I'm told to do and if you all want to follow suit, that's fine but if not that's fine because it's going to be between you and him." How long have they taught? One has been here quite a long time and I think she might retire after next year. I didn't think she was ready for retirement, but I guess she is. She only has one more year to go. The other one has been teaching about as long as I have. She came from another school and this was her first year here. She had taught fourth and now she's teaching third.

If you were to have the ear of instructors in an early childhood program what were some things that you learned your first year that you would like to try to express to them that they need to be aware of?

Things that I learned from my first year that they need to know? Maybe things that you weren't prepared enough for, things they didn't make clear enough to you or spend enough time on. There are a lot of things like that. The main thing would be inclusion. You're not really ready for that and the changes for another adult in the room where they're teaching all the time that's hard. You have interpreters, you have teacher aides



that come in and help with reading and then any number of people to help with the learning disabled children. You have to be ready for that which was kind of a surprise to me at first because you're not used to having other people in the room when it used to be only one teacher. It's not that way anymore so that was dramatic. I'm used to it by now, but that's one thing that would kind of surprise some teachers. It's good in a way because they're [teachers] are getting more help with the inclusion part it's not as tough as if you're by yourself. I think that would help with the inclusion of certain children that you have. Some schools we have the E. D. program, which makes it tough because some are included and sometimes you have difficulty with that in the classroom. It's different if you're not used to teaching them or know what to do with the outbursts and things like that it's difficult. That would be my number one thing right there because it is scary. I think you only take about one class don't you really and special children when you're in your undergraduate don't you? Yes, I took one class that I remember and that did not prepare me at all. I mean it helped me with the learning disabled but not with the emotional problems and other problems that they have. There's such a wide range so many different classes that you can't get it all in one. Did they bring that up when they were teaching you social studies or when they were teaching you cognitive development or when they were teaching creative expression? Were special children emphasized in other classes other than just that one? Not a whole lot, not that I remember, they could have but maybe it didn't settle with me. Usually things that have a direct impact on me I'll remember. I don't remember that.

Can you think of anything else that you would want them to understand or any coursework you feel maybe should be included in that program to help better prepare you?

Let me see um, I'm trying to think, I can't think of anything right now.

What about your internship or any of your pre-intern experiences? Would you suggest a different format for any of those?

No, I think it went really well. What about the length of time, types of activities they had you do? No, I think I needed that time because when you're in the classroom you're doing different things that they kind of led you into. With the pre-internship you went and observed and took a lot of notes, that was good it gave me a lot of ideas and then with the pre II you just taught three lessons and that edged you in a little bit more and eased you into it. The full internship I think the program is fine. I liked the program I didn't have any problem with that. I think it depends on what teacher you get with because some wouldn't let you take total charge of the classroom, which I think you're supposed to. The length of time was okay though? Yes, I think the length of was alright.

What would you share with a parent about being a beginning teacher? If you were talking to a friend whose child had a beginning teacher? What would you tell them?

I would say be patient with the teacher. If you have any concerns to make sure that you ask. Call them and let them know what your concerns are but I would tell them, "you know be patient with them because they are a first year teacher and their learning just like anybody else who would be in their first-year job." You just have to be patient with them and if you have any questions if there's something they do that you don't like bring it up because they may not have even been aware of something that they did. Plus don't go in

ranting and raving because you'll scare them to death because they're new at this. They're just doing the best they can and then trying to get familiar with everything.

What are some of the most important things you've learned about yourself? What areas have you seen the most growth in yourself as a professional?

I think that I have more patience than what I used to have. I have more confidence in myself the way I see myself because I feel like a professional. I feel like teaching is important and I'm proud to be one. I like the status and it makes me feel more important. Even if I had the chance to stay home I wouldn't just because I like where I am. I like the feeling, I like doing it and it has just given me a lot more confidence in myself as a person. The kids they really depend on you. They need that love and support and I guess I'm more of a loving person than I thought I was before. Maybe having children helps that too? That would help too.

What would you do differently or would you do anything differently about being a teacher?

I've made certain decisions that I wish I would have maybe done a little differently. Some days if I didn't have much patience I would like to probably redo. There's some days you just have a bad day or that one kid just stepped on your last nerve and you know you have days like that especially when you teach first grade. You know there's always things like that I'd like to go back and redo but you just do the best you can and go on and try to do better the next time. It was hard being pregnant and teaching my first year. I was out my last six weeks and that was a lot of my focus that whole year was my pregnancy. I was gone a lot with doctor's appointments but my kids were real supportive. I thought they did well in spite of all that and even being gone the last six weeks I think they did fine. I don't think I hindered any of them too much but I think I lost some confidence with some parents because I was a first year teacher plus having to be gone. I had to spring that on them the first conference, "I'm pregnant, I'm going to be out the last six weeks of school. I'll be sending a note about conferences because we won't be able to meet on conference night I will be on maternity leave." I'm sure that didn't go over well with some parents. Did any of those parents have a choice of changing their children at that time? I don't think so. Was that ever a question? No, nobody ever asked to so I don't guess that was a problem.

Two other things I want to ask you. What kind of support systems did you have in your undergraduate work? Did you have people that you were able to go to? Did you have students in classrooms that you formed a support group with that you did things together, planned classes together and so forth?

Yes, we always found a friend the first night and you worked together and helped each other out with your work and everything. That's where I made some of my good friends was from those classes. Mainly family and friends outside of that didn't know what we were doing. They didn't remember, "I haven't had that in forever I can't help you with that, or they just didn't know what you were going through they just didn't understand. They knew it was schoolwork and would say, "glad it's not me," was kind of the attitude of some of them. No, I mean they supported me going to school but as far as anything else I didn't, couldn't get any help or anything from anybody else. You said you keep track with some of those people? Are they some of your best friends now? Do they teach around here? Yes, one teaches close by. She's a third grade teacher so we'll be in the

same grade. She's taught third all this time and hasn't had to move around any. Good resource! Yes, that's what I'm thinking I'm going to call her it will be nice. We stayed together through mostly all of the teaching classes she was a year ahead of me because I had taken a while getting through. She'd always help me with stuff if I had trouble with it.

What are your plans for your future? Where do you see yourself in ten to fifteen years from now?

I'm still planning on being a teacher and I would like to have gotten my masters. That's one of my goals to get my masters but I was kind of burned out and didn't want to go back for a few years. This is going on my fourth year of teaching and I was going to wait about three or four years and then go back. Now my kids are getting a little bit bigger and they'll be doing extra curricular activities and I don't want to miss out on any of that. I'm still kind of "neyeah." I thought by now I would have the "oomph" to want to go on but right now I don't have any desire to get my masters. I do want to have it some day. That's a goal of mine. Would you like to get it in another area or would it still be elementary? Not administration, that's one thing I don't care about. I mean I can be a leader to a certain extent but I don't want to be over a lot of people. I just want to kind of do my own thing, be in my own classroom I'm comfortable with that. I'm not sure exactly what because I like computers, I like working with those and that's an idea. Then there's also another field I would like to do if I ever got the chance, which there's just not enough time in your life to do everything you want to do. It was always between that [teaching] or being a labor and delivery nurse I might some day if I get burned out of teaching and want out of the classroom I might pursue that.

One thing I can't remember if I asked you or not, do you belong to professional organizations at all other than a state teacher's organization? I think I may have asked you that.

I'm not in the state teacher's organization and no, not any others.

Do they have a professional literature section for teachers here do they get the Reading Teacher?

We get Mailbox and not things like that. We don't get any that I know of. But I'm down here a little first and second grade teacher and we just don't get things like that. I don't think they do have any magazines. I think that would be nice to have though, that would be something. I would like to have articles and things like that. I get some kind of articles our computer teacher will print out a bunch of stuff for us and let us have but as for magazines we don't have those that would be nice to have.

Can you think of anything about being a beginning teacher that you haven't mentioned that I haven't asked that you'd like to?

I can't think of anything right now. My brain's been picked.

APPENDIX F  
Ann's Interviews

ANN  
Interview #1  
April 16, 2001

I would like to first of all to ask you, "How did you decide on teaching, as a career?"

It's probably been an evolution ever since I was young. I don't have teaching parents or any of that kind of background. But, when I was in the eighth grade I would always, instead of going out to recess, I would go over to the first grade teacher's classroom, because my brother was in there, and [it was] a small parochial school, and we'd sit in there and grade papers and help some child that was having a hard time. And, so during the course of my schooling any time there was a Christian service activity that I needed to do or volunteer work I always chose to go into an elementary classroom so that I could work with small children. As I had my own kids and would volunteer in their classrooms [and] I kept thinking how much I loved doing this. I went back [to college] as an adult, I didn't finish my degree right out of high school, I got married and had my family and then went back and finished it with the intent of instead of volunteering to actually be in there. I would sit there and I would listen to the way the teachers were explaining things to the kids, or the activities they were doing and I would think, "I could do this better, I could do this better!" I would just leave there just almost lurching wanting to do something. That's when I decided that I would go back to school and finish up my degree, and I've never looked back, I've loved it.

What made you decide on early childhood?

I had seen older children and I knew that [with] my personality, I would not work well with older children. I wouldn't know how to handle a lot of the things that those teachers [are] faced with during the school day. The attitudes and the apathy, the boy-girl stuff going on and I just knew that that was not anything I wanted to deal with and I didn't feel I would be effective. I wanted to be with the younger children.

You said you remembered wanting to be a teacher from way back, can you think of some specific people that helped solidify that decision in your mind?

The first grade teacher, Mrs. Michael's, that I volunteered in her classroom, would just tease me all the time about what a great teacher I would make, and someday she knew I'd be teaching her children. You know its true when you start hearing those things it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy and you start incorporating that into your thinking and trying it on and it's fitting and so I would say she helped me.

What about people in your family situation, did they encourage you?

My mom was very supportive, but no not really, I didn't really have people that were verbal about that. They were thrilled I was going to school and finishing up my degree, but that it was teaching wasn't particularly something that they would say, "you're going to be great at." I was pretty much just self-directed and self-motivated to do it myself.

You said you were married when you went back? What were your husband's feelings about you going back to school and teaching?

He was very supportive of me going back. It really was an easy transition for us as far as what time schooling took up and the boys had gotten older so that they were pretty self-sufficient. He [husband] was very supportive and they were all very supportive, too. But, they're all sort of doing their own little thing. It was sort of amusing that mom decided to go back to school and then when I finally [graduated] they all went to the graduation. They were like oh, my goodness she really did do it.

Can you describe your experience entering into the classroom for the first time as a teacher?

I was really frustrated with some of the coursework that I took because I thought it was way too broad. There were very few courses that I felt like I actually got into the meat of teaching. I did not particularly feel prepared when I got there. I had enough life experience that I knew once I get in this I'm going to figure it out and then I'll get rolling and then I'll be okay. But I did not feel particularly prepared, matter of fact I felt terrified, that first day. I'll never forget it. Could you share something about that first day? First of all there's all when you're graduating there's all this pressure on you to have a portfolio. We'd heard about people needing videos of themselves teaching, of which I did not have. I had a portfolio and did not have a video, [there were] contacts, job fairs, just all that goes along with it, and then I'm hired. Okay, and I'm hired for first grade, which is another thing. When you have an early childhood degree, that's K-3 you had no idea where you're actually land. Of all the grades I would have wanted to teach, first was the last choice, because there's sooooo much in first grade, they're such babies, they need to be reading by the time they leave you, and I was really scared. I was hired in the summer, I wasn't contacted by any teachers, "welcome to our school, we're so glad to have you, be glad to help you in any way." The very first day that I was allowed to even be on the campus and to see my classroom, I walked in and there was not a thing in it. There were four like mismatched tables, but there were no chairs there were no textbooks, there were no manipulatives, there was nothing. I did have my enrollment list and it said twenty-five on it so I started running around to all the different classrooms cabbaging what furniture I could. The principal was not there that day, but I did get word from her that afternoon that I was to put everything back until she got there the next day and she would tell me what I could have, which I did not do. I thought, this is crazy, I'm going to keep these chairs in here. I mean, lets use our heads here okay, you're telling me I have twenty-five first graders coming but I can't have chairs, I'm keeping these chairs. So I did that, then I went to the store and I spent over five hundred dollars because the two teachers on either side of me said there are no manipulatives. What we have we keep, we'll share with you, but you really, you're on your own. So I went to the store and bought five hundred dollars worth of stuff. The first day of school came and there weren't twenty-five, there were twenty-eight and I did not even have room for any of them. I'm thinking to myself, "I have made a giant mistake, what was I thinking!" I mean, I just had terror just all over me. Somehow we made it through that first day. But it is forever imbedded in my memory, the feelings, I can remember exactly what I wore, I can remember what we did. I can remember somebody from the service center coming in my classroom and taking my hand and going, "we're going to get you some help, we are going to get you some help." And I'm thinking how soon. We were like that for a month before we had another

teacher that could come in and take five children from the first grades. You said something about the principal saying, "when I get there I will tell you what you can take." Was she a support, or do you feel she was more of a hindrance that first year? She was not a hindrance in that we were pretty much free to do whatever we wanted to do. When I was hired though, in my interview, she said to me, "I just," how did she put it, she said something to the effect of "the teacher that I'm replacing you with," or something to that effect. Basically I didn't know what this teacher had done, but it must have been bad. It must have been horrendous, because she was not invited to come back, is basically what this woman said to me. So I'm already just filled with anxiety because I'm thinking she was newly graduated from college. What could she have done that bad? So, she wasn't a hindrance because you were pretty free to do whatever you felt was the best for the children, but was not particularly supportive. "You can have what furniture I say you can have," and when I asked her about manipulatives, she said, "I can't help you with that." I didn't even know who my mentor teacher was until about three weeks into school.

Was your mentor one of those two teachers that you had gone to and they said, "we will share, but you're on your own?"

No, she was around on the other hall. We may get into this later, we met one time in the fall, and in February I finally went to her and said, "when are we going to start meeting with each other?" And she told me, "I flat don't have time." That's what she said to me. So basically I did whatever I learned I learned myself, and it was really hard. It's the hardest thing I've ever done in my life.

How many other first grade teachers were in your building?

One, and she had just graduated. We both graduated at the same time. Both from the same University? Yes, in fact we had one class together. We had no seasoned teacher there to take us and say, "here's what you need to be doing today." I never had a textbook. I didn't have textbooks [for] first grade, I didn't have any textbooks when I taught second grade. It made me a better teacher for it and I'm grateful for the experience but it is a deplorable way for anyone to come into this field. It was the most demeaning experience I've ever been through in my life.

I think back on my experience, because I taught before I had children, and then taught after they were grown. And I noticed a difference in my own maturity and things I could do and wanted to do with kids and needed to do with kids. Do you feel that that probably was something that helped sustain you that first year?

Oh, absolutely. More so than your educational experience? Absolutely, absolutely, I knew if nothing else, we could all cozy up together and read a story. I knew the things that comforted my children, and I knew the things my children enjoyed because we would be faced with days at home where it was rainy or snowy or whatever and couldn't get outside. So, I was quick on my feet to think about things that we could, that I thought would spark their interest that would be learning as well, but would also kind of pull us all together as a group and those things were the things I fell back on. I'm grateful I had those experiences.

The other first grade teacher you said was a beginning teacher also, did you find yourselves working as a team that first year?

We did, but we didn't, we were very different in our approach to teaching and our philosophies were very different. But the particular units we were working on we would come together and try to figure out ways that we could present it, what art project we were going to work on. We had to share library books and materials. We would share guest speakers. So yes and no, I would say more no than yes because we were so different in our approach and our philosophy was different.

Do you feel like you were more of a mentor to her than what your mentor was to you?

At times, we were, I think some of that had to do with our age. I was so much older than she was. She was, oh, twenty-three, maybe twenty-four and was much more romanticized about the idea of teaching. Whereas, I had children of my own and had done a lot of volunteer work I was more the gravity that kept us on the ground. It did turn out to be a mentoring thing, although, she had tremendous strengths in other areas. She thinks much more out of the box than I did, so it was fun to brainstorm with her on some things. In that way we were helpful to each other. But then it wasn't on everything, and then she and I both moved from first grade into second grade and we moved further apart. We probably didn't plan at all last year and we were the only two-second grade teachers, so we were very independent of each other.

Did you find, even though you had a mentor teacher, did you find yourself building a mentoring relationship with another teacher close by?

No, I developed a relationship with a first grade teacher in another district. I have a good friend that is a principal in that school. The summer I was hired, we were having lunch and I said to her, "I just wish there was a seasoned first grade teacher out there that could say, okay, the first two weeks of school here's what we're going to cover." She said, "I have just the person for you." I met this lady the next week and we have been inseparable. She really got me through my first grade and my second grade years. I don't know what I would have done without her. How long has she been teaching? She's been teaching probably fifteen years in all. She taught before her family and then her children came, and she stayed home and then just went back. So, [she's been] just a God-send.

You talked about a portfolio and taking it to your interview. You had had to make one in the classes at the University. What do you feel needs to be changed about that practice? It is required by the University for students to do that, how do you feel that experience could be more meaningful to students?

I think the philosophy is okay. The classroom management [required as part of the portfolio contents] you can only make your best guess, "This is what I think I'll do when I have my class." But when you get in there [your own classroom] and you're living it, and you're working it, you're going, what was I thinking, this isn't going to work. I think that the portfolio is good in that it made me stop and think, "what is my philosophy, how will I deal with these different situations that will come up?" But somewhere in the back of my mind I'm thinking, "oh, that happened in your classroom, that won't happen in mine," but it does. Those are the only two things I can think of. I liked having a lesson plan in there, I think that that's very important because it made me, for the first time experience the state's objectives. It forced me to one, two, three sit down and think this lesson through how am I going to teach it. But there again, when you don't have the

experience of teaching, it's hard to think, or hard to know, how long does it take five-year olds to do this? When you've planned thirty minutes, it might take them ten. That part is hard and maybe that only comes from living it, I don't know. The thing I don't like about portfolio's is that it becomes an adult show-and-tell and it became, in my mind very competitive, even just within our classes. I would see girls sitting there with notebooks, two and three inches thick, and I'd think oh, my goodness, what have they got in there. It would just be ream after ream of recommendations of pictures, these cheesy pictures. I guess I'm cynical enough I'd sit there and think, "yea, but what did you teach, what did they [the students they were teaching] learn." That looks really good, but I want to talk to them today and see if they remembered that, or what did they learn from that, it looks good, but I'm not sold. I could not do that. When I took my portfolio, it was about like that [demonstrates about an inch and a half with fingers]. I had my philosophy, my classroom management, I had a lesson plan, I had a few pictures-I yielded to peer pressure, and recommendations, but basically I didn't do anything else because I just felt like it was not honest. I felt it was dishonest.

I never have really seen a portfolio, but I hear a lot of talk about them. Are we placing too much value on something that's not really beneficial to what you found when you started teaching?

I think they're [portfolios] a total waste, personally, except [from] the philosophy and classroom management standpoint. I know that I carried that [portfolio] to all my interviews and I did not have one principal look at it. I'm glad I didn't make a three inch one. See that was the other thing, I was thinking if you spent all that time putting that [portfolio] together, I could be using that time thinking about how can I teach this or how can I do this better, or getting to know my children better. When my motive behind taking pictures [of student work] is to put in my portfolio rather than hanging them up so that they [student's] can see what they look like, my motives are wrong, that's not right. That's what bothered me.

You said you had to write your philosophy, do you find yourself going back and looking at that philosophy and changing anything about it, or upgrading it, letting it evolve to what you're doing now?

Matter of fact that was practically the first sentence that I said was, "right now this is how I feel about myself as an educator, but I know that it will change. I wanted you to know I don't know everything there is to know about this, and I know I'm going to change and I want to change." I worked pretty hard on being as honest with it as I could and when I interviewed for this position I did go back to it, but I didn't change very much about it. I was really pretty pleased with the way that [her philosophy] had come about. I took some of those catch words and phrases out that I knew would be important at school and put more realistic, more of me into it, so that it sounded more like something I would say. But the core of it was pretty much the same.



When I talk to entry-level teachers I try to encourage them to look at their philosophy because some of them are so specific. I said you've got to be broad, you've got to give yourself room for growth, and you've got to show that you've grown. Philosophy should change as you grow in experience. Another thing I recommend is journaling. Have you ever done any of that in your teaching?

No. I'm not a journaler. I've had several people suggest that to me. I can certainly see the value of that but I have never done that. I know that in my interning, the three different places that I interned they [the intern experiences] were, "I feel like I sound so negative" not great experiences and I kept going to my advisor and complaining. She finally said, and she was right, then you need to journal. How would you do it differently? Don't look at her as that she's doing it right, just look at what she's doing and then think to yourself, just like you told me you would do. How could you do this differently and journal those things? So I think for a while there, that I did do that, but not since I have been a teacher have I done it [journaling].

Have you given any thought to trying for National board certification?

Ever so often I think about that, but the process just is terrifying. The teacher next door is part of that certification process and we have four teachers here in our building that are working on that right now. Their eyes are like [makes motion like big goggles on the face] deer in the headlights. A lot of work, oh my gosh, so, I haven't really given it a lot of thought.

Can you think of any other experiences, or expectations you had of what you would thought would be here other than an empty classroom?

I thought when I got here that I would have furniture and manipulatives and I thought I would have a seasoned teacher that would be there to say, "here's what, just follow along with me." I thought I'd just be under her [another teacher] wing that first year and then my second year, third year after that I'll be okay, I can start out on my own. I did not have those things. I thought, too, that I was really prepared for parents and that turned out to be really a nothing. I just expected to be like a bug in a jar and that they would be really looking at every thing I was doing and questioning my philosophy and wanting to know, "what objectives are you touching on," and that never evolved. That was a concern I had that never came to fruition. Those are the only things I can really think of.

What kind of role did you have with parents in your beginning year?

The school that I came from there was not a lot of parental involvement it's just that area. The few parents that I did have were just wonderful. They were a lot of help in the classroom and became people that I felt like I could really rely on, so that's been good. At this school, this year it's been okay, it's been okay. I've welcomed the help and support where I haven't had it before, but it's a little bit different tone in that I do feel like they're watching to see how you do it and what are you doing and why are you doing it. I didn't really experience that my first two years so that's kept me on my toes more than I ever have been.

Did, did you feel any pressure from parents about being a first year teacher? Did they more or less resent you or felt like you weren't doing your job, or that they didn't think you knew what you were talking about? Did you get that kind of reaction?

I did not my first and second year of teaching at all, I really didn't. This year I was kind of a different situation. The children that attended this school were leaving schools that

they had been in. I would say for the most part, the families were not coming here out of choice, they were coming here because of the redistricting and some of them were unhappy about that change, not wanting to come here. The first thing they asked me was what school did you come from? Then it was "have you taught third grade before?" "No I haven't taught third grade, but I have taught first and second grade," which I sold to them. "It is a great experience because I have seen first graders turn into second graders, turn into third graders and it's remarkable the changes that take place in them [students]. I think they were more concerned about where I had been at as opposed to my experience. Your experience, that's interesting. You're very fortunate that you were able to see that building [the progression from one grade to the next] on top of each other, hopefully you stop at third. I've told the principal that I'm only certified through third, so I have to stop.

Thinking back on some of the experiences you've just shared with me, what would you tell teachers, or students that are preparing to be teachers how to prepare themselves?

I would really encourage them to find someone, be it at their school that they've been hired at, or anyone that's teaching the same grade as them to get as much information from them as they can. I think subbing isn't a bad way to break into this career. I graduated in December so I subbed all that spring and I took a notebook and a camera with me. The teachers that I knew that were really good teachers, I took notes and I took a lot of pictures in their classroom. I would, if I was back in that building go back to them and say, "the other day I was in your classroom subbing and we were doing this." I would just talk to them about the things that they were doing and pick their brains about everything. I thought that was a good experience because then I started making a little file. Okay, if I teach first grade, I'll do this. If I teach second grade, I'll do this, third, whatever. I still have some of those things that I go back to. Subbing is not a bad thing, it's probably good experience. It's a great way to see different districts and to try on different classes, I mean grades and see what you'd like to do. As soon as they know what grade they want to teach get right into the state objectives and know exactly what's going to be expected of them for that year. If they can get their hands on manuals for the summer so that they can be looking at those, and be familiar with what they're going to be looking at. Those would be some things I would say, I might think of others. Does that make sense? Yes it does.

You keep mentioning the state objectives. How much have the objectives helped you as a beginning teacher or have they helped?

I think they're very difficult to understand. I don't think they're very straightforward at all. I like how some teachers, and this is a practice I've adopted, have said "oh in English this is what this means to be able to do, and here's an activity that you can do to teach this particular objective." We're making notes all the way through our state objective notebook. I probably visit those once a week and making notes to myself so that I know what I'm going to be teaching. It makes so much more sense when you're up in front of the classroom if you know why you're teaching and what you're teaching and how you're going to teach it. To me it just makes more sense in my brain. The times that I have not done that, and I'm up in front of the classroom, I am a mess, it's unorganized, it doesn't come off well, they know it, you're dead meat, and you revert to, "get your library book out and read." You know, that's exactly what it is. I hate it, it's horrible that feeling, so I

want to know what am I supposed to teach you and why am I supposed to teach it to you and how am I going to do it so we all get the most out of it?

Is there a way you communicate that to parents? What you're responsible to teach and how you're teaching it.

I've never been asked that, really. I mean occasionally I'll have parents that are teaching long division to their third graders and I'll say, "no, no, fourth grade, fifth grade, in third grade all we have to do is this." Or in fractions that their teaching denominators that aren't common, and doing all this division and cross multiplication, "no, no, we don't need to do that." I guess at the beginning of the year when we have back to school night that I have touched on it somewhat. But, just to let them know what they'll be in for in the school year, specifically saying, "this week in math we're talking about fractions and it covers this state objective," I don't do that. I'll bet there's a lot of parents out there that don't even know what the state objectives are, that would be my hunch.

You've shared a few experiences of being a beginning teacher, if you were to say, "being a beginning early childhood teacher is like..."

Did you ever in scouts or in a science experiment have a battery and a wire and a light bulb? You know the frustration that goes along with trying to figure out how you can get that bulb to light up with just those materials? But once you get it and the light bulb goes on it is the coolest feeling in the entire world. That's sort of like what it is with these children, you've got them coming into your room from different backgrounds, different needs, different levels, levels within levels, but they've all got the battery, the wire, and the bulb. And how can you get those connections and the bulbs to go on, which sounds so trite, but it is really true. It's even neater when you put more batteries together and the bigger wire and the light gets even brighter. For me, that has come together with them building upon building upon building materials and their remembering things from the beginning of the school year that we talked about, making connections into what you're doing today and how that makes so much more sense today. Those are the neat experiences. There's a lot of disequilibrium and tremendous amount of frustration and doubt that goes into a lot of lessons that I've taught trying to get the light bulb to go on.

If you were to think of the myth of something teaching was supposed to be like or you were told teaching was...I'll give you an example. "Teachers know everything."

Yes! I wish you could have heard one of my little girls yesterday when they asked me a question and I stood there and I said, "you know I don't know." She was like, "**WHAT**, did you hear that, the teacher does not know." I said, "oh, my gosh, there's lots of things I don't know, but we'll figure it out together," and we did. We had to go ask the teacher next door, but we figured it out. That was one myth about teachers. Can you think of something else that you felt like, teaching was when you were there at the university, but then you figured out when it got here it just wasn't so? Oh, yes, I could sit in Dr. Mason's room and Dr. Lee's class and I would just, "oh, my gosh" we would all be brainstorming these magnificent lesson plans about how we were going to teach this and the centers we were going to set up. Everything would be so engaging that we would not have any discipline problems at all. I just knew that if I could do that with every lesson plan that I taught I would not have any discipline problems at all. And that hasn't happened. That's a huge myth. That you can just think of the right way the most interesting way, the most engaging way that you will just draw every child in, and you don't. Well, I haven't

anyway, I think that's a huge myth. What happens, of course, when it doesn't happen that way then I start doubting myself. I think what did I do wrong? I start questioning well maybe it wasn't appropriate for their developmental stage they're in or did I not bring all the intelligence's in or, or just questioning myself. Lots of self-doubt will creep in and it may not have had anything to do with that at all. It may have just been that child that day.

But if you weren't to have that self-doubt, how do you think that would have affected your teaching?

Right, well, sometimes I think I'm way too hard on myself, I'm always second thinking things through, I can do too much second thinking guessing of myself. But in a lot of ways it's really good because I did need to rethink that there are those two or three children that no matter what I do it doesn't seem to be grabbing them. I do need to be rethinking that there is a way to grab them, I've just got to figure it out. Part of that is I may not know I may need to go to Dr. Sanchez whose our ARC teacher and ask her. I may need to go to our LD teacher. I may need to talk to somebody else and just say, "what do you think, what should I be doing?" You said she's what, AIRC? ARC, academic resource center, it's like the gifted program, children get pulled out and go to her.

What courses did you feel were the most beneficial and more realistic to what you face as a beginning teacher?

Well, I think I told you earlier that Dr. Lee's class was probably the most life-changing for me as far as my philosophical approach. From the standpoint that she did not give us the answers we had to find it out ourselves. I hated that, and I ended up loving it, I really did. I'm not really sure how to articulate that, because it might be my pie-in-the-sky kind of thinking about things. But to me the most valuable learning, which is what Piaget says also, is where you are constructing your own knowledge and therefore it becomes yours. That to me is what we need to be doing, and I experienced that in Dr. Lee's class and I experienced it with Dr. Mason's class. What were the types of projects that helped you the most? The types of projects that helped me the most were coming up with the different centers and ways of presenting the material and having to come up with it ourselves. I learned the most from that. I learned the most from the different articles that we were required to read and reflect upon and give our opinions or thoughts on and to share what you thought within our class. Out of that my philosophy kind of bloomed, because taking bits and pieces and trying it on and all the talking that we did, I loved that.

Do you have much contact with anybody at the University, as far as going back to the instructors and saying I need some help with something? No I don't, but if I had the time I would. So it's a matter of time more than anything else? It's a matter of time and distance and yeah, I would love to go back and see Dr. Lee and Dr. Mason.

How much time has teaching, since you've taught, what this is your third year? How much time has that demanded from you, looking back from the first year to now?

It's basically the same amount of time, and probably because I haven't taught the same grade twice. I know that once I have done that it will probably get easier. But I'm usually here anywhere from 7:45 till 6:00 at night. It's rare that I ever leave before 6. And, and that's not even particularly getting ahead, that's just re-evaluating what I did that day and rethinking the next few days. And grading papers? And grading papers and making phone calls back to parents. Today I had a new student so I'm up to 27. It's still pretty long days

for me. Even the weekends, although that's gotten much better, I'm still probably a couple of hours on Sunday evening pulling together something that I need to be thinking about for the next day. You're talking about coming back here, or taking things home with you? I'm talking about taking things home with me. I used to come up to the building but I do better at home. If I'm up here I'll do fifty other things other than what I'm supposed to be doing. I do better at home.

When you think about how has it changed for you to teach first, second or third grade as far as types of preparation, types of concerns that you might have, even though we're going to get into concerns later. Do you feel there's much difference being in each of those grades versus being in one grade all three years?

Yes, I think in first grade I spent a lot more time cutting out things, cute ways for them to respond to a story, cute art projects that we could do and things like that. In third grade I think more about the jump in curriculum between second and third grade it is astounding! The importance of it has really struck me this year. In first grade counting to one hundred, that's a milestone, and that's one of the state objectives, being able to count to one hundred. Well, in third grade think of all the things you have to do with the number one hundred, multiply it, divide it, fractions, decimal points, money. All those things, as opposed to doing art projects and thinking of cute things that they can be doing, now I'm thinking more about this kind of learning, for me right now, is really real, these are the things that they can use in their lives. They really can use these in their life. I'm much more reflective on keeping their learning authentic and interesting and to be honest with you, studying a lot every night, just so that I know what I'm saying to them. Language arts this year, oh my gosh, I have forgotten so much. We're diagramming sentences, which they just love and they just eat up. But you know there's a lot of sentences that are just not black and white and they're always saying "we've got this extra word, what are we going to do with it." Well, I'm having to look it up because I don't know. I'm having to do a lot more studying myself just so I know what I am teaching to them.

Could you describe some of the types of students that you have to deal with as a beginning teacher? You talked about some being pulled out to go to the gifted program.

Well, of the twenty-seven that I have, six are pulled out for the gifted program, and of the remaining twenty-one I have, two that I know of that are LD, no, three, I'm sorry, I have three that are LD. The rest are just a sprinkling from being marginally low to marginally high, you have that curve in here. When you have twenty-seven kids the spread gets really big, when you've got that many bright ones, and that many low ones. It's been really harder this year, too. In centers with first and second grade, I felt like I could be meeting their needs more appropriately. I find myself in third grade, and this may change, that I'm doing just about everything whole group and then once I get everybody off on their own, busting out those few that I know that are struggling, to work with them individually. But that is getting harder and harder and harder to do, and the gap is widening and widening and widening. I know I have some work to do in that area, I'm not nearly as effective as I'd like to be.

Do you get to go and visit outside the district with other teachers to see what they're doing? Do you have opportunity to do those kinds of things?

Probably on our own, we could do that, and there again, it's just the time element. Our particular school district is very, very generous with their workshops that they provide for the teachers. We always laugh that they should give us at least half the day to just talk to each other and see how you are, what are you doing in your classroom. I'm not shy, boy I mean I know the really wonderful teachers in this district and I go right up to them and I want to know how they're doing it and I want to know all about it. We could use a lot more of that though, we could use a lot more of that.

When you talked about the different types of students you have in the classroom you said some were pulled out to go to gifted. How do they go about qualifying students for the different programs like LD, gifted, speech, or for reading difficulties? What kinds of things do they use for identifying these children?

The teacher identifies the gifted children, well they are referred by teachers and parents, which is kind of scary and I've been uncomfortable with that. We refer them and then Dr. Sanchez administers the test and if they pass they're in and if they don't they can re-test in a year. The thing I've expressed to Dr. Sanchez and why I'm so uncomfortable with it [the identification process of students for the gifted program] is, how do I know. Maybe I'm missing somebody that could be, should be tested. I think we should test everybody and then I don't have to worry about having missed someone. I have had what I thought were bright children, too, I've sent to her and they didn't qualify. I worry about how they feel about themselves after that. I think that's burdensome to me and I can't imagine what it is for them. For our reading [program] they are identified through different reading tests. Last year we had the Gates, this year we have the Star, which I don't particularly like. Based on that score they have to have a forty percent and above. You get marked into different little reading clubs, but below that you would be pulled out for some extra help. So they actually go outside the room? What about your LD, they also go outside? Uh huh. Do you have any inclusion students in your classroom? We do have inclusion? I'm talking about kids that are mentally handicapped in such a way that they really can't function as a third grader, but need to be included with kids of that age group, they do that here? They do that here, but I do not have any in my classroom, right. Yes, to tell you the truth, that scared me to death. In some of my coursework I knew that there's the possibility I could be faced with that. I substituted in a second grade classroom with a little boy that was very, I think he had cerebral palsy, that's what he had, and very low functioning and in a wheel chair. I just thought, "oh my gosh, I don't think I could do that." I would but it would be really hard, really, really hard.

If that's going to be expected of you, do you feel like your preparation prepared you for that? Is that probably a deficit as far as preparing you for the classroom?

Oh, not at all, not at all. Even though in your lesson plans you were to include how to, how do you know, I mean come on. You can think about how you'd like to do it, but boy when the rubber meets the road that's completely different.

I've pretty well asked all my questions and I know you're tired, I can sense it, but is there anything else you want to talk about? In this particular interview I wanted to get a sense of why you felt you were a teacher. What encouraged you to become a teacher, how you felt your experiences helped you in the classroom or didn't help you and what kind of atmosphere you're working in as far as kids and the type of teachers you work with. Is there anything else from that aspect that you feel that you want to add before we finish? Things you wish you would have done differently to prepare yourself, or whatever? Um, well...no, no I feel like I did everything that I could. I think the building just makes a huge difference. I feel very fortunate this year in that I have a completely different principal. I feel things are different for me because of that and because this staff. We all started on the same day and having the privilege of being hand selected from a hundred applicants has really made a huge difference in how we started out with each other. The things that I'm faced with in this building have nothing to do with what I was faced with the last two years and that is significant to me. It's staggering to me, and when I hear of other teachers speak of how other teachers don't share and they're vying for clan time and specialties, I'm thinking gosh, we just don't even think that way over here. Don't you think some of that also has to do with the principal and the way they put things together and make things work? Do you have an assistant principal here also? No.

How many students are in this school?

You know I don't know, I think about four hundred, but I'm not sure. It's growing so fast, I'm sure you saw it just driving through the neighborhood all the new houses that are just popping up. I bet everyday I go home, I'll see two new foundations being poured. . So, it's really exploding out here. A lot of the kids that go here are from this area? You said they redistricted. Very close. They're not having to travel very far? No, they don't travel very far at all. It's so sweet out front. This is the first year we've had little bike racks that they could use. It's like a Dick and Jane reader that first week of school they're like walking to school and riding their bikes going down sidewalks and nice yards and it's just amazing. I'm really lucky.

Ann

Interview #2

April 25, 2001

This is April 25<sup>th</sup> and this is Ann and we're on our second interview. Ann I'd like to review the three broad questions that I covered last week and see if you have anything different to add. The first one was "How did you decide on teaching as a career?" The second one was to describe your experience or experiences entering the classroom for the first time. And we had talked about your pre-interning and interning and then all of a sudden come into the classroom and what it was like? What thoughts entered your mind? And then the last one "What was it like being a beginning teacher in early childhood?" I asked you to come up with an analogy of what teaching was like. Do you feel like there's anything that you feel you want to add to any of these three things that you thought about this week?

Not at this time, I don't think so.

That's fine. There are a couple of things that I did not ask last time that have come out in some of the other interviews. Could you describe a typical day in your life as a teacher this year? Kind of go through segments of time.

I think the morning is the most intense as the children are arriving. Well let's see I could even back up earlier than that. I usually get here anywhere between 7:30 and 8:25 and gather my thoughts and Xerox and just basically prepare myself for the rest of the day. Then when the children start coming in about 8:40. That has to be about the most intense twenty minutes of your life. It really is because you've got the housekeeping part of the day where you've got attendance, announcements, and lunch count. Those three things are very important and need to be done. But then you've got two or three little girls that have something important that they need to tell you. I'll have somebody standing there with a tooth that they lost last night or a skinned knee or a beanie baby they saved all their allowance money for and they were finally were able to buy it. I'll have picture money due, lunch count money due and the phone might be ringing with a mom reminding me that "I don't know if you got the note today but so and so's going to need to leave a little bit early today." It's really intense and I think for me that is the most important part of the day because it also sets the tone. I want to be attentive to those children because that story that they have to tell me is very important, very important. The baseball game that went on last night and they played against this team that they were hoping they would beat and they lost or whatever's going on. It's intense and I need to be, I want to be attentive to them and have a good attitude, a caring listening attitude so that they think they are the only person in this room that I'm listening to this incredible story that they're getting ready to tell me. Then also they have morning work that they have to do every day. They have their routine that they come in and do but then they also know to go to their desk and they have things to do to keep them occupied while we're taking care of the business of the day. Throw in there to two or three of them that are having problems with whatever it is that is on the morning work and they need some help. It's not the kind of help that I would want to give them the answer. Obviously this is a skill they are struggling with and I need to spend a few minutes with them either with



a manipulative or whatever and work through it with them. That's probably the hardest part because that's the most time demanding right there recognizing that this is a child that's having a struggle and that I need to work with them a little bit more, and that's hard. Then we move on into the day. The morning is my favorite time. We do reading first then followed by math. I think those are two important subjects to do in the morning when their very fresh and I'm fresh and they are the most attentive and seem to enjoy what we are doing. Lunch is always nice. I eat lunch with them every Friday. We have a little group of five or six children, different children every week. We'll have a small intimate lunch in here which is very nice and that's probably one of my favorite times with them. You really see them in such a completely different way and they're very endearing and it helps sometimes with those more difficult ones to kind of get through some of those times with them during the day that you just think, ooooooooh! The afternoon, right after lunch is a sleepy time for me as well as for them, and so I have found that that's my favorite time to just read. Everybody just comes in and we get a drink and lounge around the carpet and I read to them. We've read some really great chapter books this year and I think that they have really enjoyed it. I love looking out at their faces and just see them with their eyes this big [makes a motion to show how large their eyes are] hanging on the next paragraph that you're going to read. I would say that most of the time as soon as it's over and that chapter's ended they're begging me to keep reading. That's a neat feeling. From there it gets a little sloppy. They're getting tired and restless and I'm tired and feeling some stress that we've still got material that we've got to cover and so we sort of polarize each other. There are days when we do and I'm thinking "we've got to do this" and they're wanting to go outside. The afternoon is taken up with spelling, word wall and language arts, which I would say are probably not any of their favorites. Then we always end the day with science or social studies, which is a really great way to end the day. We're really fortunate this year that our district has adopted three science kits per grade level. They're absolutely incredible. Which ones? I don't know, I could look for you though. Third grade does electricity, land and water, just fascinating and then plants, or seeds and plant growth and development. We will take the seed plant it, they're fast growing plants so they develop quickly and they flower. We have bumblebees that are dried that we pollinate our flowers with then the flowers quickly turn to seed. We process the seeds so they see the whole life cycle from seed, plant, flower, seed the whole process and also the importance of the bee. Those are fascinating kits and they are very hands on and they're very involved and the kids really, really enjoyed that. It's a great way to end the day. After school are usually meetings for me or making phone calls. Hopefully next year what I want to do after school is start some math clubs for those younger children that are really struggling. You know we can have a small group after school fifteen-twenty minutes once or twice a week just to keep them caught up with everybody. Are your days pretty much the same? Pretty much the same. What about pull out for reading? You mentioned some of that last week. Right, we do inclusion reading in the morning. All of our third grade children are basically leveled so we have five teachers with different levels of reading so that the children that are high go to one classroom. I have mid-pretty average, another teacher has just slightly below average and then we have two teachers that teach the really low and struggling children. For forty-five to fifty minutes they are with peers that are at their own reading level. Then everybody comes back to their classroom. The thing I like about that is that nobody really

knows that there's any leveling being done, so I like that. Nobody feels odd, because they're being pulled out, they're integrated. Everybody comes back to the classroom and we go right into math. I do have a little girl that just started here last week and she is pulled thirty minutes into our math time for some extra help with math. But so far nobody's really said much about that. Now what do you do for computers, music and PE? Where does that fit into your day? Everybody goes to specials. Third grade goes at 11:05 to 11:55. We have math, sorry, we start the day with reading then math and then specialties. Then we go right into lunch. And they have those specialties every day? They have specialties every day with an alternating rotation of PE, art, and music. Library we do once a week, Monday afternoons. We are scheduled to be in the computer lab on Thursday afternoon's however if she has other times during the week that are open we can schedule to go in there. They work on programs? We are currently finishing up on books that they have written and they are now typing into the computer, mystery stories. We have an author that is coming to our school May the 5<sup>th</sup>. Who? It's the lady that wrote the Flim Flam Man. She's coming May the 5<sup>th</sup> and we've read that story so the kids will be just absolutely thrilled because they love that story, it's a great story. We're trying to hurry and get those published so we have something to share with her once she gets here. Our ARC children are pulled out at 1:25 every day for language arts. They're doing language arts next door and we're doing language arts in here and we meet back together here at 2:00. The thing I don't particularly like about that pull out is that it's exclusionary I don't particularly like that, but I really don't know how else to do it. Sometimes you just have to go with the flow. Yes, [you] just have to go with the flow. That's sort of a rough spot but I'm not exactly sure how we could do it differently.

As far back as you can describe your educational experiences? Last week you talked about, I think you started at about 8<sup>th</sup> grade and wanting to be a teacher, but can you go back further than 8<sup>th</sup> grade and remember some things about your schooling? What you remember about particular teachers just to give me a picture about what you've been through.

I remember my kindergarten teacher was amazing. We had all kinds of really wonderful experiences with her. She was one of those kindergarten teachers that could play the piano and her husband was a hunter, so we had a big Thanksgiving feast. We had actual bear meat and deer meat that we could sample, and oh it was just out of this world. She was just so cool. She's the closest thing, I think, to being developmentally appropriate teacher that I've ever experienced in my life. She was just wonderful. I've gone to parochial schools all my life. Did you go to schools around in this area or out of state? I grew up in this state, well I didn't grow up, I was born in this state and lived there until the middle of my fourth grade year, then we moved to Texas and we moved back here at the end of my sophomore year in high school. To be honest with you, I don't really have any tremendous memories of school except that it was rigid and structured. In second and third grade at the parochial school I was at, we didn't have a cafeteria so we ate lunch in our classrooms listening to classical music and, if you can imagine we were all left in the classroom unmonitored! There was no adult with us we were by ourselves. You ate at your desk you listened to the classical music and the teacher would have a classroom monitor whose job it was to write down anyone's name that talked. Gosh, second [grade], third grade and half of fourth [grade] that was like that. At the end of the day you couldn't talk as you left the school building. They played some kind of marching music

and you marched out. When you got outside then you could talk. It was pretty rigid. And you went here till fourth grade? Right, and then in Texas it was much more, not lenient but unstructured. Was it also parochial? Also parochial and then moved here at the end of my sophomore year and graduated from high school here. I remember a world literature teacher I had my junior year and senior year that I really enjoyed. She was passionate about what she knew. It was some of the hardest material that I had ever covered, but she was determined that we would understand it and we would get through it and we would grow to love it, and I did. She was also very interested in us as people. She wanted to know who you were going to homecoming with and what does your dress look like. Since it was a small school she knew a lot of our families so she knew a lot of the things that were going on in, within our families, which could be good or bad. She was just very caring and so much fun, just a lot of fun, great sense of humor and no airs about her she was just very real. Down to earth? Down to earth and I enjoyed her class very much. She would be the one teacher I would want to make a point of going back to see. Is she still there? No, I haven't seen her in a long time. I'm not sure exactly where she is. Then there was a Christian Brother, Brother Andrew that was the same way. I had Christian Ed. with him and he was a type of person that would tackle those challenging issues we were facing, sex, dating, drugs, marriage, pregnancies. [He] wasn't afraid to talk with you about that and be up front with you, I loved that about him. I had a lot of respect and admiration for somebody that would do that [discuss challenging issues] with juniors and seniors in high school and not be too put off by the things that we asked or challenged him with. I remember also, now that I think about it, a teacher that I had in seventh and eighth grade. He would throw out topics of discussion to us that would almost incite a riot because they would be so controversial but he would basically open the floor up and let us really air how we felt about things and out of that you know formulate some opinions. There were times that I thought it got a little out of hand and it was hard and maybe that wasn't his purpose. It was hard to bring it back to some kind of circling the wagon, we've all got different opinions, but we all understood and respected each other. I remember just being frustrated and angry a lot. Now that I look back on it I really appreciate the opportunity to vent how I felt about things, plus it forced me to stay current with events. So it was a history, social studies class? Yes.

We'll get into the questions that I had planned for us to cover today. The first one is how do you as a beginning teacher define concern? What do you feel strongly about?

How do I define concern, myself personally how do I define concern? In the sense of being a teacher, a beginning teacher? Um, [puzzled look] In the school environment as a teacher. [long pause] My, oh gosh that's hard. I would, I think I would say that it's on my mind a lot with different children coming here with the different things in their lives that are going on. I'm concerned, if I'm following what you're wanting... I'm not asking for specific concerns right now. I'm just saying what do you think is concern, what is your definition of concern as a teacher, a beginning teacher? A concern is... I guess being aware of whatever it is that... I'm not sure exactly what to do with that. Do you view concern as being something negative, something positive? Concern can certainly be very positive, but it can also be negative. It can cause me to be too involved or not involved enough. Okay let's go at it from that point then. Can you think of a concern that was negative as a beginning teacher, and a concern that was positive as a beginning teacher? You said you saw it as positive or negative. Well, there's different areas of concern, let's

see. A concern could be negative in that I might get caught up in the gossip in school, which may or may not be true. Or cause me to have feelings about the situation or the person or something that's going on or I think is going to happen that's not appropriate or professional. [Concern could] cause me to formulate an opinion that's not necessarily right because it's not based on enough information. Or it [the concern] may cause me to make an opinion about a parent or a family that is very unfair or biased, thus influencing how I see or interact with their child. I think those kinds of concerns can be negative. I think concerns can be positive though, in that I can offer to my colleagues or to situations, or to children a level of empathy that might communicate caring, um trustworthiness. That [kind of concern] would be helpful, cause me to reevaluate what I'm teaching and how I'm teaching so that it better meets the needs of this child or these children. You hit on a good word, reevaluate. You're saying that that's [act of reevaluation] the positive aspect of concern. Can you think of an instance where you've had to reevaluate somebody or something as a result of a concern that you've had as a beginning teacher? Gosh, let's see, [pauses] tell me if I'm going down the wrong track. A concern that was negative... How have you, how has concern caused you to reevaluate something in your teaching or something about you as a teacher? It's interesting with these different personalities that sometimes they push your buttons. I have had a couple of students that I, it's been a raw nerve. I know that in order to be effective with them, I've been concerned I could feel myself not liking them. I could feel myself seeing that they were not only academically falling behind, but socially they were in trouble. They were very demanding of my time and they were just very needy. I felt myself becoming short with them. I became concerned in my reaction to them. Several weeks had gone by and it was sort of a snowballing kind of thing where it was gathering momentum and I was finding myself going home at night thinking I did not like how I reacted to them today. I didn't like how I felt about them. It made me really step back and see what in my personality, what buttons are they pushing. That's my stuff and I have to work through that. I've got to come to terms with that. I cannot, I don't think allow myself to bring that into the classroom. They deserve my best and even though they are harder children I have to use that to make me a better teacher. I have to find a positive way to react to them; I have to find a positive way to reinforce the good things about them. I have to find a positive way and a more appropriate way to reach them academically and help them socially, which is sort of how my lunch on Friday's has evolved, because that does allow me some time with them. So that's been a concern for me. I also have some really bright children that are challenging all the time, they're the ones that say, "I'm finished, what can I do now?" That's a concern. I'm concerned that their day is engaging and fun and that they're really thriving here at school. That I'm not just going "okay, okay, okay, here's all these things," and put them to do my secretarial busy work. That's a concern that I have that's a positive concern that I have to step back and go they deserve to be stretched. What kinds of things do you do to help them stretch? That is the concern that you're meeting their needs? Can you think of some others? What are some of the concerns that you have faced or feel you face because you are a beginning teacher? Whether they are positive concerns or negative concerns? I know that some of the concerns I have today are not the same concerns I had my very first year of teaching because of the experience. I'm much more capable of handling certain situations today than I would have been. Can you give me an example? A child that doesn't want to write

basically throws her hands up and says, "I can't do it, I don't want to do it." I think at first I would have said, "you'll think of something," and walked off and left her. Now what I would do is engage her more in the story that is in her mind and have a conversation about whatever it is and after our conversation say, "now do you think you could write that down, or could you write parts of that down?" And then she would go "oh, yeah, I could do that." The way I approach students is completely different.

What about classroom management?

I'm much more relaxed about things today than I was that first year because now I see these are really children and this is what they are capable of doing. So they like to work better standing up or they work better with a clipboard down in front of the chalkboard, or they work better with a partner than they do by themselves. Where before it was important to have a little bit more control over all of that now I'm much more relaxed and let a lot of that stuff go. It's not so important to me that we line up and everybody's here. And part of that's probably due because you're more comfortable with your goals as a teacher, what your role as a teacher what your expectations are? Right, right.

We talked a little bit about parents last week what kind of concerns from that angle have you had?

I would say overall that parents that I've encountered just love their children, are thrilled that their children enjoy school and are very helpful wanting to know where they're at and what they can do to help them at home. They're very complementary and supportive of me as a teacher, decisions that I've made or seek my opinion about things, which I'm always flattered that they do that. I would say overall that my interaction with parents is positive. I'm concerned that I've seen more this year than I have in the past is parents and primarily moms that are so enmeshed with their children that they are creating real maintenance children. That they volunteer at school so they're around us a lot so they know the in and out's of things. They just know things. I've had a couple of instances where the child has gone home and complained about who they sit by or that the classroom is too loud during math time or whatever. The parent has made a wrong assumption about the way things are and the district's called me and requested that I move their child away from so and so. Or [the parent] has told their child, "if you don't like what's on the school lunch menu today, just call me and I'll bring you something." I see a lot of children calling parents at the drop of a hat because they forgot something, like their shoes for PE or their pants for dress rehearsal this evening and, or their library book. Do you think a lot of that is because of the socio-economic status in this area? I think that has a lot to do with it and the proximity of the school to the neighborhood. It's pretty handy for a lot of these parents to just get here at the drop of a hat. And probably a lot of mothers don't work? Lots of the mothers don't work probably half-and-half I would say. In other areas where I've been the parents may or may not have graduated [from] high school therefore they've sort of communicated to their children in one way or another that school's just something you have to get through. They're not particularly into or aware of what's going on with their child. It wouldn't occur to their child to call home and say, "I don't like what the lunch menu is or I forgot my library book or whatever."

What about any concerns with your colleagues? Have you seen a difference in your first year to this year?

I have [seen] so much difference and I attribute that to our principal. I think she has completely set the tone for our building and I feel very much on the equal and the same page with all of my colleagues. Perhaps some of that has to do with we were all hired and started together. Where I come from in the past the staff has been cliché and the principal played favorites, everyone was very aware of that. For me it created an atmosphere of mistrust, caution, and low morale. This year I don't feel that way at all I just absolutely adore every person that I'm with. I could tell that by watching you guys practice. [They were practicing a skit before I started the interview for some type of assembly they were going to have.] Yes, we really are a team and we love brainstorming with each other and sharing with each other and I don't feel those undertones. I just feel like we're all really pushing each other to be the best that we can be. I just look forward to coming to work every day, I really and truly do.

Do you have any concerns from the curriculum standpoint? Have you had concerns about the curriculum?

I would have to say in teaching first and second grade I had a lot of concerns for the curriculum in that I had no textbooks at all. No teacher could really say du-du, du-du, du-du. "I don't know how you'll translate that." [I had a] mentor teacher that was too busy to mentor. Another girl and myself were the only two traditional first and second grade teachers so there wasn't anybody there to show us the way. That's when I knew that children would learn in spite of anything. Thank heavens, it makes us look really good but in my mind I'm thinking I honestly don't know how they did it because it didn't have much to do with me. This year I have textbooks and that has afforded me security in what I am teaching and I am much more familiar with the state objectives so that I am more confident about what it is I am teaching and why I'm teaching it and how I'm teaching it.

You mentioned about the science that you really liked that. Are there areas of the curriculum that you feel need to be improved that you can't or don't know how?

I think that language arts and spelling I struggle so much with those, language arts more than anything else. I think it's very difficult to teach subject-wise and part of that is because I have forgotten so much of that myself. I'm not sure I see the relevance of it [language arts] myself. I don't like the textbook that we're using for language arts and spelling. I feel like it's very weak and the assessment and activities that are included with our textbooks are cheesy. It's almost an insult to their intelligence. Plus the fact that I don't see them transferring the skills in those areas into the other curriculum, so I think it's a time filler.

Are you pretty well tied to a particular curriculum or are you given the professional freedom to choose other things? If you went somewhere and saw a spelling program that you really liked, that you could do without the school buying, would you be allowed to do that?

I think probably so, and to be honest with you I used our spelling textbook for the first nine weeks and I have not referred to it again. I have sort of fallen back on what I used in first and second grade and incorporated more of that program and have integrated it that way. I would see the children in first and second grade making connections in their reading by using that. They were transferring that skill into their decoding, so to me there

was value in that. So they wouldn't hesitate on you doing something a little different as long as you covered the objectives of the school? Yes, I think that would be fine. I think that would be fine. I know our principal is very open to that, which is nice that you're not tied into that. [It is nice] That you do, as you say, have that professional freedom, and respect from your principal that you have the best interest of the children at heart and I'll be a better teacher if I'm teaching what I think is valuable. Are there any other topics or subject areas that you feel something better could be done? I really can't say that I do. I love our math program. I love our reading program. I love the science program. Our social studies we don't have a textbook this year but the units that we have pulled together ourselves I've really enjoyed. We did a wonderful unit at the beginning of the year with the Olympics and Australia that we were able to integrate with the music teacher and on Friday for art. It became this whole big thing the kids still talk about it. That has been very powerful and I enjoyed it. I am always hearing such wonderful ideas that are out there that other teachers are doing that I want to incorporate as far as social studies is concerned. Maybe in ten years I'll be sort of where I want to be.

How would you describe your concerns as a beginning teacher, you've talked about how from year to year you've seen differences come about. Can you think of one specific instance where you had a concern as a teacher and what you did?

In first and second grade I had a boy, a Spanish-speaking boy who was not getting it. When I had him in first grade he had been retained, so he was doing first grade for the second time. [He] could not from one day to the next keep the letters of the alphabet in his mind. [He] could not identify any of the letters therefore could not read at all, unable to write. But boy could he draw, oh my gosh. He will be famous some day, I know he will be. I watched him for those first few months of school thinking I just haven't found the right way to say this to him and he's going to get it. Some days he would act like he was getting it but then a couple days would go by and we'd be back to square one. The parents had some bad experiences themselves with school and had had a bad experience with a prior teacher so they were resistant to any kind of idea about testing this child for learning disability. For them [it] was just a discipline problem, that's how they viewed that. It took me two years to build a relationship with them and to earn their trust and I was finally able to get this child tested and sure enough he was identified as learning disabled in lots of areas, math, reading, and spelling. We hung on to the fact that he was so artistic that's how I gave him value in our room. If anybody was drawing or having a hard time in our room I would say, "well go over to so-and-so, he'll draw it for you, he's great." Anytime we were doing a bulletin board or whatever, I would say, "you are so good at this, would you draw this for us?" He just beamed, I mean self-esteem-wise it just helped him so much because he knew he was doing first grade for the second time. He knew he was way, way, way behind with his peers. He hung on to art, I developed a relationship with his family and by middle of second grade they finally agreed to having him tested. He was identified and he was placed in a pull out situation for those areas during the school day. I went back to see the L.D. teacher at the beginning of this year probably within the first nine weeks because he's a third grader now just to see how he's doing and he's reading. What I learned from that was how important it is to develop trust with a family. How important it is to the best of my ability to keep that child's self-esteem in tact and to persist, just keep persisting and that was a success story. I don't know that they all turn out as well as that, but for me that was a real success story.

You mentioned something else when you talked about how the tone of the day is important. The tone that you have with parents, colleagues, the principal, how they all set the tone in some manner. Do you think your kids pick up on that aspect in your school versus when you were a beginning teacher? Comparing schools now and the types of activities that went on. How does that affect kids' learning and teaching?

Oh, gosh you know as much as we'd like to think that we're hiding things from our kids, they are such barometers. Oh my gosh they know, I'll tell you what, the children in your school know more about your school than you do, I know that. If I ever want to know what's going on or what happened to so-and-so or where something is all I have to do is ask my kids and they will tell me. I think that children, it's been my experience anyway, probably did pick up on some of my frustrations, because they see how you interact with your peers and the tone of voice that you use. If they overhear your conversation about so-and-so or this program they pick up on that and they in turn develop their bias and opinion about those things. It usually mimics mine. It's very scary. That probably has been one area that I've been very aware of and try really hard to always address my colleagues with kindness and respect and caring because the kids hear that. If they see me treating them that way and my colleagues that way then that sets a tone. It emanates from people that you believe in them that you care about them and therefore whether you do something substantial you've given them the attitude that says I believe in you, I think you can do it. Sometimes that's all it takes. I think our attitude comes across to them so strong. You know I think you're absolutely right. I think that's maybe for me where being a parent has helped me so much. I talk to these children like I talk to my own and that is with a great amount of respect and open-mindedness. They do appreciate that and pick up on that. There's nothing more heartbreaking to me than to see children stiffen up or quiver when a teacher has been short with them. You can just see them shrink like they wish they could disappear. Oh that absolutely breaks my heart I can't stand that. That's a concern that is a concern.

I think the essence of what I was trying to get across was what you determined as a concern, how you saw concern from your beginning year to this year, how they've changed or if they changed and then thinking of specific instance that a concern how a concern played out with kids or colleagues in your classroom and school. Do you have anything you want to add? I'll bet you're glad that I haven't been teaching for 35 years and had lots of war stories I could tell you of concerns.



Ann

Interview #3

May 8, 2001

We've talked about how you came to be a teacher, the things that you got from your schooling. We've talked last week or the last time we interviewed about concerns that you had about teaching. You gave me some specific instances of how those concerns played out with different students in your classroom. Today we're going to talk about you as a professional and some of the ways that you develop support systems, things you feel you would want to be different for another teacher that was beginning their career. The first question is can you describe a special moment during your first year as a teacher when you more fully understood what it meant to be a teacher?

The first year I taught was teaching first grade, and I think a moment that really stands out for me was when I listened to a child read a book to me. There were at least two sentences to every page and [I would] just absolutely be amazed at how all the things that we had done in just a short time had clicked with her and she was reading. For me, if a child can read you've set them on a road of independence. That just was a wonderful moment. Have you had those kinds of moments in your second and third years at all, that just reinforced the idea that, "ooh, I really am a teacher, I'm really making a difference."

Yes, I think for me that in second grade the thing that stands out most is the little boy that I talked to you about last week that was in desperate need of being tested. Really focusing on modifying the work for him in the classroom and then seeing him finally being tested and placed and knowing now that he is in a program that he is being successful in. The reason that that stands out to me was because it forced me to modify and to be aware of individual needs of children and to see the benefit of that. I think the softer easier way is hoping that all your children will be cookie cutter kids that you won't have to do that with and there are no such children. We say we formally call classrooms multiage when in fact we all have multiage. The thing that stood out with me in second grade was not so much that I was teaching material and they were getting it, it was that for this child how important it is to recognize the individual needs of children and to persevere in that. To see the benefits of that not only in my relationship with that child and his family we had a warm trusting relationship with each other but also just to experience how important teaching is from that aspect. To see that there's a need and to be able to persevere and not give up, and just keep hanging in there with that type of child. For me in third grade the curriculum jumped between first, to second to third is just amazing. I have loved third grade in that they know a lot of things but to step back and to be a facilitator of the things they know, rather than be a dispenser of things they should know is what teaching for me has been all about this year. To pull together a project, give them the parameters and watch what they can do with it is just tremendous. Probably some of that has to do with the age children that I've taught three different ages, three completely different developmental stages, and three completely different types of curriculum. I've experienced teaching from lots of different angles and they've all been very rewarding experiences for me.

In a way that's fortunate that you are able to build on that and be able to see the role of the teacher as it changes. Something that struck me when you were talking about the second year, the second grade student that you worked with and how you felt finding out what his needs were and persevering at something. Do you think your awareness of individual differences in children has increased the longer you've taught?

I think so, although in my mind and since I only have these three years experience, all the kids seem to fall within three groups. I have the really high children that have their own special needs. I have the well-placed third graders that are strong, average children but have their own needs as well. Then I've got those four or five that are working barely at grade level or below. It seems to me that at first, second and third that the children, in my mind kind of fell within those three ranges. Maybe that's how I've organized it in my mind. But even within each range there are special needs. With the high children I'll have a couple of boys that hate reading but love research and facts where the girls would rather write a story with lots of conversation in it. My low children will be much more interested in the things that we're doing but modified a little bit so that they know that they're still doing what others are doing but it's more successful for them. Those are all considerations to make. Did you find yourself being able to do that kind of grouping your first year though? I think probably that that is something that has developed. I think I knew and recognized that there were groupings in first grade, but boy I was hard pressed to think of how on earth I could meet all those needs. Of course first graders in my experience were much more dependent whereas in third grade they're not quite so dependent which allows me a little bit more freedom to work more with groups.

The second question that I'd like to ask you is where have you gone to seek advice or help?

Primarily from a friend another district that has taught for several years and has become a mentor to me. Her principal introduced me to her. The principal and I are friends. She's been my primary person that I've gone to. I shared with you earlier that as I would substitute for that one spring after I graduated it's not hard to find the teachers that really have it. I would, and still even to this day, will go back to two teachers that I really admire and said, "You know I remember in your classroom that you did this, could you teach me how you do that, or could you show me how to do that?" It's worked out well because I've had things to share with them and they are very glad to share with me. I just keep my eyes open to people that I feel teach the way I teach and like the things that I like and I'm just not shy. I just go pick their brains and they always are as thrilled talking about it as I am.

What kinds of things have you sought support from these people for?

Some classroom management not in the aspect of discipline, but just in the areas of centers and having much more multi-dimensional classroom setting, where and how to manage that. In my mind I know what I want it to look like, but how do you do that? From management standpoint also math ideas because I think, for me anyway, and I've seen this with children that they learn so much better with hands on manipulatives through games. I'm always looking for new ways to present that material. I have become very acquainted through a teacher with Marilyn Burns and I've really just gobbled up all of her things. Lets see what else I've sought support in. Some discipline in that it's important to me that the children are not embarrassed or humiliated. So what's the best way to manage my classroom and still keep self-esteem and respect in tack. You

mentioned that in our last interview. That's really important to me. I think I do really well with that but I do know that I have had times where I have not done well with that. Those are the days that I go home not feeling very good about myself, or the way I handled that situation. The teachers that I've gone to seem to know how to do that [discipline with care] really well. When I would substitute for them I could tell that they had their kids just eating out of their palm of their hand and I wanted to know how do you do that. Dr. Sanchez next door is a great example of that and so I've gone to her several times this year just to talk to her and see how she does things.

If you have a discipline problem with a child, here would be a little bit different because this is the first year the school has been open. Would you ever go to the teacher that had had them before to ask what worked and what didn't work?

Yes, and I have done that before and that has been very helpful to me.

Do you belong to any professional organizations other than your state teachers organization?

No, no I don't. Did you belong to anything when you were in college? No, and I don't really even have a good reason why other than maybe just time or not being aware of what is out there. What about the library here, do they have a professional section? Yes! What kind of journals do they subscribe to for the teachers, do you know? Ooh, well now as far as journals... Like Reading Teacher or something like that? I can't say that I have seen that, but they have a lot of Marilyn Burns type books, videos and things like that that I can pull from. Not so much for professional journals with articles in it to read or to be current on research that I'm aware of. It could be there and I just haven't seen it.

What kinds of workshops have you been going to or gone to recently?

Recently the district has provided for us to hear a speaker on whole language teaching. She covered a broad area of phonics, reading, spelling and language arts. She's coming back in January, which I'll go to that. Literacy First workshops, we went to that that was a weeklong process. Our professional development has included ESL training and some technology. A wonderful workshop I went to last year was Cubing. Basically it was how to meet the needs of different levels of children within one classroom covering the same material. We got some really neat ideas from that. Those are the ones that I can think of right off. We're very fortunate the district is very generous. So most of the professional workshops that you go to are those that are provided by the school or the district for you? Right. Do you get to pick and choose which ones you want or are they pretty well decided ahead of time? They're pretty much decided ahead of time but it's decided with input from the teachers. We scream loud enough who we'd like to see in here and they try to be very accommodating to that. Do you have a staff development person in your school building? Yes, yes we do. Does your school building itself ever provide anything just for your teachers here? Some technology but I think no, as far as the building is concerned that we haven't had anything specific. I guess it's so expensive when those different people come they try to keep it district wide. I did attend a science workshop by put on by a big oil company in our state. Do you have a bulletin board or something to make teachers aware of opportunities outside the school that they might be able to participate in? As far as workshops are concerned? Like an information board where teachers can pick something to attend? No, we don't or not that I've seen. I know that they'll post things in the teacher's lounge of workshops, but they're pretty much locally

within the district. We have a technology school, our district has and they are always offering classes, so it would be that type of thing. We've got a small bulletin board out in the hall that offers web sites that are supposedly good to go to but as far as any of those broader workshops, no, I don't know anything about those. It would be neat to find out. Is there any staff development money for you to participate in something? Like if you found something that you really wanted to go to in the summer? There probably would be um, I've never really checked into that. This principal would probably welcome a chance to send you someplace.

If you were to share your experiences as a beginning teacher with beginning early childhood teacher candidates, what would be some things you could tell them? What specific things would you want them to be aware of that you were not aware of or that you felt were really important to you?

You know as I've thought about this over the past few weeks I realize how little I know about assessing children. I would hope somehow that they could become more learned about that than I was when I came because that is crucial. I know a lot of becoming a good kid watcher comes from the experience but there has to be some coursework in there that would help us be better at that. I know that in reading that I have really struggled with that [assessment] because I don't exactly know what their weaknesses are and how to help them with that. That might be one thing that I would be telling them is to seek out coursework or books or something that would help you in the area of assessment. I would tell them about assessment, I would also tell them about the time that's involved with this job. If you want to be a really good teacher that it requires a lot of your time. It requires a lot of thinking outside the box, certainly outside the manual. I think to always try to put themselves in the place of where that child is and if they were hearing you say the things that you're saying how are they going to feel? How would you feel if someone was saying that to you that way? Would it get you interested or does it reflect that you really want to know how they think and feel about something? Some role playing would be good. Try things yourself first before you do it in the classroom as much as you can. I mean I hear great ideas and I read tremendous ideas, but boy, you know walk through it one time first and see if that's really appropriate. Think about the children you have in your classroom. That is just key. It may look cute but hmm, hmm, hmm. What are they learning, where do you want them? Think that through, what do you want them to learn from this and be prepared.

Something that was brought up in a workshop I went to had a panel of four presidential awardees. One of the things they mentioned was we wish we had a list of key books and materials that we should have at our disposal. Was anything like that ever available to you either through your class work at the college or somebody in one of your schools who said, "here are some books that you probably ought to have in your classroom. Here are some materials that you really need. These are basic things you need to have." Was anything like that ever mentioned to you?

No, I think just from being in the classroom with my interning that I started seeing common things, and was making a mental list. I think primarily the teacher that I have become good friends with in another district was the one that sat down with me and said if you don't have anything you need to have at least pattern blocks. You need to have base-ten blocks and those kinds of things that I would not have thought about having, and that was very helpful. Literature that was wonderful, too, you know that she would

suggest different books and what you could do with these different stories. Now I'm the type person and probably from college that this helped a lot, but in pulling together a unit you know you have to use all your resources. I had become familiar with literature. I was able to find resources like the zoo and nature center and all the things they have available to you. They are thrilled that you would ask them. In the community at large there are so many people out there that just would do anything.

What would you share from your experiences as a beginning teacher with administrators? What you want from them, what they can provide for new teachers?

I think that first and foremost would be a mentor that they know will have time for a new teacher, I think that's key. I think just for them to know or let me know that they don't expect me to know how to do everything the first year or even the third year. To offer lots of pats on the back I think. To let us know that we are going in the right direction. I'm giving you my own inventory, I realize. That's fine that's what I'm asking. Realizing that we are first year teachers, that we don't have all the answers. What workshops are out there that would be good for us to attend so that we're both working. "I'm trying to keep aware of what is out there and if you're letting me know what is out there then with your support I know that you want me to be the best I can be, that you're going to arrange for me to go to that by funding or whatever." Those are the things that come to mind.

What are the most appreciative qualities in an administrator?

The principal that we have now, I always feel like no matter what my idea is, it's valuable. Whatever I have to say, she will always say to me, "you know that's a good point, or, "you know I'm so glad you said that, I hadn't even thought about that." Well, she may have but you know I kind of sit up a little straighter. I do have something valuable to contribute here. When she came in to observe me, she put a note in my mailbox that said, "loved your lesson!" She knew that there would be a two-week gap between that observation and our meeting with each other, and I didn't want to be biting my fingernails off. With just that little tiny note I was so much at ease and I felt good about what I had done. It wasn't that nagging questioning in my mind. You know, "I loved your lesson," well all right! I'm, good, that's great, I just needed to know that. So that feels really good. What about visibility? I think I have enjoyed that with this principal. I've enjoyed having her pop into my classroom or just coming to the door and just waving and letting me know she's there. She is very much a part of anything that we do [even] as far as our talent show she was right in there with us. Any of the assemblies, she's right in there with us. If we're going to eat fried worms, she'll be right there beside us, not really, but she would, she would go that length. She did so much as far as building community with the different activities that we had during the summer. We did a ropes course together, we got together at a painting place where you pick a piece of pottery out and you paint it then you have it fired and all the teachers just met. It was just fun just to sit around and get to know each other through an activity where you weren't very threatened. We played Bunco and she was just right there with us. Plus she's been in the classroom. She knows where we're coming from. Yes, she's been a teacher herself. Matter of fact I went to her Friday and said, "you know I've got this child that I'm just on my last nerve with, could I send her down to your office for just the last hour of the day to get some things done?" "Absolutely," no questions asked. I didn't need to offer any explanation that was fine. I think that it's important, too, that I don't feel like she second-

guesses me at all. I feel like she really respects me as a professional and my opinion and my assessment and is just very supportive of that.

What about relationship with parents and kids?

Oh, gosh, crucial. She is either in front of us deflecting any trouble, or she is right beside us supporting us. I absolutely feel that she would go to bat for me on anything, you know, as long as she felt it was appropriate. I think she would defend me against anything really. So, it's pretty well a critical characteristic that that principal be willing to support you in your professional journey? Yes, yes, right. She is just so much fun, she really works hard to keep the moral high. She doesn't mind if I am running out of copies and I'm needing something I can go to her and she'll say go do whatever you need to do. She also knows I won't abuse that so we have a mutual respect for each other. For spring break at our faculty meeting she surprised us with a great big cake from the brand new bakery that everybody's been dying to go to but nobody had time. She surprised us with a great big cake and we were all just like, "oh, you're so cool." It's just those little things that just mean absolutely the world to me. The very first day of school we had, since this is a new building, we had little mason jars that she had hired somebody to paint for us with the school building on the front with the school name – established in 2000, and just with a little note. You know, oh my gosh, that just set the whole tone for the whole year. I mean we were just like going... I just felt a thousand feet high. So she's just awesome, she's really awesome.

What would you tell a parent about your experiences as a beginning teacher?

Would weigh my words carefully. Okay, now let me ask you. How do you mean that?

What would you want them to know about you or how to relate to you as a beginning teacher? I would let them know that I'm a parent myself. Cause I think that's important and I'm always quick to let them know that I have three boys. Cause I have a lot of parents out there that think I don't under... I might not understand boys, but I do. Um, um, of my experience as a first, second and now as a third grade teacher, that I've had the opportunity to see the skills build one on the other. That um, we are partners that their child is as important to me as my own and that as long as we have the best interest of that child in common with each other that we will go far. That they are as much a part of their child's education as I am. That I have an open door policy that they are welcome anytime to call or to come and sit and watch and be a part of our classroom. Um, that I don't always have the answers but I'm willing to keep working with them until we find somebody that does. And um, that I won't give up. Those are probably some things I would say.

What would you tell instructors at a university? Your experience as a beginning teacher has taught you certain things. What would you want them to understand about that experience, because they are going to be preparing others?

Somehow we need to get them back into the classroom. I think they need to know what we're experiencing out here and how much it's changing. No matter how much you read until you live it do you fully understand it to see what you're up against. Explain that a little bit more, "it." Well, these are different children that come to us today. They are, in my opinion, extremely high maintenance children that require, not require, want to be entertained. I don't see children today as knowing what to do with themselves without stimulation of some kind other than their own thoughts. They don't know what to do with

their own thoughts. They don't know what it is to be quiet and to curl up with a book. They don't know what it is to just be. That's just changed a lot from when we were in school. These children are pretty tenacious. They have much, well, I can't say that of all schools, but the children here are coming from a **very** broad spectrum of experiences. The children I've had the last two years their experiences were very broad but in a completely different arena. The disrespect in the classroom today is phenomenal and it is supported by parents. There's a part of me that learned in school that if your curriculum and your classroom management are developmentally appropriate and very engaging that the children will thrive in your classroom. I think that to a large extent that's true, but you know what, that puts all the burden on me and that is a bunch of bunk. That's just not right. Now I don't know what they could do on the college level to change that but maybe just their expectations need to be different. I think that probably it would be very interesting to see them come in and teach a lesson. Now you could sort of tell them ahead of time how many children you have. Well, I know for myself that one of my professors, and you and I talked about this a little bit, the idea that respect for the children was key. One of the ways to show respect for the children was to allow that block area, if in the classroom, if so-and-so's building, that you need to you know leave that up for them to continue to go back to. I'll never forget my first grade year and I had Lego's and the fights that broke out over the fact that so-and-so's had that Lego airplane together for over a month and I need those wheels. They're the only wheels in the whole classroom. Well, okay so there's disequilibrium and so you spend a day trying to work through the logistics of all of that, it doesn't work. How I internalize this was, "I am a bad teacher because I don't know how to help them." My maternal instinct says take the wheels and put them up and when everybody's cooled off we're going to take the airplanes apart and divvy this up and we are never saving anything again. Well, one of the ways you can get around that might be to take pictures with a camera. That's a good idea! That's a great idea! Now see those are things that I would have not thought about. Anyway I think that the critical thing happened was that for a long time I would think I'm not doing this right. I am bad and I wasn't it was just frustrating!

What have been some of the most important things you've learned about yourself. In being a teacher what are some things you've learned about who you are? You've mentioned one thing you talked about respect. And that when we show respect to others we get respect in return. Can you think of some other things that you've learned about yourself?

I know how important it is for me to feel that I've been heard and it's equally important to children. You don't have to have an answer and you don't have to know how to solve the problem as long as they feel like they've been heard. I think I've learned that about myself. I know I've learned about myself that I'm much better in the morning than I am in the afternoon. I know that there are certain children that absolutely send me into orbit push all my buttons. Those are the ones that after I've stepped back that I'm willing to look at myself and see that it's not what they're, it's not the child that's making me crazy it's what they're doing. Why is it making me crazy? I've learned that about myself, that I need to be reflective in the way I am with them, that I don't have all the answers. I really thought I did, but I don't so I've learned that about myself. Today I'm okay with it I'm pretty okay with that.

What have you learned about yourself in relationship to your school, not just your classroom but your school?

Hmm, I've learned that I'm not as much a leader as I thought I was. I'm much more comfortable being a team player. I'm a better sailor than I am a captain, but I'm pretty comfortable with that. I've also learned that because I am reflective and because I bring [that characteristic] to my faculty things about myself they do look to me. I mean I feel like I have a valuable place here that I am valued that my opinion is valued and that my ideas are valued and that I play an important role here, which has been really nice. That's a really nice feeling to have. I didn't feel that way in the other school I was at, but I do feel that here, very much so.

What would you do differently if you were to start over? Or would you do anything differently?

You know I'm not sure I would have as hard as it was I learned so much from everything. But that's kind of my nature, no matter what happens I know that there's something for me to learn, so what can I do with it. I'll first gripe and complain a lot about it but then I'll dig in and do the work and see what there is to learn from it. I think there are things I regret that I had to do for instance buy so much at the very beginning and be faced with the prospect of having 28 first graders your very first day with no support. There are things that I regret that I had to go through but I don't think that I would change how I did it or what I did.

Can you think of anything that you would like to add or questions you would like to ask about what we've discussed these past three interview sessions?

You know I don't know if this is even relevant or not, but I have thought often that the mentoring program, the internship program needs to be revamped. Now are you're talking about mentoring like with entry year or mentoring like during the interning? Interning. That needs to be changed or re-evaluated. Can you give me an example? The screening of the teachers that want to be involved in [the mentoring program] that needs to be better. I would have to say that two of the three teachers that I interned with were not what I would call, they would not be who I would want my children to intern with. I think that needs to change. I think the teacher who is allowing an intern to be in their classroom, their philosophy needs to be in alignment with the college's philosophy. I think that's really the only thing that I can think of right off the top of my head.

Where do you see yourself in ten or fifteen years?

Oh, definitely teaching and just so much better at what I am today. I have this picture of the kind of teacher that I want to be and I hope in ten or fifteen years I'll be close to that.

Would you ever want to have interns or be involved in that process?

I would, I really would, but I think I have a ways to go before I'm ready to do that, because of the things that I would want to teach her or him. It's a lot of work if you do it right. Yes, yes, I was shocked. One of the teachers at another school close by that I know has interns, it's a lady I subbed for, the hours that she spent and how concerned she was for the teacher that would intern in her classroom. I was amazed, but because of that level of involvement that teacher was prepared when she went out. Maybe that's one of the things, maybe that's what's key. I never felt like that. I felt like the teachers that I had were getting that stipend and that's all they needed or wanted. That was the easiest five



hundred bucks they ever made or whatever it is that they pay. All the support [from the mentor] needs to be so much more involved.

Would you see yourself going on and getting any further education?

I've thought about that often. I probably will pursue a master's, although monetarily there's not a whole lot of incentive there. If the district wasn't so generous and wasn't paying for it, I probably would not. Oh, they pay for you to go get your master's? Yes, they will pay a portion of that anyway, so I probably would. But as far as our paychecks there's not really the incentive there.

What would you want to get it in?

I would probably get it in early childhood. I think that's what I would do. I would love to have an intern in probably three, four, five years when I felt like I had something to give, because their time is so valuable, all of our time is so valuable, so precious. You've got to compact a lot into that just really brief time and you want them to catch the fire like you have the fire so you're passing it on and not extinguishing it.

APPENDIX K

Oklahoma State University  
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 2/4/02

Date : Monday, February 05, 2001

IRB Application No ED0175

Proposal Title: EXPRESSED CONCERNS OF BEGINNING TEACHERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION

Principal  
Investigator(s) :

Bonnie Lynn Voth  
235 Willard  
Stillwater, OK 74078

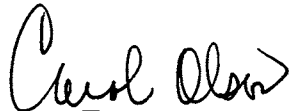
Kathryn Castle  
235 Willard  
Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and  
Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s) : Approved

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Signature :



Carol Olson, Director of University Research Compliance

Monday, February 05, 2001

Date

Approvals are valid for one calendar year, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modifications to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval with the advisor's signature. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited and exempt projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.

VITA 2

Bonnie Lynn Voth

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Dissertation: EXPRESSED CONCERNS OF BEGINNING TEACHERS  
IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Major Field: Curriculum and Instruction

Biographical:

Education: Graduated from Irving High School, Irving, Texas in May 1966; received a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from Central Missouri State University, Warrensburg, Missouri in May 1972; received a Master of Science in College Teaching from Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma in May 1991. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University in May 2002.

Experience: Taught first, second and third grades at Fairview Elementary School, Fairview, Oklahoma, August 1972 to May 1976; taught Instructional Technology, Personal and Family Living, and Organization and Implementation of Early Childhood Programs as adjunct at Northeastern State University, August 1989 to May 2001; taught second grade in Pryor, Oklahoma, August 1992 to May 1996.

Professional Memberships: National Association for the Education of Young Children. Association for Childhood Education International. Kappa Delta Pi. National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.