

INTEGRATED THEMATIC INSTRUCTION:
A CASE STUDY

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND

The Need for a Different Curriculum

“A . . . study says American 15-year-olds’ ability to apply what they’ve learned in math, science, and reading to real-world questions is, on average, well, ‘average’ compared to their peers in other industrialized nations” (Stein, 2001, p. 9). This statement is an indictment of the traditional system of education in America. Traditional education in America is under constant attack from many different areas because it is becoming increasingly well known and accepted that traditional education is not meeting the needs of students.

Educator and nationally known newspaper columnist Marion Brady (2003) describes the problems of traditional schools as, “stuck on a performance plateau. Even the best of them fail to hook solidly into students' natural curiosity, natural need to know, natural desire to make more sense of the world and their place in it” (p. 1). Brady (2003) goes on to say that if educators “take away the report cards, certificates, diplomas, attendance laws, parental pressures, and community expectations, the schools would fall apart” (p. 1). Many non-traditional educators, like Brady (2003), believe that traditional education in America is focused more on the educational output of students than on their educational needs.

THE PROBLEM

Traditional education, non-traditional educators like Brady (2003) argue, fails to create an educational environment that fosters connections within the curriculum. This fragmentation occurs because of the separate and independent courses taught in traditional schools. The fragmentation of the school curriculum, a teacher-centered process approach to learning and centering the learning around tests, are the major reasons non-traditional educators believe that traditional schools fail to wholly educate their students.

Holistic educators, on the other hand, teach subjects, ideas and topics in relation to other subjects, ideas, and topics. Such curricular integration is one of the primary aspects of holistic education. Holistic educator Clark (1991b) believes holistic educational philosophy has a “profound assumption about the nature of the world: an assumption that everything in the universe is fundamentally interconnected” (p. 53). Holistic educators seek to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the world by connecting all subjects traditionally taught separately, into an integrated curriculum.

Teachers of Integrated Thematic Instruction also believe traditional schools are not properly educating American students. The stated mission of Susan Kovalik & Associates (2003) is to “translat(e) brain research into practical curriculum and instructional strategies for the classroom and to participate in the creation of learning communities dedicated to developing competent, caring, and responsible citizens” (p. 1). Due to the failures of traditional education, Kovalik (2003) decided to create what she saw as a new philosophical idea of a more complete form of education based on research

of how the brain learns.

Educators, including R. Miller (1990) and Kovalik (2003), conclude the traditional school system is failing its students, and therefore, they are pursuing a better type of schooling, one that will not fail children. Stoddard (1993) states the problem as “the failure of our traditional system to nurture personal inquiry and individual self-development that results in student anger, frustration, loss of self-esteem, alienation, and hopeless boredom” (p. 31). According to educators such as R. Miller (1990), Clark (1991b), and Stoddard (1993), the major failings of traditional education are that it does not educate the whole child and it produces students who are unable to connect what they are taught to real life because they do not view the world as a whole.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine the educational philosophy of Integrated Thematic Instruction in a school setting. The study developed a working definition of what holistic education is by examining the major concepts discussed by most holistic writers and educators. In the glossary, the study established a definition of traditional education for comparison purposes. Using the results of the study, the researcher determined whether Integrated Thematic Instruction came within the agreed-upon working definition of holistic education, traditional education, or if it is a unique educational philosophy.

ASSUMPTIONS

One assumption of this study is that a laboratory school reflected the philosophy of Integrated Thematic Instruction. Another assumption of this study is that the educational philosophy of Integrated Thematic Instruction was observable in the laboratory school.

GLOSSARY

The terms in this glossary are defined specifically for use in this study. The terms defined in this study are applicable only to this study.

Integrated Curriculum: An integrated curriculum combines two or more subject areas to create one course or cover an educational theme. Integrated curriculum is designed to increase student learning and retention of material. Integrated curriculum is also an educational model for decreasing instruction in isolated academic disciplines because it combines goals and objectives from a range of academic areas (Beane, 1997).

In an integrated curriculum, teachers can combine disciplines by creating logical connections within their classrooms. Reisberg (1998) states “teachers using integrated curriculum may select a subject for instruction and include related topics from other areas in the unit plan” (p. 272). A teacher, or team of teachers, can combine subjects that have traditionally been taught separately into a single integrated course.

Holistic Education: Within the conceptual framework of holistic education there is no consensus on what exactly makes up true holistic education. Some major factors,

however, are agreed upon by all holistic educators. The components which are common to all forms of holistic educational philosophy are as follows: 1) the education of the whole child, mind, body, and spirit, 2) all things are interconnected and related and should be addressed as such in the educational curricula, and 3) the transformation of the way students think from separate, fragmented thoughts and ideas to a connected, caring and self-aware whole. (A more detailed explanation of holistic education is contained in Chapter II).

Traditional Education: There is not one single model of traditional education, but as is the case of holistic education, a few major factors are commonly present. Traditional education is teacher centered, uses a fragmented curriculum, and emphasizes testing to determine the knowledge a student has gained. The philosophy of traditional education has evolved from a few influential movements, such as cognitive psychology and behaviorism (Miller, 1990).

Traditional education is a teacher-centered approach to education. The teacher is the source of knowledge in the classroom, and therefore, all aspects of education come from the teacher to the student. All curricular choices, assignments, and discipline come from the teacher, with little to no input from the student. Traditional educators divide the curriculum into individual components, such as physical geography and American literature, and decrease the natural cohesiveness that exists in real life. Because of this fragmentation, holistic educators argue the traditional curriculum creates fragmented learning and thinking in students. Clark (1991a) states traditional education creates fragmentation in two ways: “One is the way the content is organized or structured, and the other is the nature of the content itself” (p. 31). Because the school day is arranged

for separate and independent courses, traditional education can do nothing but divide the subjects themselves into separate and individual units, which is a reason for fragmented thought. (A more detailed explanation of traditional education is contained in Chapter II).

Whole Brain: “Whole brain” refers to the concept that all aspects of the brain need to be engaged in the learning process. Holistic educators believe students will learn better when they are actively involved in the learning process. One reason students learn better when actively involved is that multiple parts of the brain are engaged, thereby increasing the opportunity for learning to take place. The body (physical nature), spirit (emotional nature), and mind or brain (mental nature) should all be engaged for whole brain learning to take place (Miller, 1990; Kovalik & Olsen, 2002).

Whole Child: “Basically, holistic education seeks to teach the whole child. This means academic achievement is only one goal of education, and the social, emotional, physical, aesthetic, and spiritual aspects of the human personality need to be recognized as well. In modern society, ‘school’ has been defined as the place where knowledge and facts are taught, where people are prepared for careers and to be useful citizens. Holistic educators assert, however, that this emphasis on intellect and vocation results in lopsided development of human potentials and that a complete redefinition of the school is needed” (Miller, 1991, pp. 358-359).

LIMITATION

One limitation of this study is that the working definition of holistic education established by this study may only be applicable to this study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is Integrated Thematic Instruction?
2. Does Integrated Thematic Instruction fall under the guidelines of the working definition of holistic education?
3. Does Integrated Thematic Instruction fall under the guidelines of the definition of traditional education?
4. Is Integrated Thematic Instruction a unique educational philosophy?

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The researcher developed a working definition of holistic education. The researcher also developed a definition of traditional education. Once these definitions were established, they were applied to the philosophy of Integrated Thematic Instruction. This study looked to discover whether, when practiced in a real-life school situation, Integrated Thematic Instruction is a holistic educational philosophy, a traditional educational philosophy, or a unique educational philosophy. A qualitative method, case study, was employed to research the philosophy of Integrated Thematic Instruction and describe it.

The laboratory school used in this study was Thoreau Middle School in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The researcher attempted to determine if the philosophy of this school,

Integrated Thematic Instruction, can be defined as a holistic educational philosophy even though Integrated Thematic Instruction does not officially profess to be a holistic form of educational philosophy.

To determine whether Integrated Thematic Instruction is holistic in nature, the researcher determined whether, in action, it educates in a holistic manner or in a unique manner. Holistic education is education of the mind, body, and spirit of the child. Miller (1988) states that “in the holistic curriculum the student is not reduced to a set of competencies that must be ‘performed,’ or an abstract set of mental processes; instead, there is an acceptance of the richness and wholeness of human experience” (p.26). Simply stated, holistic education tries to educate the ‘whole’ child.

The same set of procedures were used to determine if Integrated Thematic Instruction is actually a traditional educational philosophy. The school was examined to determine if, in action, it practices a form of education that falls within the definition of traditional education, or if it educates in a manner unique to Integrated Thematic Instruction.

The philosophy of education professed by the laboratory school, Integrated Thematic Instruction, was fully explored to determine if the school educates the whole child. The researcher examined the literature of Integrated Thematic Instruction to determine if it has themes common to those of holistic education. The language or terminology used in the literature base of an educational philosophy is one signifier of the nature of that philosophy. Since the terminology used in an educational setting is a key element of establishing holistic educational philosophy as a non-traditional philosophy of education, the educational language from the literature base needs to be examined to

answer the questions: Does Integrated Thematic Instruction use terminology that can be viewed as holistic? Does Integrated Thematic Instruction use terminology that can be viewed as traditional?

The researcher went to the school to conduct interviews and observe the philosophy of the school in action. Conducting all of these different types of research helped the researcher document whether Integrated Thematic Instruction can be considered a holistic educational philosophy or a traditional educational philosophy. One example of a holistic signifier the researcher examined would be if: in a holistic school, courses that are traditionally taught as separate courses were integrated, for example, integrating science and mathematics into a single curriculum. One example of a traditional signifier would be if the school practices separate-subject classes, for example, teaching science and mathematics in their own independent classes.

Again, in this study, the philosophy of Integrated Thematic Instruction was fully explored. In examining this philosophy, the researcher observed and analyzed the philosophy of the laboratory school, Integrated Thematic Instruction, to determine if it is a holistic philosophy of education, a traditional philosophy of education, or a unique philosophy of education.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

To understand the relationship Integrated Thematic Instruction has with holistic education and traditional education, we must examine the literature base of each philosophy. Using the literature base, one can begin to see the relationship Integrated Thematic Instruction has with both holistic education and traditional education. This also gives the researcher a base of knowledge to use when examining Integrated Thematic Instruction in action in a school setting.

TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

Traditional education, the philosophy of education with which most Americans are familiar, must be examined first. There is not one single agreed-upon version of what is considered traditional education, but common factors are present in all forms of traditional education. They are all teacher-centered, use single-subject curriculum, and emphasize testing as the ultimate way to determine knowledge. Educational author Hirsch (2001) sums up traditional education when he states that traditional education has “explicit, agreed-upon academic goals for all children; a strong focus on academics,

order, and discipline in the classroom; maximum time on learning tasks; and frequent evaluations of student performance” (p. 16).

The philosophy of traditional education has evolved from a few influential movements. The first traditional educational movement is cognitive psychology, which has become a leading educational movement in the United States. One type of school reform that is closely associated with cognitive psychology is called the informational processing perspective. “The informational perspective has an internal focus. Learning is described as a change in knowledge stored in memory” (Newby, et al., 2000, p. 29). Schools focus on changing and adding to the knowledge stored in a child’s mind. Memory is the key to a person’s ability to learn.

Newby, et al. (2000) write that “human memory has two essential characteristics. First it is organized rather than random. The second essential characteristic of human memory is that it is active rather than passive” (p. 29). These two ideas form the complete basis of this cognitive psychological perspective. Cognitive psychologists believe teachers must understand and address these two factors for students to progress educationally. Teachers must understand the cognitive processes before they can successfully teach students anything. They must be able to help students translate any information into a meaningful form, so that students can remember it for later recall and use (Newby, et al., 2000).

Within this discipline, “the primary responsibility of the instructional expert is to create conditions that will help the students attend to, encode, and retrieve information” (Newby, 2000, p. 30). The teacher is only used to design a curriculum that the student can then process, much like a computer processes information. The teacher organizes the

new information, links the new information, and then helps in guiding the student in the retrieval of that information.

Within this cognitive model, if the teacher fails to guide the student in the processing of the information, the student can process it him/herself if he/she has the ability. According to Newby, et al. (2000), “students’ responsibility within the informational processing perspective is to actively synthesize information, using cognitive supports provided by the environment or that they develop for themselves” (p. 32). If the student does not have the ability for this type of processing, then no learning will take place.

In this model the student’s mind is a computer, able to be programmed and to process information. It is a teacher-centered approach, because it starts with the teacher organizing the information to be processed by the student, rather than the student having any influence on the information to be processed. This model of education is rigid and mechanistic.

Another influence on traditional education is behaviorism. Behaviorism focuses on changing and modifying student behaviors. In behaviorism, the teacher controls all of the learning, establishing the educational goal and guiding the student to that goal. In the behavioral perspective, the teacher has the primary responsibility for arranging the learning situations to help students learn the material. To make sure that learning is taking place, behaviorists believe a teacher should set behavioral objectives for students to complete (Newby, et al., 2000).

In the behaviorist perspective “teachers should use cues to guide students to the goal” (Newby, et al., 2000, p. 27). All knowledge starts and ends with the teacher.

Newby, et al. (2000) describe the learning situation: “the environment presents an antecedent (A) that prompts a behavior (B) that is followed by some consequence (C) that then determines whether the behavior will occur again” (p. 26). Behaviorists believe that students will exhibit learning when they consistently behave in the newly modified way (Newby, et al., 2000).

This process can be called “shaping” (Newby, et al., 2000, p. 26). Behaviorists believe shaping can help students learn as teachers slowly modify the behaviors of students to reach the desired goal. Students take a passive role in education because the teacher completely determines the goal and the way to achieve that goal.

Another form of education that has attempted to reform traditional education is called constructivism. Of the main forms of traditional education, constructivism has the most characteristics that are similar to holistic education. According to Newby, et al. (2000), constructivists believe that knowledge is constructed and learning is a “change in meaning constructed from experience” (p. 34). Experience can be gained in a variety of ways by having students interact with objects, situations, or other students, to gain the experience.

Similar to the cognitivist perspective, constructivists believe that knowledge is added to pre-existing knowledge. Newby, et al. (2000) state that “learning is determined by the complex interplay among students’ existing knowledge, the social context and the problem to be solved” (p.34). The role of the teacher in this perspective is to place students in situations where they will be able to gain experience and construct new knowledge from that experience. Instructors in the constructivist perspective ask students to use their knowledge to solve what would be considered meaningful or realistic

problems. Even though this perspective relies on a student gaining knowledge from real situations, it is still a teacher-centered approach because it is up to the teacher to create those situations or problems (Newby, et al., 2000).

All of these different forms of traditional education, while existing simultaneously, are not the only examples of different forms of traditional education. These are the traditional educational systems that dominate American schools and make the best comparisons to Integrated Thematic Instruction.

Importance of Traditional Education

One of the most fervent supporters of traditional education is author E.D. Hirsch. He believes that a traditional form of education is the best way for American students to learn and succeed in school. Hirsch (1999) writes that schools in which students learn more have “tended to favor the explicit teaching of phonics, the memorization of the multiplication table and the use of standardized tests” (p. B9). Hirsch takes this standpoint despite many other educational authors shifting their support away from traditional education.

Peterson and Campbell (2001) are two authors that recognize the trend that American education has shifted toward a common form of education, traditional education. “Throughout the twentieth century, the design of the American school system became increasingly comprehensive, uniform, centralized and professionally directed” (p. 2). However, they also recognize the need for educational reform, whatever form that may take. Peterson and Campbell (2001) write that, “by the beginning of the twenty-first century, most Americans agreed that something needed to be done to improve America’s

schools” (P. 4). They believe that traditional schools might no longer be sufficient for educating students when they state “for all the centralization, standardization, and professionalism that had occurred, schools seemed no more adequate to the task set before them” (Peterson and Campbell, 2001, p. 4) of properly educating students. Traditional schools do not produce well-rounded students that can function in real-life situations.

The questioning of traditional education by Peterson and Campbell is answered by Hirsch. He believes that traditional education is the most valid form of education. Hirsch (1999) points out “the fact that recent improvements in equity have been achieved only by school reforms that use conservative methods like drill and practice and a demanding curriculum” (p. 9). Drill and practice are some of the characteristics of the teacher-centered nature of traditional education. Hirsch believes that, despite authors like Peterson and Campbell questioning the adequacy of traditional education, the current traditional form of education is the best way to educate.

To support this belief, Hirsch uses the Coleman report from the 1980s which, showed that most Roman Catholic schools were better at achieving equity than most public schools. Catholic schools followed a rich and demanding curriculum, requiring a lot of drill and practice, and expected every child to reach minimal goals in each subject during the year. As a result disadvantaged children prospered academically, as did their advantaged peers, and the schools narrowed the gap between races and social classes (Hirsch, 1999, p. 9). Hirsch (1999) believes this research shows that traditional education helps students from all backgrounds, ranging from private Catholic school children to disadvantaged public

school children, to succeed. And, according to most educators, giving all children the opportunity to succeed academically is the goal of schooling.

In support of traditional education, Hirsch (1997) states that “the emphasis that permeated the traditional school was recitation, memorization, recall, testing, grades, promotion, and failure” (p. 42). Traditional educators use these ideas to place an emphasis on a teacher-centered education. Hirsch (1997) describes traditional education as one in which, “it was necessary that children primarily listen, sit quiet and attentive in seats, try to fix in their minds what the teacher told them, commit to memory the lessons assigned to them” (p. 42). Hirsch believes that this form of education is the type of education that all school children should have.

One of the main points of detraction that some educators have about traditional education is that it does not have an engaging curriculum. To answer these detractors, Hirsch writes that, “traditional knowledge-based schooling is currently employed with great success in most other advanced nations. It fails to note that challenging subject matter - the core of traditional education - can be taught in a lively, demanding way” (Hirsch, 1997, p. 42). He goes on to say that, “an effective teacher can make the most distant subject interesting, and an ineffective one can make any subject dull” (Hirsch, 1997, p. 42).

Many detractors of traditional education also state that whole-class instruction creates a learning environment that is not conducive to a good education. They stress that individualized instruction is a better way to educate. Again, Hirsch (1997) disagrees with the detractors by writing,

how then can we explain the paradox that individuals learn more and better in schools where greater emphasis is placed on whole-class instruction than on individualized tutoring? How do we explain the research finding that even students needing extra help make more progress when whole class instruction is emphasized over individual tutorials? (Hirsch, 1997, p. 42).

To further emphasize this point Hirsch (1997) states, “knowledge is effectively given to the entire group simultaneously, more students are learning much more of the time” (p. 42). He asserts that this simultaneous learning is one of the main features of traditional education and is why it is the best way for students to learn.

Another problem detractors have with traditional education is the use of standardized tests. Hirsch (1999) counters the detractors by stating,

standardized reading tests are among the most valid and reliable assessments that exist and among the most important instruments for measuring excellence and fairness in education. To take a reading test, a student has to perform the very skill being assessed. These tests, even in their much-maligned multiple-choice forms, are highly correlated with each other and with real-world reading skills (p. B9).

Traditional educators stress that standardized testing is the best type of assessment. They create a single standard that can be used nationally to determine educational quality and knowledge levels of all students. These tests are seen as a fair way to establish educational standards that can be used in many different educational situations.

Reformers challenge objective tests because their methods have failed to increase test scores (Hirsch, 2001).

All education that can be considered traditional education consists of single subject courses. Hirsch (2001) believes that subject-matter knowledge should come first and foremost. It is the most important function of schools. “The real-life competencies that people need, such as the abilities to read, to write, to communicate, to learn, to analyze, and to grasp and manipulate mathematical symbols, have major components that psychologists have found to be ‘domain specific’” (Hirsch, 1996, p. 219). “Domain specific” is simply another way of stating a course is single-subject.

The best way to teach these domain specific classes is by using the traditional approach to education. “Adequately detailed guidelines help teachers by discriminating between knowledge that is required and knowledge that is merely desirable” (Hirsch, 1996, p. 32). It is important that each content area be a separate class so that students can concentrate on, and learn, the domain specific material. Hirsch (1996) goes on to state, “there is no substitute for this requisite domain-specific content knowledge in the performance of reading or any other intellectual skill” (p. 219).

Recent Shift toward Holistic Education

Since the inception of education in America, there have been attempts to restructure and reform the American traditional educational system. However, beginning in the 1960s, the idea of educational change started gaining momentum. ‘Radical’ educators understood that, even in the 1960s, the traditional system of education in America was failing its students. They began the modern movement of educational reform that is still taking place today (Miller, 1990).

The trend of trying to correct educational problems continued into the 1970s. However, the reform movements of the 1970s were less radical than the reform movements of the 1960s, and seemed to shift from a total abandonment of public education, to a reform of those same public schools. Miller (1990) goes on to say “around 1970, there emerged another group, whom we may call mainstream liberals; they responded to social and educational dissent with less radical – yet still quite potent – ideas for reform such as open classrooms and ‘public schools of choice’” (p. 148).

In the early 1970s, with the open classroom educational approach, the beginnings of a holistic educational movement could be seen. The open classroom “may be considered holistic because its starting point was a faith in the natural unfolding of human development” (Miller, 1990, p. 149). Teachers who believed in open classrooms allowed students more individual freedoms and were more interested in the students as whole beings. Despite the fact that open classrooms started as a holistic idea, they did not remain that way. Open classrooms stayed away from true holism and remained firmly entrenched in traditional educational philosophy. Miller (1990) called the open classroom approach an “accommodating holistic movement” (p. 150). After the radical movements of the 1960s, the reform movements of the 1970s were much less radical in their ideas for educational reform. In fact, these reform movements are now considered the epitome of traditional education.

After the open classroom movement of the 1970s, the reform movements that followed all moved further away from the holistic idea. Miller (1990) states that “American education had weathered its most serious crisis without making any major concessions to its critics. The ‘back-to-basics’ movement, emphasizing test scores,

‘time-on-task’ and other heavy-handed control over the lives of children, continued to gain momentum through the 1980s” (p. 151). This movement was not a forward thinking reform movement. Miller believes it was a movement back in time to a more teacher-dominated system of education. It was a form of American education that discounts the value of the student and certainly does not address the needs of the whole child.

It can be argued that movements such as ‘back to basics,’ are not really reform movements at all. They are not really interested in making a wholesale reform to education. These movements seem more interested in reestablishing the traditional school’s control over the students. Each movement followed the same pattern of the previous movement. They seemed more interested in reasserting control than in creating reform (Brown, 1991).

Holistic educators like Clark feel there is now a shift toward holistic education taking place. They believe that the demand for better quality education will bring about a call for holistic education. Since all other aspects of peoples lives are becoming increasingly connected, our education should as well. “While much has been written about the need for educational reform, not enough attention has been paid to the fact that, in education, as in virtually every other area of our lives, a major paradigm shift is occurring” (Clark, 1991c, p. 17). The belief that a shift is needed is centered on the fact that many people are starting to see the folly of using simple test scores to judge a student.

Simply stated, the paradigm shift vis-à-vis students is the movement from an assumption that each student was born with a given, mathematically quantifiable, intellectual capacity, to the assumption that each individual student has an innate

potential for thinking and learning whose boundaries defy quantification (Clark, 1991c, p. 18).

Because the assumptions of traditional education are proving themselves to be not valid, the need for a holistic form of education becomes ever more important. Holistic educators believe that each individual student has the ability to think, succeed, and learn and this is creating the shift toward a holistic curriculum because it fully addresses the needs of students (Clark, 1991c).

HOLISTIC EDUCATION

One of the many educational movements throughout the history of education is the movement toward holistic education (Miller, 1991a). With regard to those that stress all schools need to move to traditional education as the best way to educate students, Miller (1991a) states it “is primarily a desperate effort to reassert [the traditional] worldview even as it is more obviously becoming obsolete (p. 2). Holistic education challenges, not only traditional education, but also the reform movements, to move away from a fragmented worldview to a holistic one that addresses all of the needs of all students.

Within the conceptual framework of holistic education there is no consensus what exactly makes up true holistic education. Some major factors, however, are agreed upon by all holistic educators. The components which are common to all forms of holistic educational philosophy are as follows: 1) the education of the whole child, mind, body, and spirit, 2) all things are interconnected and related and should be addressed as such in

the educational curricula, and 3) the transformation of the way students think from fragmented thoughts and ideas to a connected, caring and self-aware whole.

Holistic education is a philosophy that presents itself as a philosophy that can give students a high quality educational experience. According to Hassard (1985) the “holistic approach focuses attention on creativity, wisdom, and will” (p. 51). Holistic educators stress student freedom and creativity, while they make connections within the curriculum.

Holistic education does not focus on determining which facts or skills adults should teach children. But on creating a learning community which will stimulate the growing person’s creative and inquisitive engagement with the world.

Holistic education is not concerned with “Cultural literacy” (“what every American needs to know”) so much as with nurturing healthy, while, curious persons who can learn whatever they need to know in any new context (Miller, 1991b, p. 7).

Holistic education, in general, is a concept that was developed to present students with a more well-rounded education than what they receive in a traditional school.

The purpose of holistic education is to help students gain a whole knowledge of themselves, of society, and of the world around them. To gain the ‘whole knowledge,’ students view society holistically, such as being able to understand the interconnectedness of the society and world in which they live, and the interconnectedness of the education and knowledge that they receive. However,

it is impossible to know what the state of knowledge is – in other words, the problems its development and distribution are facing today – without knowing something of the society within which it is situated. And today more than ever,

knowing about that society involves, first of all, choosing what approach the inquiry will take, and that necessarily means choosing how society can answer (Lyotard, 1999, p. 13).

According to the beliefs of holistic education, more knowledge in a well-rounded manner equals a better opportunity for success in society. Holistic educators feel that their students gain a well-rounded base of knowledge and also a better chance for further knowledge, which leads to more success when the students are finished with their education.

Holistic education is not intended specifically for, or only for, giving its students the ability to succeed in a globalized world. Miller (1990) says that “holistic education emphasizes the development of each individual’s unique and characteristic potentials, not the preservation of cultural belief systems and social institutions” (p. 156). While this can be one of its outcomes, it does not emphasize it as one. Holistic educators believe that traditional education, because of its fragmentation and isolated curriculum, does not have the ability to properly prepare students for the challenges they will face in society and the world.

The way holistic educators try to educate their children differently is seen in their entire approach to education. Gibson and Peterson (2001) state that in holistic education “a teacher/student/community search for what is true, gaining and testing ideas in a reasonably free atmosphere where passion and joy are privileged” (p. 104). Holistic educators place an intrinsic value on the child, therefore their schools operate using a different philosophical approach to education than a traditional school. These schools use a philosophy of holistic education. Clark (1993) believes that “holistic education

recognizes the multidimensional nature of human experience by honoring the emotional/psychological, physical and spiritual, as well as the cognitive needs of the learner” (p.81). Simply put, holistic education tries to educate the ‘whole’ child. This is education of the mind, body, and spirit of the child. Traditional education focuses primarily on educating the minds of students while de-emphasizing the body and completely ignoring the spirit.

Purpel (1995) agrees with the holistic idea of teaching the spirit as well as the mind and body by saying “the mind and the body are to be nourished and trusted then so also do we need to attend to matters of the spirit with all the elusiveness and problematics that this concept brings with it” (p. 156). He acknowledges that addressing the spirit in a curricular situation might be difficult, but states it is something that should be done. Since traditional education completely ignores the spirit of a child, Purpel could be seen as an advocate of holistic education and its push to educate the spirit.

To address the whole child, holistic education uses a multitude of techniques to educate children. Of course this is not to say there are any prescribed methods that an educator in a holistic school must follow. Holistic educator Flake (1993) uses an ecological example to demonstrate that by having a variety of approaches to holistic education, it creates a stronger overall philosophy. “There is great diversity among educators and this is a strength since in ecological systems, diversity makes for stability” (p. 77). That is one of the attractions of holistic education; it is child-centered and therefore, impossible to have any predetermined form of teaching style. This is in opposition of traditional education, which is teacher-centered and rigid in its curricular outcomes.

Within the philosophy of holistic education there is not one prescribed curriculum or system. Also, there is not one ordained set of standards or way of running a school within the philosophy of holistic education. As Network of Education Associations of Tasmania (NEAT) (2001) puts it, “holistic education is not any one technique or curriculum” (p. 1). Because there is not one prescribed curriculum for holistic educators, holistic education is meant to create meaningful connections within the whole person. It leaves plenty of room for flexibility of functionality.

Holistic educators, such as Miller (1990) believe that “holistic education will not solve the problems of our age, but along with other personal and societal changes we can begin to confront our alienation” (p. 7). This alienation is the fragmentation, the things in our society that separate and divide us into our various parts. As Clark (1991b) phrases it, “life is shaped by either an assumption of separateness, in which the essence of reality is fragmented, or an assumption of wholeness, in which the essence of reality is unity” (pp. 54 - 55). Holistic education, because its philosophy is based and founded on the concept of wholeness, attempts to produce students who can see this unity and be productive citizens. This idea is in opposition to the fragmentation of traditional education.

Miller (1993) stresses that “in a holistic approach, intellectual grounding means critical, flexible, and creative thinking, and the ability to do research, to locate and take advantage of all potential resources” (p. 113). Because holistic education is flexible and open in its designs, it allows for the investigation of topics in a myriad of approaches. Holistic educators can work with their students to discover the best way for their investigation to proceed. Because subjects are seen in their relation to the whole, they can be approached and understood from many different world views.

Despite, or possibly because of, the relative openness of holistic education, there are common ideas or themes that transcend all writings and thoughts on holistic education. These commonalities are what will be used in this paper as the fundamentals of what make up holistic education. The following sections discuss the commonalities.

The Whole Child

The first issue to address is how holistic education educates the mind, body and spirit, or the whole child. How can one educate the whole child? According to NEAT (2001), one of the most important steps in educating the whole child is having schools acknowledge “a recognition of the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual dimensions of being human” (p. 3). Holistic education stresses educating all facets of it’s students to create well-rounded and whole humans. These facets, emotional and spiritual for example, are ignored by traditional schools. Holistic educators believe that by ignoring these dimensions, traditional schools are short-changing their students and are not creating truly well-rounded citizens.

Holistic education, as does traditional education, places an emphasis on educating the mind and body of the child. Miller (1988) points out that “by connecting mind and body, we facilitate human wholeness” (p. 98). But holistic education takes it a step further than traditional education. There is a connection between the mind and body that is stressed in holistic education. This connection lies in the fact that our bodies are controlled by our mind, while at the same time our mind is limited by the body it inhabits. When connections are made between these two in an educational setting, increased learning can take place.

Holistic education attempts to “acknowledge the spirituality and soul by promoting reflection and contemplative practice, allowing for self-expression and creativity, enchanting through a sense of mystery, wonder, awe and reverence, and supporting deep questioning and transformation” (NEAT, 2001, p. 1). The concept of spirituality is far more than a simple religious act. The reflection and deep questioning that reflects the spiritual side of an individual is encouraged, and even stressed, in holistic education whereas it is rejected and even feared in traditional schools. “Ultimately, a spiritual worldview is a *reverence for life*, an attitude of wonder and awe in the face of the transcendent source of our being” (Miller, 1990, p. 154). Even though the common connotation given to spirituality is that it is a religious act, it can be seen in holistic education as purely an inner reflection and not religious at all.

Holistic education is not concerned with the problems associated with church/state separation, because the spirit is an essential and central characteristic to holistic education. Clark (1991b), a holistic educator who stresses the spiritual nature of education states, “I affirm that holistic education is fundamentally spiritual. Indeed, I have concluded that any search for wholeness, regardless its form, is a spiritual search” (p. 61). However, this is not to say that spirituality is simply a religious act or behavior; it can be a personal reflection or connection to the world or topic they are studying. This personal connection, or spiritual connection, is central to holistic education because it is this connection that signifies true understanding in a holistic context.

Stressing the importance of the spirit in holistic education, Miller (1988) states that “the highest level of intuition is the spiritual. Here intuition is independent from feelings, thoughts, and sensations” (p. 76). In this instance, intuition is knowing without

restriction. Within a holistic educational setting, the concept of intuition goes beyond the simple learning of a topic or subject because “at the spiritual level, intuition moves beyond dualism to experience unity directly” (Miller, 1988, p. 76). Spiritual-level intuition is based on being able to fully understand the topic being studied beyond the simple mental range; it is being able to comprehend the topic on physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual levels.

Within the context of holistic education, “intuition is a direct knowing” (Miller, 1988, p. 74). Since intuition is direct knowing, it is much more than simply being aware of a topic or idea and is more likely to be involved with a student who is learning holistically. True intuition actually goes much further than direct knowing. Miller (1998) states that “intuition involves direct knowing and occurs at different levels – physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual. Intuition needs to be integrated into the classroom because it can enhance the student’s thinking, particularly creative problem-solving” (p. 86). Creativity and problem-solving are ideas central to holistic education. Holistic education seeks to develop creativity and problem-solving in students.

According to Miller (1988), “there is some evidence that intuition is integral to creativity” (p. 77). The use of intuition would allow a student the ability to creatively solve problems. Holistic educators address the intuition of a student because intuition is an important part of creative problem solving and problem solving is a concept that is central to the educational process of the student.

To educate the whole child, holistic education has the flexibility to use a multitude of techniques to educate children. Of course this is not to say there are any prescribed methods that an educator in a holistic school must follow. According to

Gibson and Peterson (2001) a holistic curriculum will have its “pedagogy and content rooted in democracy” (p. 104). That is one of the attractions of holistic education; it is democratic, child-centered and does not have any agreed-upon, predetermined teaching style.

A child-centered curriculum intrinsically places value on the child, because they are seen as a valued contributor to their own educational process. This empowers the student and gives them ownership over their own education. “The participative democratic process is fundamental to holistic education. This means that there is full participation in the various levels of decision making by those most affected by the particular decisions” (Clark, 1993, p. 85). It creates a sense of value within the student because the students themselves are in control of their own education. Whereas this sense of empowerment and ownership is a vital part of holistic education, this very same sense of empowerment and ownership are not something that is encouraged or even allowed in traditional education.

One of the ideas in a child-centered curriculum is that of group work and cooperative learning. When students work on projects together, they not only learn the material, they also learn how to work successfully with other people. Noddings (1995) believes that students should work cooperatively in schools by saying “in schools, students should be encouraged to work together, to help one another – not just to improve academic performance” (p. 143). While Noddings does not spell out a specific curricular goal, she does believe in the integration of students and cooperative learning, which are both central to a holistic environment and therefore central to holistic education.

Connections in the Curriculum

The second major theme central to holistic education is that within the curriculum, all things are interconnected and are specifically addressed as such. This idea demonstrates the value of finding a better educational system. Holistic educational philosophy, with its fully integrated and interconnected curriculum, is a progressive form of education that addresses real-world situations. Turner (2000) describes a situation where simple testing, as done in a traditional school, would not meet the needs of a holistic student when he writes “success in school work is not viewed as a sufficient test of practical merit, but must be supplemented by a test in the world of practical affairs” (p. 31). Holistic educators want to be practical in their applications because they feel this is the best way to help all students succeed.

Because holistic educators believe all knowledge is interconnected, it should be addressed as such in a holistic curriculum. This is to say that within holistic educational philosophy, the best way for learning to take place is by connecting a topic to everything else. Clark (1991b) writes that “holistic education is based on the assumption that, at some fundamental level, ‘everything is connected to everything else.’ If this is valid, then it follows that nothing can be truly understood apart from this global context” (p. 55). Students live in a world where everything is connected. Examples such as jobs, work, and home are all facets of life that need to be seen as they truly are, which is a part of a greater whole of the global context. To understand where they lie in this global context, one must first understand the entire global context. Holistic education seeks, through an integrated curriculum, to do just that.

The integration of subjects and ideas in holistic education is done without the integration being contrived and meaningless. This idea is fundamental and vital for an education to be truly holistic, because holistic education “recognises that all knowledge is created within a cultural context and that the ‘facts’ are seldom more than shared points of view. It encourages the transfer of learning across academic disciplines” (NEAT, 2001, p. 1). This learning transfer across the traditional academic disciplines is something that is inherent and natural for holistic education and not natural in traditional education.

Another form of integration holistic education stresses, is educators “have a range of teaching and learning practices that address multiple ways of thinking and knowing” (NEAT, 2001, p. 1). This can be integration of teaching styles. Holistic educators cannot simply teach in the standard teacher-centered traditional way. Because holistic education has no set curriculum and allows students the power of self-determination within their education, a teacher has to be able to adapt to the educational needs of students.

Different student projects or assignments will call for a different educational approach by the holistic educator. Since all students do not think, learn, or react in exactly the same way, the demands placed on holistic educators include being prepared to address a variety of thinking and learning styles.

To put it simply, holistic educators believe “education should be inquiry driven, interdisciplinary and integrated, and based on explicit assumptions of interconnectedness, wholeness and multiple ways of being” (NEAT, 2001, p. 1). This is why holistic education requires, and fulfills, all of these values within its framework. It integrates all knowledge and tries to help form a whole and complete individual out of a student. One

example how holistic education helps create a whole individual is in its teaching methods. Because there is no set or predetermined approach to holistic teaching, it allows teachers the freedom to discover what techniques work best for their classes and individual students.

The purpose of this different educational approach is to attempt to build a better person, by building a better student. One of the ways to build a better student is to attempt to train them to think in a different way, which holistic education attempts to do by recognizing and addressing the concept of multiple intelligences. Holistic educator Cathey (2000) describes holistic schools as places that “provides opportunities for children’s multiple intelligences to emerge” (p. 1).

The concept of multiple intelligences is based on the idea that within each individual person there are many different areas of learning, knowledge, and abilities. Addressing the multiple intelligences of students is vital to holistic education. To address this, Cathey (2000) states that “one aspect of holistic education is our commitment to providing children a wide variety of learning experiences that tap their multiple ways of learning” (p. 1). An example is that while some people are very gifted in mathematics, demonstrating a high level of intelligence in that area, they might be very poor verbally, demonstrating a low level of intelligence in that area. Holistic education will try to address this person’s low level of verbal ability while allowing them to obtain their fullest potential in their strong area, in this case, mathematics. It has been “determined that our traditional focus on linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence is too narrow. There exist other important intelligences that have previously gone unrecognized by creators of standardized tests” (Flake, 1993 p. 38). In a traditional school, a person could be seen as

a low achiever simply because of a low verbal ability. Because of this one weak area, the person would not be allowed to fulfill their full potential even though they may have high abilities in other areas.

This demonstrates how traditional education has a limited view of students and their abilities. Holistic educators believe traditional education does not do what true education is supposed to do or

in other words, the essential social function of the school is not only to find out whether a pupil has learned a definite part of a textbook or not; but through all its examinations and moral supervision to discover, in the first place, which of the pupils are talented and which are not; what ability every pupil has and in what degree (Sorokin, 2000, p. 20).

Holistic educators believe that holistic education is best equipped to discover the best area of ability in students. A student-centered curriculum, which is a primary component of holistic education, and is usually not a factor in traditional education, is best suited to bring out the best in students. Also, because holistic education allows students to explore areas of the world where they are most interested, and to explore them holistically, it is best suited to discover students' hidden talents.

Holistic educators reject a traditional approach to teaching with its independent courses and believe all things should be interconnected within a holistic curriculum. They do this to give students a better education. Holistic educators believe its student-centered curriculum would help students develop their natural motivation and initiative and, in turn, help their students gain a better knowledge base, or as Turner (2000) states it, "schooling is presented as an opportunity, and making use of it depends primarily on

the student's own initiative and enterprise" (p. 28). Holistic educators believe that traditional education, by its fragmented nature does not allow for students to fully develop their own initiative and enterprise. Traditional education, with its teacher-centered approach and fragmented curriculum, does not give students the education they need to live a successful life in our world today.

Transforming Student Thinking

The third major theme in holistic education is that holistic education uses the integrated curriculum to transform student thinking from fragmented thoughts that do not understand the wholeness and interconnectedness of the world into a caring connected self-aware person. Even within holistic education there is much more to education than a student following along a simple curriculum. All aspects of a student's schooling makes up their education. Holistic education acknowledges and incorporates this into its philosophy. Holistic education uses its philosophical approach of an integrated curriculum to create a new way of thinking within its students.

One of the ways holistic education seeks to transform student thinking is by allowing schools and educators the freedom to construct their curriculum as they think it is most appropriate for their particular classes. One of the changes that is a departure from traditional education is allowing, and even stressing, that students work in groups. The importance of group work is addressed by holistic educators because they "emphasize the need for community, cooperation, and common values" (Miller, 1990, p. 156). Working in group situations helps teach the students not only a different way to

learn, but also cooperation with other people. Cooperation and group work are components of integration used by holistic educators.

The idea of integration within holistic education goes much further than simply putting two subjects together in a single class. It can start there, but can also go so far as to incorporate every subject, as seen by traditional education, into a single comprehensive topical lesson that can take an extended amount of time to fully explore. Integration can also mean the combining of grade levels, as seen by traditional education, into a single cohesive group to study a topic. Integration can also be combining a class into various groups so the topics can be examined by the group instead of individually. This type of integration helps the students learn more than the just the topic being studied; they learn cooperation. While students are learning how to work with others, they are also learning about the people with whom they are working and about their connections to those people. When students understand each other better, they are more likely to be open-minded, caring, and compassionate people themselves.

The idea of group learning in holistic education is also expressed in its cooperative learning techniques. “In cooperative learning, students work with each other to accomplish a shared or common goal” (NEAT, 2001, p. 4). Students work together on a topic. They exchange ideas and information. They cooperate on distributing responsibilities for whatever project they are exploring as well as any detail of what needs to be covered. It is a group building process as much as it is a process of information gathering. Group building is a cooperative process, which is opposed to segregation because “segregation offends the sense of fairness” (Turner, 2000, p. 28), and being fair by addressing the needs of all students is an important part of holistic

education. Cooperative learning can also have students working on individual projects, but stressing that the students use a free exchange of ideas when another student finds information, or a resource, or anything that can help with a project.

These ideas of integration are rarely, if ever, expressed or developed in traditional education, which sees and approaches everything in an independent and fragmented way. Holistic educational philosophy stresses “shifting our attention from parts to the whole, from objects to relationships, from structures to processes, from hierarchies to networks. It also includes shifts of emphasis from the rational to the intuitive, from analysis to synthesis, from linear to non-linear thinking” (NEAT, 2001, p. 3). Because holistic educators seek to develop these concepts fully, it is also seeking to develop a better and more well-rounded person, at least according to its standards.

Holistic educational philosophy seeks to transform, not only what its students do in class, but also the way these students think about themselves and the world. This is described by Clark (1991b) when he states that “the ultimate purpose of holistic education is to transform the way we look at ourselves and our relationships to the world from a fragmented to an integrative perspective” (p. 56). Holistic education uses its integrated philosophy to achieve this transformation of student thoughts. With cooperative learning and group-building techniques, holistic education continues to build a different educational pattern and belief system within students.

Because of its completely unique philosophical approach to education, holistic education seeks to distinguish itself, and be acknowledged as such, from other forms of education. The ability of holistic educators to transform student thinking will give their students the ability to see the world as a whole, and make a positive impact on that world.

Clark (1991b) believes in the importance of transforming student thinking because “at the fundamental level, holistic education is an overshadowing philosophy of life. Implicit in this philosophy is that holistic education has the potential for transforming the world” (p. 61). The ideas of integration and transformation of knowledge are all intertwined and fundamental parts of this philosophy of education. Holistic education wants students to realize the interconnectedness of their world, to see things in a holistic manner, not fragmented. The philosophy of holistic education desires students to acknowledge this wholeness and be aware of it in their daily lives.

Holistic educators have to be aware of the previous training of students. “The shift from the parts to the whole is not easy because we have all been conditioned by our upbringing, our education, to think in terms of parts” (NEAT, 2001, p. 5). This training, from traditional education, has been in fragmented educational pieces. Each course is an entity all to itself, separated from all other courses or subjects. As its name suggests, the holistic educators view everything as connected to everything else. Practitioners of this philosophy know that “holistic education reflects an attitude, a philosophy, a worldview, that challenges the fragmented, reductionist, mechanistic, nationalistic assumptions of mainstream culture and education” (Clark, 1991b, p. 55). The philosophy of holistic education disagrees with the fragmentation of traditional education.

Holistic educational philosophy seeks to address caring and compassion while it educates the whole student. Addressing care and compassion is not stressed in traditional education which “stress(es) the basics or thinking skills, but caring and compassion are rarely addressed” (Miller, 1988, p. 2). This is another way holistic education attempts to transform students’ thinking. By simply acknowledging the spirit of the child, holistic

education acknowledges there is more to a student than their mind and body. It is the emotional nature of a student, something that can be addressed in the spirit, that holistic education educates to be caring and compassionate. Because holistic education has the freedom to address the ideas of caring, compassion, and the spirit, it seeks to have students form a different and unique perspective compared to traditional education. Since traditional education does not address the spirit of a student, it is very limited in what it can do to develop compassion in a student.

Integrated Curriculum

The use of an integrated curriculum is a central theme to the implementation of holistic education. Without integration, the three common ideas in holistic education cannot be accomplished. Holistic educators believe that connections need to be made in the curriculum and one of the ways to do this is by using an integrated curriculum.

Within a holistic school all subject areas are integrated together. This would not only include subjects like science and math, but also areas like physical education. Miller (1988) writes that, “the holistic curriculum explores the relationship between mind and body so the student senses the connection between the two. The relationship can be explored by movement, dance and yoga” (p. 73). Subjects like yoga or dance go far beyond simple physical exercise. They incorporate mental concentration and knowledge, as well as their physical movements. When a student masters these areas, they have mastered much more than a simple physical routine. Their minds and bodies have been challenged and they have successfully achieved the goal of understanding and learning through an integrated, holistic course.

“A current trend in schools has been the promotion of interdisciplinary curricula” (Richberg & Nelson, 1997, p. 85). Integrated or interdisciplinary curricula is designed to increase student learning and retention of material. An integrated curriculum can also be a curriculum that combines two or more subject areas to create one course or cover an educational theme (Beane, 1997). For example, a topical unit on castles, exploring where castles were located, how they affected local economies, how they were built, and what type of people lived in them, etc., represents an integrated unit that combines many subjects that would traditionally be taught in separate courses.

Holistic schools use an integrated curriculum as a part of their philosophy. One of the benefits of an integrated curriculum is that, by its design, it assists teachers in keeping their students engaged in classroom activities and learning. Also, integrated and holistic lessons can be adjusted to meet the many different learning styles of students. Secondary school educator Dykman (1997) researched an integrated curriculum. In her report on integrated lessons, many of the students who were successful were not only the students who had previously shown academic promise, but also “the very kids who didn’t have the basics” (p. 25). This is evidence that all students can benefit from an integrated or holistic approach to education. Dykman (1997) goes on to state the integrated lessons were highly successful because “the kids were so involved that they couldn’t help but learn” (p. 25).

Holistic education stresses the flexibility an integrated curricula can have. This was addressed by a school administrator when he stated “give the teachers the freedom to experiment and don’t get upset if something doesn’t work” (Anonymous, 1997, p. 23). This freedom allows holistic educators to adjust their integrated lessons to continue with lesson styles that work well with their students or change the ones that do not. It also allows holistic educators the freedom

to adjust the lessons for whatever learning style might work best with the integrated topic being studied. This freedom encourages students to be learners that are actively involved in their lessons, which increases their ability to learn from those integrated lessons.

Beane (1997) states students gain knowledge easier in an integrated curriculum, especially when compared to a traditional fragmented curriculum. The integration of knowledge is advocated in holistic schools primarily because it is argued that it makes all knowledge more accessible and more meaningful to the student by taking it away from separate subject areas and placing it in holistic contexts that make more connections for students. As evidenced by these authors, a growing body of research suggests that such ‘contextualizing’ of knowledge, through curriculum integration, makes it more accessible to students (Beane, 1997).

Holistic education, by using an integrated curriculum, is an educational philosophy that minimizes instruction in isolated academic disciplines by combining goals and objectives from a variety of areas into one cohesive unit or topic. Reisberg (1998) stresses the importance of integration because “teachers using integrated curriculum may select a subject for instruction and include related topics from other areas in the unit plan” (p. 272). More research into holistic education also demonstrates how an integrated curriculum is important for creating diversity in the potential learning strategies that can be used by schools. Research suggests that a holistic approach to education can create better ways of learning.

Another benefit to a holistic philosophy of education is its openness to different ideas and interpretations. This openness creates a diverse educational climate and “diversity in our schools and classrooms and the challenge of high standards for all students contribute to the need for an integrated, constructivist approach that does not fail our students” (Harris & Alexander, 1998, p. 115). This type of diversity would create a classroom where students of all learning styles,

backgrounds and abilities can successfully learn the material in the holistic topic. Holistic education realizes and appreciates that different students learn better by using a variety of learning styles, such as reading the material, hearing the material, or by a hands-on approach (Harris & Alexander, 1998, p. 115). The creation of a diverse learning climate is an essential part of holistic education.

Students who learn in a variety of ways could be successful in a holistic school because it caters to multiple learning styles. Holistic education allows for all subjects to be taught using multiple approaches. This approach gives educators more opportunities in addressing different learning styles so all students have the potential to better understand the material because “instinctively, we know we must focus on the needs of the individual learners, starting where the learners are and helping them to progress as far as they are able” (Richberg & Nelson, 1998, p. 85).

Holistic Language

Holistic educators demonstrate that their philosophy is an improvement over the philosophy of traditional education, some of the concepts they address, and the language they use to address them. An example of the power of particular words within the language of holistic education is the study of ‘literacy.’ The study of literacy is a single, integrated topical study of all concepts of reading, writing, comprehension, etc. The idea of this type of integration is considered a major part of the curriculum of holistic education. This is a much different approach to reading, writing, etc. than that of traditional education.

Traditional public schools do not generally study literacy. They study separate and fragmented courses such as reading and writing, which are also commonly referred to as literature and grammar. There is a subtle, but major difference between these uses of language. Mead (1934) states that “it is important to recognize that that to which the word refers is something that can lie in the experience of the individual without the use of language itself. Language does pick out and organize this content in experience. It is an implement for that purpose” (p. 13). In a traditional school, which uses a traditional educational language, classes and subjects are fragmented into individual courses. These courses are isolated into these single subject areas and not integrated into a common course.

In a holistic philosophy of education, these courses are melded into a single area of curriculum called, as in this example, literacy. This conveys meanings to the students at several different levels. Just having a single course dedicated to this area of study informs the students, and others, of the holistic philosophy of the school. It demonstrates that the traditional areas of the curriculum, which were held in different classes are actually very connected and can, and, according to holistic educators, should be learned in an integrated manner.

HOLISTIC CRITIQUE OF TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

Prior to examining the literature base of Integrated Thematic Instruction, this section is dedicated to a critique of traditional education. Holistic education is critical and finds fault with much of traditional education, and uses this critique to establish some

of the major components of the holistic educational philosophy. One must examine that critique to determine if Integrated Thematic Instruction has any of the same critiques of traditional education or commonalities with traditional education.

A recent study of traditional schools by holistic educators discovered many problems in a traditional school's ability to give a student a quality education.

We were concerned with several continuing facts of schooling: (1) lack of connections with families and communities; (2) ongoing instructional strategies based on disjointed, purposeless, boring instruction that is disconnected from the real lives and family and community experience of students; and (3) the need for democratic processes of decision-making in schools that empower students, families, teachers, and other school staff. However, we have also been concerned about the lack of explicit attention to two major additional dimensions of schooling: (4) the ongoing segregation of students with different learning styles and abilities into special programs for students with disabilities, at risk, gifted, and limited English speaking; and (5) the lack of attention to the social and political context of schooling—the increasing inequality in schools and communities, pressures for standardized testing that separate students, families, whole communities, and educational workers – by race, socio-economic status, and ability” (Gibson & Peterson, 2001, p. 103 – 104).

These problems with traditional education are the same ones that holistic educators have been pointing out for years.

The answer to one simple question describes the philosophy of a teacher or school: “what do I want the students to learn?” The way the teacher answers this question

reflects his or her assumptions about the nature of learning, and obviously will have a significant impact on both what is taught and how it is taught” (Clark, 1991c, p. 21). In a holistic school a teacher would get a student’s input on their learning and use a broad approach to the learning trying to get the student to use the higher level thinking skills they naturally possess. A traditional teacher would determine exactly what and how the students would be required to learn, not allowing the students any choice in the process.

American schools follow a variety of models and philosophical backgrounds, one of which is holistic education. Holistic educators oppose traditional philosophies of education because they believe traditional public schools are not educating children to their fullest potential. Botstein (2001) describes this belief: “the comprehensive high school created an impersonal instrument of education, capable of sustaining mediocrity in learning. Although it was designed to make excellence efficient and widespread, it has proven incapable of training adolescents to value learning, achieve high standards and act with confidence as young adults” (p. 1). So, to educate America’s children to their fullest potential, holistic educators try to do what traditional education has failed to do.

In a traditional school, knowledge is measured by tests. Clark (1991c) believes that traditional educators “have created an elaborate system of testing based almost entirely on those learnings that can be demonstrated and quantified” (p. 21). These tests and measures have a controlling effect on schools by predetermining exactly what information teachers will need to address in their subjects and “in so doing, we have reduced concepts like understand, know, appreciate, enjoy, and believe into measurable behaviors like write, recite, identify, list, compare and contrast” (Clark, 1991c, p. 21). The tests and measures eliminate anything that cannot be categorized in a set of multiple-

choice questions or other easily quantifiable means.

The teacher-centered curricula of a traditional school is exemplified by the idea that the teacher holds all of the knowledge and the student is only to sit quietly and receive the knowledge. According to Sorokin (2000), the function of the school “was seen in ‘pouring’ into a student a definite amount of knowledge, and, to some extent, in shaping his behavior” (p. 20). This idea has the teacher at the center of the learning process. Holistic education, on the other hand, does not follow a teacher-centered concept. It places the student at the center of the learning process. The student is seen and valued as having knowledge prior to interaction with the teacher. The teacher, in holistic education, is to facilitate, not dictate, the learning and knowledge of his or her students.

Educators Hargis and Terhaar-Yonkers (1991), note that in a traditional school we provide the same curricula to all students at normative levels that are grouped in a classroom. The curricula are designed with no concern for the individual learner’s interest but are established for the means of chronological age groups over thirteen academic years. This is done in spite of the fact that the academic performance and readiness levels in any primary grade will range by more than 2 ½ years (p. 164).

The curriculum supplied by a traditional school is not designed to meet individual learner’s expectations. Most traditional schools have to answer to a rigid testing system that limits what the teachers can teach. Recent research has shown that “standardized testing is designed to crush the main message of any honest or worthy education: we can comprehend and transform our world” (Gibson & Peterson, 2001, p. 104). Traditional

schools are also limiting since the basic nature of traditional teaching is a teacher-centered system of education that greatly discounts the students' opinions and ideas.

It is as if we did not recognize the normal array of individual differences in learning ability that exists in every classroom. We readily accept differences in artistic, athletic, and musical talent. We also expect myriad differences in physical and personality traits. However, we seem to have a rigid, unyielding view of academic aptitudes and abilities, despite the wide variation in the same group of students as occurs with so many other traits and characteristics (p. 164).

Because traditional education tries to place all students in the same category, not allowing for individual differences, traditional education is essentially trying to create one type of student. Stoddard (1991) states that "all students are fed the same bland curriculum diet regardless of vast differences in gifts, talents, interests, and experiences. Teachers are required to do the impossible: Standardize students" (p. 220). This "bland curriculum diet" does not allow for individual students to express creativity because it forces them to follow a single predetermined guideline for any lesson that they might have to learn.

Stoddard (1991) believes that traditional educators' focus on the individual courses in a school's curriculum limits the ability of students to reach their full potential. "Because of our nation's preoccupation with curricula, education has evolved into a purposeless organization that emphasizes standardized achievement and 'minimum competence' over maximum achievement and the full development of individual potential" (p. 220).

Teachers and students are not allowed to stray from the predetermined curricula, which is a necessary part of traditional education.

Holistic educators recognize the importance of allowing students the freedom to explore multiple options when their original course of action is not producing results satisfactory to the student. Doris (1993) states “when children raise questions about the world around them and teachers encourage them to pursue understanding, we encourage further wonder as well” (p. 59). This idea is in opposition to the traditional educational idea of a curriculum that tries to homogenize its students. Holistic education allows and encourages students to express their creative thoughts. Holistic educators believe that freedom helps students develop into better learners and eventually more productive adults. When addressing a curriculum that allows students to be free and creative, as opposed to a traditional curriculum that does not allow freedom or creativity, Render, et al. (1991) state

that creativity, along with other facets of the human being, cannot be approached without attention to the whole organism. Classroom teachers need to modify their perceptions and move into new space. It will pay off in helping more and more students realize greater and greater potential (p. 241).

One example of a topic that is limited by traditional education is reading. Sherr (1991) points out that “a reading program directed toward the goal of cultural literacy emphasizes content: books, stories, poetry, essays. It cares more that all children receive the benefit of exposure to a common content, and less that reading experiences be adapted to individual students’ needs” (p. 152-153). Reading in traditional education is used to teach political agendas and cultural heritage.

However, in traditional education the subject of reading

does not go far enough, though, in considering either the experiences of the

student or the context of society. Cultural literacy commits teacher and children to arbitrary standards imposed on human experience in the past and in the present. It leaves little room for individual interpretation or for critical analysis of the historical, social, and political contexts of literature. Nor does it allow for the creative expression of the student's own life experience (Sherr, 1991, p. 153).

Reading is limited and controlled, as are all other subjects in traditional education. What the student wants and needs to read is not valued. What the student wants to do with the knowledge gained is also not valued. According to Sherr (1991), to a traditional educator "reading is a quantifiable experience: its value to the child is in the number of pages read or in the number of error-free worksheets completed. Such an approach clearly alienates the reader not only from what is read but also from his or her own interests – from the full context of the reader's life" (p. 153). Holistic education recognizes that reading cannot and should not be quantified. The quantifying of reading is a controlling and limiting action.

Another problem holistic educators see with traditional education is its emphasis on simple facts. Anderson (1991) states that "although most teachers acknowledge children's need for active learning, there remains an overemphasis on teaching and learning of facts" (p. 243). This over emphasis on facts can be directly attributed to the system of testing and the fact that "these facts are presented in isolation without clarifying the relationship of the individual elements to the whole, or underscoring their significance to every day life" (Anderson, 1991, p. 243). While holistic educators also are interested in students learning facts, these facts should be learned in concert with other ideas and in relation to the greater whole.

A traditional approach to education, by its very nature, also limits how much teachers can accommodate each individual student. Gang (1991) believes that “teachers then have a responsibility to help each child achieve his or her own potential. This can be accomplished in an atmosphere that fosters self-confidence and self-esteem, integrates academics with experience, and develops a sense of community among students and adults” (p. 84-85). A holistic approach to education allows teachers the freedom to meet these students’ needs.

According to holistic educators, traditional education is failing and short-changing students. The narrow curriculum not only limits what students can learn, but also does not prepare them for adulthood. Kessler (1993) describes this when he states that “a growing number of educators are recognizing that the pursuit of an exclusively academic education leaves students ill-prepared for future challenges both as individuals and as members of society. Academic performance itself, as well as self-esteem, character, and human relationships suffer when the education of the whole person is neglected” (p. 19). Traditional education neglects the whole person and therefore cannot give its students an education that prepares them for future challenges.

More evidence of the limiting nature of traditional education is that all models use tests, both teacher-developed and standardized, to determine if the student has successfully processed the information. Gibson and Peterson (2001) stress that “the emphasis on standardized testing is strengthening a focus towards standardized curriculum and more rote teaching methods” (p. 119). The traditional schools use of standardized tests has a standardizing, and therefore limiting, effect on the education its students receive.

Clark (1991b) believes “like all cultural systems, the foundation of holistic education consists of certain fundamental assumptions about the world” (p. 54). These assumptions are that the entirety of the world is connected. There is a wholeness in everything that transcends the separate thoughts, objects, and courses within a traditional education. Holistic schools recognize, acknowledge, and stress that they are a unique educational society.

Holistic education is intended to fill a void left by traditional education. NEAT, a holistic education organization, believes that “education for meaning is a quest for understanding and meaning. Its aim is to nurture healthy, whole, curious persons who can learn whatever they need to know in any new context” (NEAT, 2001, p. 1). Holistic education offers not only a different educational philosophy or approach, but also a way to change how students think. Holistic educators not only want to educate the whole child, but also to teach the child how to solve problems and how to address any situation in a suitable manner.

Holistic education is not like traditional education in any way. According to Sorokin (2000), traditional education has been “a kind of machinery for testing the abilities of the individuals and determining their social position” (p. 20). To be mechanistic is to be rigid and inflexible. Due to its student-centered curriculum, holistic education is extremely flexible. A student-centered curriculum does not allow for any mechanistic ideas or actions.

Even though education is supposed to help all students prepare for their future, a traditional school acts as a function of society that places people into their respective roles. Therefore, traditional education does not really help all students to be prepared.

“Education is thus more a selector, sorter, and allocator than it is a socializer” (Meyer, 1977, p. 59). It helps keep children of lower socioeconomic standing in their place as members of the lower classes. Schools, and in this case traditional education, perpetuate the social order (Bourdieu, 2000).

Heyns (1978) writes that “schooling is critical for the achievement of children from poorer backgrounds, while schooling for the relatively advantaged appears to be supplemental” (p. 50). Because traditional schools seem to do little more than supplement the learning of some students, there is a critical need to develop a form of education that will truly benefit all children. Holistic educators desire to improve education and to greatly increase the knowledge base of all students, including those from lower socioeconomic levels. By improving the educational nature of schools, holistic education would improve the entire educational system for American students.

Holistically Restructuring Education

Holistic educators argue the fragmented curriculum and subjects in traditional schools create fragmented learning and thinking. According to Clark (1991a) traditional education creates fragmentation in two ways, “one is the way the content is organized or structured, and the other is the nature of the content itself” (p. 31). Because the school day is arranged for separate and independent courses, the subjects themselves are divided into separate and individual units, which is a reason for fragmented thought.

Educational pioneer John Dewey was even opposed to the single subject curriculum that is used by traditional schools. According to Segall and Wilson (1998), he called for a “broad fields curriculum or fused curriculum” (p. 157), a curriculum that

integrated individual subjects into a single curriculum. It is a child-centered curriculum in which students would be “actively involved in what they learned, rather than be passive receptors of knowledge as they were in single-subject curriculum” (Segall & Wilson, 1998, p. 157). These ideas by Dewey are an early holistic educator attempting to improve traditional educational philosophy.

A fused or integrated curriculum is part of the holistic answer to a fragmented curriculum. Clark (1991b) states “the consequence of this fragmentation on our thinking and thus our behavior is personal, social, and global competition, conflict, confusion and exploitation” (p. 55). Students who come out of this type of school setting are not able to see the big picture. They have been trained into thinking that ideas and subjects are broken down into small, completely independent units instead of being part of a greater whole.

The structure of traditional schools, according to holistic educators, is rigid because it is based on a rigid scientific method. The scientific method in education presents a narrow view of learning and thus limits what students can and cannot do. Clark (1991c) explains that the scientific method is a “reductionist worldview [that] is explicitly taught in our schools and forms the conceptual framework for most social decisions” (p. 17). Not only does this way of teaching affect how students learn, but it also influences the way students view the world around them. Because it is a limiting method, or a method that reduces the amount of information that students can learn, it can go so far as to limit the abilities of students to interact in positive ways in social situations.

The scientific method being referred to here is the method that allows only one

answer to a question. Clark (1991c) describes the strategies of the scientific method as “fragmenting, linear, and sequential. Its empirical logic discounts intuition and value-based perceptions and forces us into an ‘either/or’ problem-solving and decision-making mode” (p. 17). The answer to any question has to be arrived upon by a rigid set of rules governing what is allowed and what is not. The scientific method is a system to control, instead of educate, children. In traditional education, “curriculum developers look to science and the scientific method to attain the control and universality needed to achieve their goals” (Brown, 1991, p. 10). Holistic educators believe students need more flexibility, not only in what they study, but also in how they study. This flexibility is not allowed by the scientific method and therefore, not allowed by traditional education.

Part of the reason traditional educators believe the scientific method, and other forms of controlling education, are necessary to education is that they believe children need to be taught to think. “Implicit in the current wisdom on teaching thinking skills is the assumption that children have to be taught the higher order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, critical thinking, problem solving, creative thinking, and decision making” (Clark, 1991c, p. 19).

Traditional educators seem to believe that not only do students need to be taught what to think, but also taught how to think. According to holistic educators such as Clark (1991c), this belief is simply not true. “Research has now reinforced what every parent has known intuitively: The process we call higher-level thinking is an innate capacity that begins to develop at an early age” (p. 20). Higher-level thinking is something all children are capable of and come by naturally. Clark (1991c) believes that traditional educators, sometimes termed behaviorists, do not fully address the potential of students

because “it seems evident that human learning is far more complex than the behaviorists recognized” (p. 22). A school needs to be able to address the needs of that higher-level thinking. Holistic educators believe that a holistic school can meet those needs more readily than a traditional school due to the very nature of each type of school.

“A holistic approach would redesign education from the bottom up. The foundation assumptions, the basic goals, the content of the curriculum, the design of the classroom and the school building, the respective roles of the learner, teacher, and administrator-all would be drastically changed” (Miller, 1991b, p. 7). Holistic educators are calling for a restoration of a high quality educational experience. “Although there is still intense pressure to repair, restructure, and shore up a crumbling system, there is a rapidly growing social consciousness that soon will reach the ‘critical mass’ and will usher in a new system of education” (Stoddard, 1993, p. 31). There is the hope that before the current traditional education system completely fails, society will demand, and act on the demand for a new educational system that will meet all of the needs of students.

Holistic education, if adopted, would represent a fundamental shift in American education because it empowers students to be actively involved in determining their education. Teachers would no longer need to be the center of power in a classroom. The emphasis of learning would shift from the teacher to the student. “This different emphasis undermines the traditionally authoritarian role of the teacher, administrator, policy maker, and textbook publisher,” states Miller (1991b). He suggests that, when considering a quality system of education, “we need to critically examine our culture and our social institutions to determine whether these are contributing to - or hindering - a

nourishing learning environment for young people” (p. 7). Teachers and administrators would act as facilitators that are in place to support and guide a student’s education. Because schools are impacted by society, society must acknowledge the need for a wholesale change in education before it can take place. Society, and the community at large, must also recognize the value of this change and embrace it.

It must be recognized that the shift being called for is not like the previous educational movements. Miller (1991b) claims that “holistic educators are not speaking of piecemeal reforms, nor even of “restructuring,” as the term is currently used. They are speaking of a fundamental transformation of education” (p. 7). The previous educational reform movements merely shifted ideas around, but kept the same basic form and philosophy of teacher-centered and controlled education.

As the awareness of the limiting nature of traditional education grows, educators push for a shift toward holistic education. The shift toward a holistic philosophy “has resulted from the research in the nature of intelligence, thinking, and learning, which has thrown a new light on the vast area of human potential. The research challenges both the way that the educational system is structured and the way that teaching and learning are perceived to take place” (Clark, 1991c, p. 17). As research is conducted on learning, more and more evidence supports the need to shift toward a holistic educational approach. According to Clark, the research demonstrates the need for a shift away from the current traditional educational approach.

INTEGRATED THEMATIC INSTRUCTION

Using the guise of brain-based research, Integrated Thematic Instruction was developed in response to traditional education and is an educational philosophy very much in agreement with the previously established working definition of holistic education. According to Kovalik and Associates (2001),

ITI (Integrated Thematic Instruction) is a systemic model based on current brain research to guide comprehensive schoolwide reform. Reality based, it can provide the framework for orchestrating key aspects of a school or district plan for continuous improvement – professional development, curriculum development, selecting teaching strategies, assessing results, and involving families and the community (p. 1).

Ideas that have come out of the brain-based research are applied to the curriculum. It is the research on the fundamentals of how the brain works. Integrated Thematic Instruction attempts to use this latest research on the human brain to develop curriculum and schools that address the way humans learn. The research is helping educators understand how the brain learns, remembers, and processes information. Integrated Thematic Instruction uses this understanding to gear its curriculum to take advantage of the way the brain processes information. An example would be when topics and ideas are studied in a way that will increase a student's knowledge retention.

Interestingly, the findings of brain research, much like the ideas of holistic education, demonstrate the importance of not limiting education to simply the mind or cognitive aspects of a student. Kovalik and Olsen (2002) state that the brain “research

provides a very compelling endorsement of the power of collaboration to increase learning, improve the quality of products, and make work/learning environment more pleasant and productive” (p. 1.18). When different parts of the brain are engaged, there is a higher chance learning will take place. The more areas of the brain are engaged, the higher the chances of long-term memory learning (Kovalik & Olsen, 2002, p. 4.2). Therefore, incorporating physical activities, or other activities aside from the typical classroom learning, into the topics being studied increases the chances for knowledge to be gained and long-term learning. Integrated Thematic Instruction addresses learning in a variety of ways. It is an educational philosophy that believes the brain makes mental programs to process what we have learned to select a pattern and then take action (Kovalik & Olsen, 2002, p. 5.4).

The research shows that when multiple brain areas are engaged in the learning process, the chances of long-term memory retention are higher. Kovalik and Olsen (2002) believe that “the body and brain form an inseparable learning partnership. Each sends messages out to the other which alters the messages that are sent back” (p. 2.6). The best way to learn is to get multiple areas of the body and the brain actively involved in the learning process, which is commonly referred to as multiple intelligences. Some people learn by doing, some people learn by reading, some people learn by watching, but the more of these areas that one can engage in the learning process, the higher the opportunity for developing long-term memory.

The idea behind multiple intelligences, is that different people learn in different ways. Where some people are good in math, other people are better in reading. One

person is not necessarily ‘smarter’ than the other person, but each has an area of strength that needs to be emphasized.

Educators using Integrated Thematic Instruction realize the importance of addressing multiple intelligences of students. This idea is strengthened because in the past two decades our definition of intelligence has changed dramatically. We used to be told that intelligence was a singular, general characteristic – people were either across the board smart or not so smart. Of course, all of this was determined by a paper-pencil test that distilled human capability down to a single number, an intelligence quotient or IQ number (Kovalik & Olsen, 2002, p. 1.1). One of the major points of Integrated Thematic Instruction is to make content meaningful by addressing multiple intelligences and that there is not a single quantifiable number that should be used to determine the intelligence of a person. Different personality traits give different people different learning styles. Integrated Thematic Instruction addresses the multiple intelligences of students to ensure that all students can have a successful educational experience (Kovalik & Olsen, 2002).

To address the idea of multiple intelligences, Integrated Thematic Instruction addresses as many different learning styles as possible. The ultimate goal of Integrated Thematic Instruction is to give its students a “being there” experience. A “being there” experience engages all of the senses. Therefore, it can be seen that a “being there” experience also addresses multiple intelligences, in learning the topic at hand. It involves the body and the brain in the experience.

The bodybrain-compatible elements of the ITI (Integrated Thematic Instruction) model are the primary ways of translating brain research into action

in the classroom. These nine elements are: 1) absence of threat/nurturing reflective thinking, 2) meaningful content, 3) enriched environment, 4) adequate time, 5) immediate feedback, 6) movement, 7) choices, 8) collaboration, 9) mastery/application (Kovalik & Olsen, 2002, p. xiv).

Integrated Thematic Instruction addresses all these areas and, because of this, addresses the potentially different intelligences within the classroom. These body-brain elements are combined in Integrated Thematic Instruction schools to create a child-centered curriculum that gives all students the best learning experience.

Integrated Thematic Instruction can provide the framework for orchestrating key aspects of a school or district plan for continuous improvement – professional development, curriculum development, selecting teaching strategies, assessing results, and involving families and the community (Kovalik & Associates, 2001, p. 1).

When developing Integrated Thematic Instruction, Kovalik came up with an educational model that

is based on five basic principles from brain research: 1) Intelligence is a function of experience, 2) Learning is an inseparable partnership between body and brain, 3) There are multiple intelligences or ways of solving problems and/or producing products, 4) Learning is a two step process: step one – Making meaning through pattern seeking, step two – Developing a mental program for using what we understand and wiring it in to long-term memory, 5) Personality impacts learning and performance (Kovalik & Olsen, 2002, p. xiv).

By basing this educational philosophy on current brain research, Integrated Thematic Instruction is trying to use the latest and best techniques to help give students the best

opportunity to learn. All five of these principles are dedicated to increasing students' understanding of their schoolwork, whereas traditional education produces a "remarkable lack of transfer to long-term memory" (Kovalik & Olsen, 2002, p. 1.16). By catering to the strengths of the human brain, these techniques make learning more natural and productive.

According to Integrated Thematic Instruction there are 19 senses, instead of the traditional five. To fully engage all 19 senses one must make learning meaningful and unforgettable. A "being there" experience engages all 19 senses so students completely understand the topic at hand. "Study grounded in being there experiences immerses students in the real world application of skills" (Kovalik & Associates, 2001, p. 2). If the students can actually experience something, instead of simply reading or hearing about it, they will have all of their senses engaged, which will lead to a more complete understanding of the topic being presented (Susan Kovalik & Associates, 2001).

The major focus of "being there" is to make the topic real and important to the students. In doing this "our own common sense and experience, personal and professional, tell us that practice solving real problems and creating products of value in the real world does increase the capacity to do so" (Kovalik & Olsen, 2002, p.1.1). When students realize the value of the topic being studied and when they see how it can directly affect their lives, they will be more likely to become deeply involved in the study and gain a better understanding of the topic.

A "being there" experience can actually involve the students being on a location that is related to the topic they are studying.

Community locations or events are the starting point for curriculum integration.

Research shows that when students make an in-depth study of a location – we call it a being there experience – the exploration reveals important understandings from the core subjects and the need to master essential skills (Kovalik & Associates, 2001, p. 1).

An example would be the study of fish and having the class visit an aquarium, or the ocean, or a local lake, or any of a myriad of possible locations that corresponds to the topic of fish.

When students are studying finance for example, a “being there” experience can be a real-world experience. In this case it could be the students working with a financial advisor who has volunteered his or her time. The advisor could help the students establish mock stock portfolios and aid the students as they follow their stocks. The students could research the history of their companies and the items that they produce. Students “see how mathematics plays a key role in sales and in tracking important trends. They see how people use oral and written communication skills to make things happen” (Kovalik & Associates, 2001, p. 2). Using this “being there” experience, students would be learning marketing, math, history, and many other subjects all under the topic of finance.

A “being there” experience has to be centered around a topic. It cannot be a random event the teacher decides to explore. Therefore, teachers of Integrated Thematic Instruction incorporate all aspects of learning around a single theme. “With learning expectations in mind, the teacher selects an organizing concept – a big Idea – that is important and complex enough to anchor in a yearlong theme” (Kovalik & Associates,

2001, p. 1). The use of thematic instruction is central to Integrated Thematic Instruction being properly implemented in a school.

When using a thematic approach to education and giving the students a “being there” experience, students will not only have the opportunity for individual study, but also the opportunity for group work. Kovalik and Associates (2001) believe that “collaboration makes learning enjoyable and exciting. Students realize that they are learning how their school and larger community work” (p. 2). This collaboration is students working together and learning from each other, as well as learning from the topic they are studying and the teacher who is facilitating the topic.

By exploring entire topics, instead of just singular subjects, and by relating those topics to the real world, students will have a better learning experience and a deeper knowledge base. While studying at a school that practices Integrated Thematic Instruction, “students make meaningful connections throughout the year that lead to mastery of standards and responsible, informed citizenship” (Kovalik & Associates, 2001, p. 1). Students understand how they connect to their class work and also how they connect to the outside world.

Teachers who are involved with Integrated Thematic Instruction are specially trained to properly use its techniques in the classroom, such as learning how to use a topical approach to education instead of individualized courses. This non-traditional educational philosophy is not something that is simply dropped in a teacher’s lap. Within Integrated Thematic Instruction, “teachers and schools share a common goal of nurturing responsible citizens – an ultimate purpose for student learning” (Kovalik & Associates, 2001, p. 1). To be properly trained, they must also understand the ultimate goals and

desired outcomes for Integrated Thematic Instruction. There are two main goals in Integrated Thematic Instruction: “1) to create participating citizens, willing and able to engage in our democratic processes to improve life now and for future generations, 2) to help educators translate current brain research into practical strategies for the classroom and schoolwide” (Kovalik & Olsen, 2002, p. xiii).

The effort that teachers put into understanding and accepting this philosophy comes across in their delivery of their materials in class. Kovalik and Associates (2001) believe that “because of the lifelong guidelines and LIFESKILLS [*sic*], and the effort that teachers put into their work, students immediately recognize that they are a part of a community of learners who care about and respect each other” (p. 2). Students will recognize the importance of this educational philosophy partially due to the effort they perceive their teachers are giving. Students will also understand that this approach is not a typical traditional approach to education and they will have a better educational experience because of it.

Teachers of Integrated Thematic Instruction, because of their special training in the techniques of Integrated Thematic Instruction, know how to get their students engaged in the topics they are studying. They use the concept of a “being there” experience to make the topic relevant to the students. Kovalik and Associates (2001) describe how teachers of Integrated Thematic Instruction

show students how they will put new skills to use as they learn. For example, students see how to write a correct business letter to request information about a topic or permission to make a presentation before the city council. When students

need to learn a skill to use it for something important to them personally, they remember the skill and can apply it again (p. 2).

Teachers of Integrated Thematic Instruction not only make the topics relevant to their students, but they also get the students involved in the educational process.

Teachers who practice Integrated Thematic Instruction “present skill instruction to capture interest and ‘hook’ students emotionally” (Kovalik & Associates, 2001, p. 2). If a teacher can get the students to emotionally invest themselves, then those students will put more effort into their education and receive more out of their education.

According to the creator of Integrated Thematic Instruction, when properly implemented, Integrated Thematic Instruction is a wholesale reform of education. “Understanding the application of the emerging biology of learning is the keystone to meaningful, systemic school district change” (Kovalik & Associates, 2003, p. 1). A school cannot claim to implement Integrated Thematic Instruction and also claim to be a traditional school. By introducing Integrated Thematic Instruction as its curriculum, a school is shifting away from the rigid fragmented thought of a traditional school and moving toward a connected non-traditional philosophy.

Philosophy of Thoreau Middle School

To be able to determine if the observed school matches the holistic criteria, we must first understand the philosophical approach it takes in educating children. Thoreau Middle School uses multiple approaches to make up its educational philosophy. Thoreau Middle School uses two primary philosophical ideas, and multiple secondary

philosophical ideas in its approach, with each having its own specific purpose. The multiple approaches all concentrate on a different area of the school philosophy and can work symbiotically to create a high-quality educational experience for the students.

Thoreau Middle School is part of the Tulsa Public School system in Tulsa Oklahoma. However, it practices a non-traditional philosophy: “the faculty and staff at Thoreau are dedicated to nurturing the physical, intellectual, emotional and social needs of today’s adolescents” (Tulsa Public Schools, 2001, p. 2). A traditional school would not concern itself with the emotional or social needs of its students. But the faculty and staff at Thoreau Middle School prides itself on giving its students a complete and well-rounded education, not a limited one as in traditional schools.

Another way Thoreau Middle School differentiates itself from a traditional school is by its curriculum. The school uses a variety of techniques that are non-traditional in philosophy such as a “purposeful exploration and unlimited levels of inquiry are directed by a team teaching approach using concepts, skills, community resources, field trips, activities and Integrated Thematic Instruction strategies for each grade level” (Tulsa Public Schools, 2001, p. 2). Team teaching and field trips are ideas traditional schools also use, but when combined with the non-traditional philosophical approaches of the school, they take on a whole new meaning for students.

The major philosophy of Thoreau Middle School is Integrated Thematic Instruction, which has been previously explored. The second philosophy that needs to be addressed is the idea of Tribes. Tribes is a philosophy that corresponds with and adds to the strengths of Integrated Thematic Instruction. Tribes is designed to be a complimentary system to Integrated Thematic Instruction. All students at Thoreau

Middle School participate in a Tribe. The students meet in their Tribes as the first activity of the school day. The Tribes.com (2002) website describes the “purpose of the Tribes process is to assure the healthy development of every child so each one has the knowledge, skills and resiliency to be successful in a rapidly changing world” (p. 1). At Thoreau Middle School, Tribes are much more than a ‘homeroom’ arrangement, much more than a simple gathering of students and teachers at the beginning of the day. “The TRIBE agreements of attentive listening, no put-downs, showing mutual respect and appreciation, and the right to pass permeate every aspect of the school day” at Thoreau Middle School (Tulsa Public Schools, 2001, p. 2).

The students discuss their school situations from positive to negative. It is an environment where students are safe to express concerns about their classwork and concerns about situations with other students. The environment is safe because “the TRIBES [*sic*] program creates a positive, safe climate where students learn appropriate life skills and the basics of using a democratic group process” (Tulsa Public Schools, 2001, p. 2). It is designed to allow students the time and place to work out problems in a positive manner before the school day.

The positive and safe environment, created by the use of Tribes, is one way that Thoreau Middle School goes about giving its students an increased opportunity to be successful in school. “Students achieve because they: feel included and appreciated by peers and teachers, are respected for their different abilities, cultures, gender, interests and dreams, are actively involved in their own learning, have positive expectations from others that they will succeed” (Tribes.com, 2002, p. 1). When a student begins his or her day with a positive experience, interacting with both students and teachers, they are more

likely to continue to have a positive experience throughout the remainder of their school day. The major curricular theme and central focus of the educational philosophy, however, is Integrated Thematic Instruction.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The research method used in this study was case study. Case study is a form of research which, despite being tied to a unique and limited situation, can be used for a comprehensive study. This comprehensive study can be a model for generalization of the specific outcomes to the greater whole. The case study examines a phenomenon specifically set apart in a particular manner, in this case, a study of Integrated Thematic Instruction in action. The researcher used this case study to generalize the specific outcomes to a greater whole, to determine if Integrated Thematic Instruction in action at the laboratory school represents a holistic philosophy of education.

Merriam (1998) defines case study as “an intensive holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (p. 27). A case study may be qualitative or quantitative. This study will be qualitative in nature because the researcher seeks understanding of the educational philosophy of Integrated Thematic Instruction. According to Stake (1995), “a case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case” (p. xi). A single example, or case, is used as a generalized model of the topic being studied. Simply put, a case study is an in-depth investigation of a single unit such as an

individual, school, group, program, or organization. The first and primary requisite for a study to be deemed a case study, is it must be limited to the topic under investigation.

There must be a delineating factor in regards to the object being studied; the case is an individual entity. The researcher is focused on understanding a unique situation.

Because the researcher knows the case under investigation is a unique educational situation, he or she must progress with caution to properly and fully complete the study.

To be able to properly use case study, the researcher must specifically limit the individual research topic. Merriam (1998) states “the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case” (p. 27). Miles and Huberman (1994) describe a case as “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context” (p. 25). In this research study, the case is the examination of the philosophy of Integrated Thematic Instruction in action at a laboratory school. Thoreau Middle School, a local school that practices the educational philosophy of Integrated Thematic Instruction, will be used as the laboratory school in this study. Because the school is specifically labeled, as required by Merriam (1998), it is a unique and limited situation. The boundary of this particular case, as required by Miles and Huberman (1994), is that the study is of this philosophy at one specific school. The case to be investigated has been established.

BEGINNING A CASE STUDY

Yin (1993) believes to successfully complete a case study, a researcher must prepare extensively for the study. To be prepared to conduct the study, the researcher must first consider several questions such as:

How are you going to define your case? Are you doing a single or multiple-case study? What are you seeking to prove, conclude, or observe? How should you decide whom to interview and how long the interviews should be? What type of interview instrument, if any, should you use? And finally, what should you do with your notes and other material, when you are ready to ‘write up’ the case? (Yin, 1993, p. 43–44).

Once these questions have been considered, the next step of the study is to establish the framework of the case study.

The first step in preparing to establish the framework is defining the category of case study to be used. Merriam (1998) offers three categories of case study. They are descriptive, interpretive, and evaluative case studies. Merriam (1998) defines a descriptive case study as one that “presents a detailed account of the phenomenon under study (atheoretical)” (p. 38). The definition of interpretive case study is one that “contains rich, thick description used to develop conceptual categories or to illustrate, support or challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to data gathering” (Merriam, 1998, p. 38). The evaluative case study is defined as one that “involves description, explanation, and judgment, [which] is the final and ultimate act of evaluation” (Merriam, 1998, p. 39). As with the three types of case study established by Yin (1993), the researcher can use any of these forms for a specific study.

This study will be what Merriam (1998) would term a descriptive case study. “Descriptive cases require the investigator begin with a descriptive theory” (Tellis, 2003, p. 1). The descriptive theory in this case will be the description of Integrated Thematic Instruction from the literature review. The description from the literature will be used for

comparison to the on-site research findings. A literature base of holistic education and traditional education will also be established to use as a source of comparison for the on-site research results. The researcher will study the laboratory school as an example of a school that practices the philosophy of Integrated Thematic Instruction. The researcher will use a “thick description” (Guba and Lincoln, 1981, p. 376) of Integrated Thematic Instruction in action so educators can gain a better understanding of the nature of this educational philosophy.

The next step common with all categories of case study, is to develop the initial questions that focus the study. Using these questions, the researcher is also answering the question of what he or she wants to know, a vital question in any type of qualitative research. Another question that requires an answer is how he or she plans to get there? In other words, how does one frame the study?

FRAMING THE STUDY

According to Merriam (1998), initial sets of questions need to be answered to develop a successful study. The method by which these questions are answered demonstrates the theoretical framework for the study. This theoretical framework also assists in defining the research problem or problems. A theoretical framework is “the structure, the scaffolding, the frame of your study,” and “every study has one” (Merriam, 1998, p. 45) primarily because every study needs a theoretical framework to establish how it will be completed.

To successfully establish a framework for completing a study, Merriam (1998) recommends the researcher determine his or her personal disciplinary orientation. This

researcher will approach the study as an educator, because that is the researcher's educational and experiential background. According to Merriam (1998), the researcher must draw upon "concepts, terms, definitions, models, and theories of a particular literature base" (p. 46) to properly develop the research questions and conduct case study research. Drawing upon those items from a literature base will make the framework clear and assist in generating the specific research questions for the study. The literature base for this study is from the canon of literature related to holistic education and Integrated Thematic Instruction. Establishing the theoretical framework also assists in developing appropriate techniques for data collection and analysis. In addition, the particular requirements of a specific framework provide a solid guide for discovering and interpreting the findings of the study.

After the initial questions are determined, the next step is to generate the problem statement(s), the purpose statement(s), and the specific research questions for the study. The research questions will guide the study while reflecting the most significant factors as demonstrated in the problem statement(s) and purpose statement(s).

The data collection component is the next step in the study. Merriam (1998) defines 'data' as "nothing more than ordinary bits and pieces of information found in the environment. They can be concrete and measurable, as in class attendance, or invisible and difficult to measure, as in feelings" (p. 69). The choice of deciding what information should be considered data is strictly up to the researcher. Because the case study can also be a quantitative form of study, the data derived could be numerical. Because this study is qualitative in nature, the data was collected from observations and interviews. However, not all data collected in this study necessarily originated from these qualitative

situations. Various school documents were also used as valuable data. Merriam (1998) states a qualitative case study is “about asking, watching and reviewing” (p. 69). Data in this qualitative case study was collected from multiple sources.

Interviews and observations occurred when the most data could be gleaned from them. Occasionally, an observation could not be completed when scheduled, an interview took its place and when a scheduled interview could not be held, observations were substituted. Information from interviews helped in assessing observations or understanding a participants’ views on the events being observed. Observations played a key role in this research study. The review of relevant school documents was also important. All three techniques, interviewing, observations, and document review, contributed to triangulation, the use of multiple data sources to support of findings as they emerge. Triangulation strengthens the reliability of the study as well as the internal validity. Triangulation also allows for pieces of data that might have otherwise been overlooked to be revealed and added to the description of the study.

DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected in three ways: interviews, observations, and participant observations. The researcher interviewed a convenience sample of administrators, teachers, and students from the laboratory school. The interviews occurred during down time for the administrator, teacher, or student. The interviews took place on school grounds and consisted of approximately 12–15 guiding questions with probes and clarifying questions. The interview questions (see Appendix A and Appendix B) are open-ended. Each of the questions gave the participants ample room to expand upon

answers. The interview process allowed flexibility in the follow up questions and in the question sequence. The questions ranged from: “To what extent do your classes combine subject areas?” to “What does it mean to educate the whole child?” The interview questions from Appendix A covered a wide range because the focus of the study was to determine whether this was a holistic school environment. Many non-traditional educators and students do not have the opportunity to publicly discuss their educational philosophy. The participants interviewed in this study were able to express their experiences and give candid, thoughtful, and insightful answers regarding the educational philosophy of the school. The nature of the interview questions allowed the interviewer the freedom of investigating topics and questions determined by the participants.

Data were also collected through observations of educators and students in different situations across campus. Observations were conducted in a variety of educational settings at the school from classroom activities to physical education. They were completed without interference in the daily activities of any school personnel. The researcher observed educators and students in classroom situations and in a wide variety of other school environments, such as the playground. Students and educators were observed both in one-on-one interactions such as in the library, and in group interaction such as during physical education.

During these observations, the researcher was able to conduct multiple informal interviews in many different settings, including classrooms, the library, and at lunch. It is hoped that in many cases students and educators felt comfortable in a relaxed setting and therefore, spoke more freely. The informal interviews proceeded basically as normal conversations. The researcher allowed the students and educators to discuss whatever

topic they were comfortable talking about, but tried to direct the conversations to areas in which more information is needed (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

PATTERN MATCHING

As the data were gathered it was continuously examined for the emergence of patterns. Tellis (2003) describes the process of pattern-matching as a “major mode of analysis” (p. 1). Pattern matching is the process of examining data from differing sources to determine if there are repeated themes emerging from the data. This process allows the researcher to identify and focus on important themes or patterns and follow up on them. Matching patterns and closer examination of the data allows the researcher to adequately describe the events that take place in the case, which can lead to a better understanding of the case under study.

Because this is a descriptive case study, Tellis (2003) states that “the predicted pattern must be defined prior to data collection” (p. 1). Agreeing with the principle established by Tellis, another educator Garsen (2003) describes pattern matching as “the attempt of the case researcher to establish that a preponderance of cases are not inconsistent with each of the links in the theoretical model which drives the case study” (p. 1). In this case the predicted pattern or theoretical model, depending on which term an educator uses, is the description of the educational philosophy from the literature of Integrated Thematic Instruction. Soy (2003) states that the use of pattern matching “keeps investigators from reaching premature conclusions by requiring that investigators look at the data in many different ways” (p. 1). As patterns emerged and data were

analyzed, the description of Integrated Thematic Instruction became more complete, conclusions were reached and the final report was written.

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Regarding the critical issues of validity and reliability, Merriam (1998) believes this issue is addressed through the conduct of an ethical study. The investigator must convince the reader that all procedures were properly followed. Reliability is uniquely problematic in a qualitative study. Because a qualitative study, and in this specific instance, a case study, is an examination of a particular and specific experience, the research findings will be difficult to replicate. Rather than looking at reliability in the traditional sense, Guba and Lincoln (1985) suggested considering the “dependability” or “consistency” of the obtained results (p. 288). To ensure the dependability of the results, the researcher had a dependability audit done by outside examination.

Tellis (2003) states that “internal validity is enhanced when the patterns coincide” (p.1). When similar patterns emerge from multiple sources of the study, it supports the results of said patterns. When describing the internal validity of a case study, Soy (2003) agrees with Tellis because “when a pattern from one data type is corroborated by the evidence from another, the finding is stronger” (p. 1). Therefore, the researcher used triangulation to ensure and enhance the validity of the study. The researcher also used reflective participant observation in an effort to identify the most relevant dimensions of the study and to ensure the atypical did not become the focus of the study. Finally, the researcher invested sufficient time through prolonged engagement to ensure the validity

of the study. In addition to field activities, the researcher conducted member checks and did peer debriefing to ensure accuracy of the data.

The researcher ensured external validity, which is the generalization of the findings to other situations, by providing an adequate thick description outlining the context, time, and salient/relevant dimensions and relationships among those dimensions under investigation. Merriam (1998) suggests that the reader's understanding of the study is the key factor in determining any type of generalizability. The reader has to determine which part of the study, if any, applies to his or her own situation (Merriam, 1998).

THE FINAL REPORT

Once all the information had been gathered and analyzed, the researcher wrote the final report. This was a difficult task because the case study reports do not follow any standard form (Yin, 1993). The final report of case studies vary because each independent study will have a form that best fits its needs. Stake (1995) goes so far as to say that "a write-up can be organized any way that contributes to the reader's understanding of the case" (p. 122). Merriam (1998) agrees with Stake (1995): "there is no standard format for reporting qualitative research" (p. 27). The researcher and author of the report must make sure he or she has followed the proper procedures when conducting the investigation, and that way the uniqueness of the individual research study will be reflected in the final report.

CONCLUSIONS

Case study is a flexible form of research that can be used in a qualitative study such as the investigation of an educational philosophy to determine whether it is a holistic philosophy of education. Although there is no predetermined form for conducting a qualitative case study, as long as a researcher follows the general guidelines established by the previously mentioned authors, a successful study will be conducted.

Case study is a comprehensive form of research study because, as Merriam (1998) states, it “is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single, bounded unit. Conveying an understanding of the case is the paramount consideration in analyzing the data” (p. 193). For this case study, the researcher gathered information on-site through interviews and observations. These were conducted on-site and compared with the previously established related literature. Data was examined for any emerging patterns. The patterns that emerged were used to complete both the study and the final report.

CHAPTER IV

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN INTEGRATED THEMATIC INSTRUCTION AND HOLISTIC EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

Kovalik and Olsen (2002) acknowledge the ideas and strategies in the educational philosophy she developed, Integrated Thematic Instruction, are not new or unique; they have been practiced by other educators during the course of educational history: “it is important to recognize that the curricular and instructional strategies described in the ITI (Integrated Thematic Instruction) model are not new. Good teachers have implemented them over the years but did so intuitively” (Kovalik and Olsen, 2002, p.xvi). While stressing the historical nature of her philosophy, Kovalik (2002) also stresses the need for scientific backing for them. She bases Integrated Thematic Instruction on what she terms the latest in scientific brain research, which began with her using the previously mentioned book by Hart. Kovalik (2002) does not discount the many holistic educators who preceded her; she simply believe the educational ideas of holistic educators, while historical and important, were not as scientifically researched as her educational philosophy. (Kovalik and Olsen, 2002)

Kovalik (2002) does not describe in detail the historical background that helped her design Integrated Thematic Instruction other than to briefly acknowledge her ideas

are similar to the ideas of previous educators, although she does not name the educators to whom she is referring. Kovalik (2002) does not acknowledge that Integrated Thematic Instruction can fit within the holistic literature. Despite her lack of acknowledgement of the connections between Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education, such historical connections can be made, and Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education acknowledge many of the same ideas.

The philosophy of holistic education has a long history, evolving for more than 200 years. As Miller (1990) states, “holistic education is not a new orthodoxy; it is a richly varied approach that honors the inherent creativity and uniqueness of individuals – and communities” (p.3). The roots of holistic education reach back to the 1700s with Rousseau (2004) and continue through Dewey (1964) in the mid 1900s. Their ideas form the basis of the modern holistic philosophies, which began when “the holistic paradigm emerged as a vibrant and coherent intellectual movement in the 1980s and has been expressed by thinkers in diverse fields – psychotherapy and medicine, physics and biology, religion and philosophy, economic and political theory” (Miller, 1991, p.6). The fact theorists in science and medicine arrived at modern holistic thought around the same time as educators demonstrates the universality of holism. As Miller (1990) points out, “scientists now recognize that ultimately, reality can only be known with ‘uncertainty’ and through ‘complementary’ perspectives, because the observer is inextricably involved in what is observed” (p.58). Thus, Miller (1990) uses a scientific basis for the holistic belief that the best way for learning to take place is by making connections within the curriculum and to the outside world.

Is it possible that one form of holistic education appearing during the 1980s was Integrated Thematic Instruction? Discussing her search for a better form of education, Kovalik (2002), the creator of Integrated Thematic Instruction, states “my quest for answers intensified. I scoured bookstores for books about learning and happened upon Leslie Hart’s *Human Brain and Human Learning* in 1983. At last . . . [sic] an explanation about how the brain learns from a scientific perspective” (Kovalik & Olsen, 2002, p.xii). Using this book, Kovalik (2002) developed the philosophy of Integrated Thematic Instruction, based on a scientific perspective of brain research. This philosophy embraced the idea that the best way to learn is by engaging the whole student and not just the mind of the student. Because “thinkers in science and medicine have articulated a holistic, ecological science” (p.58), Miller (1990) would agree with Kovalik’s philosophy and its ‘scientific’ basis as being a better form of education than traditional education.

Because holistic education contains many broad ideas, such as curricular integration, holistic educators such as Kovalik can focus their philosophy on the way the brain learns, or as she would phrase it, focus on brain research. In the context of educating the whole child, Miller (1990) also discusses the importance of brain research: “wholeness is inherent in all phenomena; we may speak of ‘whole brain’ learning in one context, development of the ‘whole person’ in another” (p.58). Many holistic educators, such as R. Miller (1990) and Clark (1991b), understand there are varying forms of holistic philosophy, including philosophies that focus on brain research as their central theme. Holistic educators also understand that, because of the broad ideas within holistic education, not every educator with a similar educational philosophy, such as Kovalik (2002), will acknowledge his or her ties to holistic education.

The beginning of holistic education can be traced to the idea that everything is related to everything else, an idea that “was relegated to a dissident movement labeled *romanticism*. Holistic education thus has its roots in the ‘romantic’ educational theories of Jean Jacques Rousseau, Johann Pestalozzi, and Freidrich Froebel” (Miller, 1991, p.6). The educational ideas of these philosophers, who are the acknowledged founders of holistic educational philosophy, can be demonstrated to be consistent with the philosophical ideas of Integrated Thematic Instruction.

HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS OF INTEGRATED THEMATIC INSTRUCTION AND HOLISTIC EDUCATION

With Kovalik’s acknowledgement that educational ideas used in Integrated Thematic Instruction are not new, one can examine these educational ideas to determine whether there is any historical connection between Integrated Thematic Instruction and either holistic education or traditional education.

The idea of a child-centered integrated holistic curriculum has been around for more than two hundred years. In 1762, Jean Jacques Rousseau wrote *Emile* which is viewed as the first example of a child-centered integrated curriculum. “Make your pupil attend to the phenomena of nature, and you will soon arouse his curiosity. But to nourish his curiosity be in no hurry to satisfy it. Suggest problems but leave the solving of them to him” (Rousseau, 1962, p. 73). Rousseau believed children needed to be able to express themselves to develop into well-balanced and free-thinking individuals.

In addition, Rousseau recognized the need for life experiences: “contending that the traditional means of teaching moral character through discipline and learning by rote produced tyrants and slaves, Rousseau proposed to teach Émile by exposing him to appropriate stimuli that would generate life experiences” (Rousseau, 2004, p. 1). These life experiences can be seen as consistent with the educational idea in Integrated Thematic Instruction, of ‘being there’ experiences. Rousseau (1962) stated that “the only type of lesson [Emile] should get is that of experience” (p. 40). The holistic education philosophy also asserts students should be able to connect their educational experiences to real life experiences.

Rousseau, as a founder of child-centered curricula, expressed other ideas that are consistent with both Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education helping to establish the connection of Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education. “Rousseau reacted against the artificiality and corruption of the social customs and institutions” (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2003, p. 1). Traditional education is a system for social conservation; it is designed to maintain the status quo. In traditional education, Rousseau (1962) stated “the child perceives the objects, but cannot perceive the relations that bind them, or hear the sweet harmony of their concord. It calls for an experience he has not acquired and sentiments beyond his range to get the impression resulting from these sensations as a whole” (p. 74). Rousseau rejected this idea, an idea similar to traditional education and also an idea that is rejected by both Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education, as he demonstrates in his work, *Emile*. (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2003, p. 1)

Rousseau’s ideas were unconventional and ground breaking. The educational

ideas in *Emile* were so controversial that the book was ordered burned by the French government. A natural child-centered education was seen as dangerous to the structure of society at that time. In *Emile* Rousseau replaced the teacher as the center of power in education. By replacing the teacher as the center of power he was also replacing the hold that the teacher, and society, could have over the student. Willis (2003) states “because the child is innately good and the teacher has been corrupted, the educational process should be child-centered, not content-centered or teacher-centered” (p. 1). When students are free to learn naturally, they are less likely to be controlled and influenced by societal pressures of what children should learn.

Because Rousseau believed traditional education was not giving children the quality of education they needed, “he emphasized nature and the natural way of doing things. Education should occur in a natural rather than artificial environment and should be a natural outgrowth of the child's development rather than a set of contrived experiences” (Willis, 2003, p. 1). These ideas are fundamental to both Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education today. Traditional education places children in contrived and controlled situations, instead of in real life situations they can take with them throughout their lives.

The educational ideas in Rousseau's writing were the beginnings of modern holistic philosophy. “Make sure that their experiments are linked together by some sort of deduction, so that with the help of this connection they may arrange them in order in their minds, and be able to recall them at need” (Rousseau, 1962, p. 79). His most important effect on educational philosophy was his influence on many other educators who took up his ideas and continued their evolution to the idea of holistic education. In

the late 1700s and early 1800s the educator who began to follow and expand Rousseau's ideas was Johann Pestalozzi. (Willis, 2003)

The main focus of Pestalozzi's educational philosophy was to educate all children regardless of socio-economic background. In 1805, he founded an educational institute. When he advanced Rousseau's ideas and developed ways for them to be implemented into an educational situation. Pestalozzi opposed memorization as the only learning tool and strict discipline in the classroom. He pioneered the use of moveable objects to teach science and other ideas to his students: "I thought, then, that the art of educating our race must be joined to the first and simplest results of these three primary powers--sound, form, and number; and that instruction in separate parts can never have a satisfactory effect upon our nature as a whole" (Pestalozzi, 2004, p. 11). These ideas can be seen as the early stages of teaching the whole child by engaging both their body and brain in the learning process.

Pestalozzi furthered Rousseau's idea of moving away from traditional education. "He defined education as the harmonious development of all the powers of the child, especially the intellect. This represented a fundamental shift in thinking from traditional schools which saw education as specialized institution for the development of the intellect alone" (Willis, 2003, p. 1). He developed a curriculum that addressed more than just the intellect or mind of a child. "Take care to teach children to think, feel, and act rightly, to quicken and make use of the blessings of faith and love in themselves" (Pestalozzi, 1973, p. 50). Pestalozzi understood children learn better when their whole person is engaged.

Pestalozzi concentrated on improving education for all people, on moving away

from classical curriculum toward teaching more practical subjects. Both Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education teach children in a way that is meaningful and move away from what Pestalozzi would call an 'elitist' philosophy. Integrated Thematic Instruction calls it a 'being there' experience and holistic education uses the term 'making connections,' which shows a historical connection between Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education.

Pestalozzi realized the importance of properly training teachers to be able to implement a holistic educational philosophy in the classroom. Pestalozzi first developed many different educational notions used by both Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education, educational notions like group work, field trips, and allowing for students to be able to express their individual differences. He also realized the importance of developing a curriculum that follows holistic guidelines (Unknown, 2004b).

Pestalozzi "made popular the idea of teaching by getting students actively involved in learning through using all of their senses. His particular method for doing this was called the object lesson" (Willis, 2003, p. 1). Because the object lesson engaged all of the senses of the students, it can be viewed as the precursor to the body-brain partnership in Integrated Thematic Instruction and educating the mind, body and spirit in holistic education. The object lesson was central to Pestalozzi's belief that children should be actively engaged in their educational experiences, a belief that is central to both Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education.

Pestalozzi (2004) questioned the system of memorization by asking "how infinitely must the children suffer under these circumstances?" (p. 12). He also

questioned the social environment in which this rigid type of learning takes place.

Pestalozzi was one of the first to believe that the social environment is an important facet of the students' total educational experience. "He said the social environment of the classroom should be modeled after the family and should be characterized by love and affection" (Willis, 2003, p. 1). Pestalozzi knew that when students felt comfortable and safe in their school environment they were more likely to have a successful educational experience. This idea of a non-threatening environment was common to both Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education.

Pestalozzi's educational philosophy was the continuation of Rousseau's ideas. His ideas developed the child-centered concepts that form the backgrounds of what eventually became Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education. Pestalozzi also promoted the ideas of a child-centered holistic curriculum, the 'Pestalozzi Method' in his school at Yverdon, established in 1805, where children learned through activity and had the freedom "to pursue their own interests and draw their own conclusions" (Smith, 2004b, p. 1). These ideas, while novel at the time, are now the commonly accepted ideas of both Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education. (Willis, 2003, p. 1)

Another early educator who carried the early banner of a holistic curriculum was Friedrich Froebel. "Froebel attended the training institute run by Johann Pestalozzi at Yverdon from 1808 to 1810. Froebel left the institution accepting the basic principles of Pestalozzi's theory: permissive school atmosphere, emphasis on nature, and the object lesson" (Marenholz- Buelow, 2004, p. 1). The time spent in the institute had a profound affect on Froebel who continued Pestalozzi's pursuit of what is viewed today as a holistic educational philosophy.

In 1826, Froebel published *The Education of Man*, his first book. In it he espoused ideas consistent with both Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education. Froebel believed children gain a deeper understanding of life by doing something rather than by just reading about it. “To learn a thing in life and through doing is much more developing, cultivating, and strengthening than to learn it merely through the verbal communication of ideas” (Froebel, 2003, p. 1). To further this idea he developed the idea children learn about themselves and their surroundings while playing, because in play a child is free to learn to the best of his or her ability (Froebel, 1967). In 1840, Froebel, advancing the ideas of a child-centered integrated curriculum, opened the first Kindergarten.

Similar to Pestalozzi, Froebel believed children learn best in a caring, loving environment that engaged their whole person and not simply their mind. According to Barr (2003),

Friedrich Froebel, 1782-1852 stresses the respect with which the individuality and ability of each child should be treated; the importance of creating a happy, harmonious environment in which he or she can grow; and the value of self-activity and play as a foundation on which the integrated development of the whole person can be built (p. 1).

Each one of Froebel’s ideas is consistent with the educational philosophies of both Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education and can be seen as a predecessor to them.

Froebel’s educational philosophy can be easily divided into four basic components: “(a) free self-activity, (b) creativity, (c) social participation, and (d) motor expression”

(Ellington, 2003, p. 1). Both Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education stress student having educational choices, which corresponds with Froebel's free self-activity. Froebel (1967) states that a student "should not be bound, confined or swaddled or later on kept in a state of dependence. He should early learn to find himself, the source and center of all his powers and should move freely and actively, grasp things with his own hands, stand and walk by himself, look and see for himself, and use all his limbs equally and vigorously" (p. 59). Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education both stress student creativity and the importance of social participation.

Froebel's idea of motor expression is similar to the belief in Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education that children must be actively engaged in their educational experience for it to be a complete and whole education. He tried to create "educational environments that involved practical work and the direct use of materials. Through engaging with the world, understanding unfolds. Hence the significance of play - it is both a creative activity and through it children become aware of their place in the world" (Smith, 2004a, p. 1). For early learners the concept of play can be not only a way to entertain, but also a way to fully educate.

Froebel also believed to educate the whole student, one must address the spiritual nature of students. "His theories of education are based on a belief in the divine unity of nature, so that spiritual training is a fundamental principle" (Unknown, 2004a, p. 1). However, his view of a child's spiritual nature was not a religious view of spirituality. His ideas of spirituality are in accordance with the currently accepted holistic beliefs on spirituality.

Froebel believed the most important educational years were the early ones. He

thought that education at the early life stages, because it provides the basis of all future activities, has to be developmentally appropriate and has to educate the student wholly.

As an educator, Froebel believed that stimulating voluntary self-activity in the young child was the necessary form of pre-school education. Self-activity is defined as the development of qualities and skills that make it possible to take an invisible idea and make it a reality; self-activity involves formulating a purpose, planning out that purpose, and then acting on that plan until the purpose is realized. (Ellington, 2003, p. 1)

Froebel continued to develop his educational ideas until his single greatest contribution to education: his introduction of Kindergartens in 1840.

Maria Montessori also advanced the notions common to Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education. She was directly influenced by the educational ideas of Froebel as well as Pestalozzi and Rousseau. Montessori believed in the “development of training for teachers along Froebelian lines (she also drew on Rousseau and Pestalozzi) and developed the principle that was also to inform her general educational programme: *first the education of the senses, then the education of the intellect*” (Smith, 2004c, p.1). Montessori, who opened her first school in 1907, developed a system of schooling that is still active and influential today.

Montessori, much like Froebel, believed the early educational experiences of the child are vital to developing an overall person. Her method of education ensured that children would have a quality form of education. Montessori also believed “young children learn best in a homelike setting, filled with developmentally appropriate materials that provide experiences contributing to the growth of self-motivated, independent learners” (Garfield Montessori Magnet School,

2004, p.1). A fundamental assumption made by Montessori is that children are affected by their learning environment. Because of this belief, she incorporated the idea of creating a safe, comfortable and caring learning environment for her students.

Beyond the idea of a safe environment, Montessori believed teachers within that environment should direct students through the learning process, not control them as teachers do in a traditional school environment. “We must, therefore, quit our roles as jailers and instead take care to prepare an environment in which we do as little as possible to exhaust the child with our surveillance and instruction” (Montessori, 1970, p. 47).

The teachers are to use their training to recognize when students need to advance.

“Teachers show students how to create order and discover principles by means of carefully demonstrated lessons that can then be practiced at will.”

(The Montessori Academy, 2004, p.1). When students are ready to advance, the teacher will demonstrate the appropriate lessons and learning procedures so that they can learn the new material and then advance again.

The three main guidelines behind Montessori’s educational philosophy were that “children are to be respected as different from adults and as individuals who are different from one another, children create themselves through purposeful activity, and the most important years for learning are from birth to age six” (Garfield Montessori Magnet School, 2004, p.1). These guidelines, the basis of the Montessori educational method according to the Garfield Montessori Magnet School (2004), are in agreement with the educational ideas of both Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education.

Because of its nature, the student in Montessori’s system has to be self-motivated to be able to take full advantage of it. “Whether the child will find his own way to

learning and perfection or whether he will be impeded depends on her” (Montessori, 1970, p. 56). If the student is not self-motivated, it does not matter how good a job the teacher is doing in modeling lessons. The student is the center of learning as demonstrated by the importance placed on the student within the educational system. Teachers encourage effort and monitor progress, but do not pressure their pupils to perform according to any preset standards or schedules. Introduction of new lessons is tailored to the individual needs and interests of each child. Discipline is mainly self-discipline. Within constructive limits, a student can work on his or her lessons at whatever pace and in whatever order he or she chooses. Independence, initiative, responsibility for making choices, and persistence in seeing tasks through to completion are qualities fostered by this approach” (The Montessori Academy, 2004, p.1). This idea is consistent with the philosophies of Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education, which are both child-centered philosophies of education that placed the students as the most important part of the educational system.

Montessori was a proponent of educating all children. In her first school, established in the slum area of Rome to demonstrate the power of an effective educational curriculum, she emphasized engaging the whole personality so that the child would be more likely to have a full and positive learning experience. Her emphasis on engaging the entire persona of a student, instead of just the mind, and on an integrated child-centered curriculum, make it is easy to understand the historical influence her ideas have had on Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education.

Another philosopher whose educational ideas fit in the holistic timeline was John Dewey, the last in this line of great educational thinkers that gave holistic education, and

in turn Integrated Thematic Instruction, its beginnings. Dewey, a proponent of an integrated child-centered curriculum and a contemporary of Montessori, also called for a “broad fields curriculum or fused curriculum” (Segall & Wilson, 1998, p. 157), which integrated individual subjects into a single curriculum. This type of child-centered curriculum, in which students were “to be actively involved with what they learned, rather than be passive receptors of knowledge as they were in single-subject curriculum,” (Segall & Wilson, 1998, p. 157) place Dewey in the lineage of early versions of the holistic educational philosophy that are in use today.

Dewey also recognized the importance of allowing children the freedom of choice in their educational endeavors. By recognizing these factors in an educational setting Dewey was also acknowledging the importance of developing the whole student and not just the mental capabilities of that student. According to Ellington (2003)

play designates a child's mental attitude and should not be identified with anything performed externally; therefore, the child should be given complete emancipation from the necessity of following any given or prescribed system of activities while he is engaged in playful self-activity. In summarizing Froebel's beliefs regarding play, Dewey concluded that through stimulating play that produces self-activity, the supreme goal of the child is the fullness of growth which brings about the realization of his budding powers and continually carries him from one plane of educational growth to another. (p.1)

Dewey recognized that within a school that practices a student-centered curriculum, the teacher would have to play a vastly different role than a teacher in a traditional, teacher-centered school. “In Dewey's pedagogy the teacher has two main

functions. The teacher must guide the young through the complexities of life and give them opportunities to learn in the natural way, that is, by solving relevant problems” (Flanagan, 2003, p.1). This pedagogical approach demonstrates the importance for the child to be active in the learning process and for the teacher to concentrate on the student’s needs, and not what the teacher thinks the child should learn, which is often the case in traditional schools.

The second function of a teacher in Dewey’s educational philosophy was to “enable the young to cope adequately with contemporary conditions and to cope with the new tasks which an unpredictable future will bring” (Flanagan, 2003, p.1). This idea stresses the fact that, as stated by various holistic educators, since we do not know what type of employment situations the future holds, the whole child must be educated so children are adequately prepared to handle any future situation in which they find themselves.

Dewey established a school to demonstrate the three simple principles on which his educational philosophy was based.

The first principle was that the business of the school is to train children in co-operative and mutually helpful living – to help them to grow into community.

The second principle was that the foundation of all educative activity must be in the instinctive, impulsive activities of the child, and not in the presentation and application of structured, external material. Finally, the laboratory school promoted the child's *individual* tendencies and activities. These were to be organised and directed to promote the idea of co-operative living. The learning process would take advantage of the child's individual tendencies and activities to

reproduce on the child's plane the typical doings and occupations of the larger, maturer society into which the child is finally to emerge (Flanagan, 2003, p.1).

These three principles are all consistent with both Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education.

The educational philosophy that Dewey developed and recommended was demonstrated in his school. According to Flanagan (2003), Dewey wanted the laboratory school to provide learners with the opportunity to create their own experience; to experiment, to enquire, to create. He wanted a classroom where children could move about, form groups, plan and execute activities, in short, learn for themselves under the direction and guidance of the teacher (p.1).

Dewey believed schools must present life in a real and vital way so that the child can relate to the world around him or her. “I believe that school must represent present life – life as real and vital to the child as that which he carries on in the home, in the neighborhood, or in the playground” (Dewey, 1964, p.430). These ideas are common to both Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education. They form the important elements of a high quality education for which schools that practice both Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education are striving.

Soon after Dewey’s death in 1952, beginning in the 1960s, the idea of a holistic educational change started gaining momentum (Miller, 1990). The call was not for tinkering with the curriculum or seating arrangements, but for a profound critique of the traditional conception of schooling itself. While several early educators proposed the total abolition of public education, the movement as a whole made a strong plea for fundamental, as opposed to merely cosmetic, reform (Miller, 1990, pg. 147). These

radical educators understood that, even in the 1960s, the traditional system of education in America was failing its students. They began the modern movement of educational reform that is still taking place today.

The trend of trying to correct educational problems continued into the 1970s. However, the focus of reforms of the 1970s was less radical than that of the reform movements of the 1960s and seemed to shift from a total abandonment of public education to a reform of public schools. A group of mainstream liberals “responded to social and educational dissent with less radical – yet still quite potent – ideas for reform such as open classrooms and ‘public schools of choice’” (Miller, 1990, pg. 148). With the open classroom educational approach, the beginnings of a holistic educational movement could be seen. “The open classroom approach may be considered holistic because its starting point was a faith in the natural unfolding of human development” (Miller, 1990, pg. 149). Open classrooms allowed students more individual freedoms and showed increased interest in the student as a whole being.

However, the liberals of the early 1970s were not interested in radical reform, hoping instead that reform could take place without significant social change. “By the mid-1970s, American education had weathered its most serious crisis without making any major concessions to its critics. The ‘back-to-basics’ movement, emphasizing test scores, ‘time-on-task’ and other heavy-handed control over the lives of children, continued to gain momentum through the 1980s” (Miller, 1990, pg. 151). This movement was not a forward thinking reform movement. It was a movement back in time to a more teacher-dominated system of education. It was a form of American education that discounts the value of the student and does not address the needs of the whole child. The philosophy of

Integrated Thematic Instruction emerged in opposition to the ‘back to basics’ movements of the early 1980s.

CONCLUSIONS

It is easy to see the commonalities between Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education. Even though Integrated Thematic Instruction does not profess to be a holistic philosophy, when one looks at the common characteristics of Integrated Thematic Instruction and the working definition of holistic education, one can argue that Integrated Thematic Instruction should be labeled a holistic educational philosophy.

In this section, a historical connection has been established between the philosophies of Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education. While this initial connection is the early stage of proof that Integrated Thematic Instruction is a form of holistic philosophy, further examination of Integrated Thematic Instruction is needed to determine whether Integrated Thematic Instruction continues to hold a holistic philosophy when put into action in a school setting.

CHAPTER V

DESCRIPTION OF ON-SITE RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

Using the historical backgrounds and common ideas of both philosophies, a case has been made that Integrated Thematic Instruction can be classified as a holistic educational philosophy. However, despite the connections in literature and ideas, is there a connection between holistic education and Integrated Thematic Instruction as they are practiced, or is Integrated Thematic Instruction more like traditional education when carried out in a school setting?

The on-site research occurred during the 2003 – 2004 school year at Thoreau Middle School in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Research was conducted in both the fall and spring semesters, including 3 different academic quarters. Formal interviews were conducted with 10 students and 8 faculty/administrators. Informal interviews were also conducted throughout the study. The researcher observed all core classes in all grade levels at the school and most elective courses as well. Observations all took place before school hours, during class breaks, at lunch, during ‘Tribes’ and during micro-society.

THE SETTING

Thoreau Middle School is a demonstration academy for the Tulsa Public School district. This means it is a model school that is supposed to demonstrate the best practices of Tulsa Public Schools. It is designed to employ curricular practices and ideas that can benefit all students in the remaining schools in the Tulsa Public School district. The academic grade levels of students at Thoreau are 6th, 7th, and 8th.

The school is located in a building that had been used for several other purposes, including a junior college. It was chosen, and slightly remodeled, for specific use as a school that practices Integrated Thematic Instruction.

The physical layout is carefully constructed to assist the students in the learning process and conform to the requirements of Integrated Thematic Instruction. Most classrooms are spacious and open. They are very large and can accommodate 40 to 50 students, which is the approximate number of students in each core class section. There are no desks in any classroom. Round tables are the primary furniture. The researcher was told that desks separate the students and inhibit the building of community. Round tables allow students to interact more easily, move about the room more easily, and conduct group work, which is essential to Integrated Thematic Instruction.

The rooms are generally arranged with the tables in the middle of the room so the students have easy mobility, both in and out of the room. On one side in every classroom is an area designed for student reflection. It has couches or recliners in this area for the students to sit or lie on. This is a 'safe zone' where students can go if they are upset, mad, troubled or just need some quiet time to themselves. This area has different names for each grade level even though it serves the same purpose in all of

them. The 6th grade area is called “Australia,” the 7th grade area is called “Chillin,” and the 8th grade area is called “Walden Pond.” This area is designed for students to be able to get away from other students or teachers or from whatever is bothering them. They can stay in the area reading, thinking, or just being alone until they have calmed down and gotten themselves together enough to rejoin the class. Teachers do monitor this area to make sure that a student’s needs are being met and also to ensure that no student tries to take advantage of this area.

The lighting in many classrooms is low and soft because according to several teachers, research shows that low lighting has a calming effect on people. Fluorescent lights, in not only their lighting, but also their sound, have a stimulating effect on students.

The colors in the classrooms and hallways are also chosen for their calming effects. The primary colors in every room are blues and greens, which are considered earth tones and are used to attempt to give a natural feel to the school and real and artificial plants decorate every classroom. These colors and plants help create a warm and inviting classroom designed to make the students feel comfortable in their environment so they can produce better work.

On the walls in every classroom are the themes for the school year, the school’s lifeskills, and benchmarks. The themes are the guiding principles which allow the students to make connections throughout the semester. Each quarter has a different theme, such as diversity or exploration. All topics studied during that quarter, in all core classes, are related to whichever theme is designated for that quarter. The school also attempts to instill lifeskills in every student so students can progress into the world as

well-rounded individuals, not just someone with knowledge, and the students must meet the benchmarks which are the standards established by Tulsa Public Schools for all schools in the system.

As a way for the students to help decorate the school, they create murals and wall hangings themselves. This is a good way not only for the students to publicly express their artistic abilities, but also to take ownership of the school. The act of designing, creating, and hanging the artwork, allows the students to demonstrate that this is not just any school, but that it is their school.

Another decorating theme used throughout the school is the pictures of wolves. The Timberwolf is the school mascot and the pictures encourage school spirit and give the students a real image of their mascot that they can identify with.

All aspects of the student's mental wellbeing is thought of at Thoreau. While they stress a highly demanding curriculum, the teachers and administrators also understand that for students to reach their full potential, all areas of their lives need to be addressed.

GETTING TO THOREAU

The students at Thoreau Middle School come from all across Tulsa, not just one particular part of the city. Until this school year, the only way to be able to attend Thoreau was by applying for admission. There are no standards or academic requirements to meet, but one must agree to abide by the rules and regulations of the school. Once applications have been accepted from throughout the entire school district, the district is divided into four areas. A random drawing is held and an equal number of

students are selected from each of the four areas to be the next 6th grade class at Thoreau Middle School. Students whose names are not drawn to attend Thoreau can be placed on a waiting list. If a student leaves the school, another student is chosen from the waiting list to replace him or her.

CLASSES

Core classes at Thoreau are divided into two different areas and cover all four of the generally accepted core areas. One set of core classes is the integrated class of language arts and social studies. The other set is the integrated class of mathematics and science. Core classes at Thoreau are integrated by subject, but not by grade level. Elective classes at Thoreau are not integrated by subject: they are, however, integrated by grade level.

The core classes at Thoreau average approximately 40 students per class. Core classes are twice as long, time-wise, as elective classes. So, even though the core classes have two subjects to cover, they also have twice the amount of time to do so. An easy way to think about this is that the core classes operate on a block schedule while the elective classes operate on a traditional schedule.

Each grade level at Thoreau is divided into two sections, each with its own team of core teachers. Each section is also divided into half again so that one quarter of the grade will be in math/science while the other quarter attends language arts/social studies. Each section of students remains with the same set of core teachers throughout the school year; therefore, there is one core group, half of the students, which a core teacher will

never have in class. During electives, grades and groups are mixed so students interact with students outside of their core group.

Throughout the school day the students sit at tables and work on various kinds of assignments. When students are working on group projects not only is there a lot of movement in the room, but is also there is a lot of clutter on the tables and in work areas. Because students get to choose the way they address many assignments, one table could be working on a poster for a presentation, with another group reading and researching in encyclopedias for information to use for a Powerpoint presentation.

The most powerful word used at the school is inquiry. An inquiry is, simply put, a buzzword for a project, but it is much more involved than a simple assignment. An inquiry is a large, group-oriented, multi-leveled task that comprises the central form of grading criteria at Thoreau. One teacher explained an inquiry as a way for teachers to go about “testing their [the students] knowledge instead of making them memorize.” The teacher continues “You’re actually making them put it into their own words and make it a part of themselves. They have to take in the information and basically teach us” (Teacher Interview 6, 2003).

CLASSROOM INTERACTION

The interaction between teacher and student and between student and student at Thoreau is a major aspect that sets this school apart from other middle schools. One of the first things that one will notice when entering the hallway is that every teacher is at a doorway greeting students as they enter the classroom. Many schools, from traditional to holistic, have their teachers meet and greet the students at the door or at least stand in the

doorway when it is time for class, but at Thoreau, it goes a step further. The teachers not only do the traditional meet and greet at the door, but they also shake hands, give high fives, or otherwise physically greet every single student who comes in the door.

The need for physical contact was explained to the researcher in multiple ways. The physical touch is something that is more than just a hello; it is intended to break down the barriers between teacher and student. It is an acknowledgement of students as important individuals with thoughts and feelings of their own. It gives a personal touch as the students enter the class and is supposed to help make the student feel more comfortable with the teacher and the class.

Another interesting fact about the classroom interaction at Thoreau is that the students seem to go out of their way to assist other students. This assistance can be as simple as holding a poster for another student who is doing a presentation or as important as making sure that a group member is able to finish their task in the allotted time. The students seem to take pride in being able to assist other students, and they realize it reflects well on them as individuals when they are willing to go out of their way to help others. Part of the purpose of the school is to teach students to work together. Encouraging them to assist and help one another throughout the day is one way that the administration and faculty at Thoreau address this idea.

Many class assignments throughout the entire school are group assignments. Group work is important at Thoreau because it builds cooperation and community among the students. Because one of the goals at Thoreau is to prepare the students for future endeavors, the importance of group work is stressed. As teachers in the school said, in real life situations from work to play, people have to work with and interact with other

people. “That’s why, when you’re in the working world, you’ll be able to get along and work with all kinds of people” (Teacher Interview 5, 2003). The classes at Thoreau stress group work so the students can learn to work with and interact with other people.

Another way Thoreau sets itself apart is that the students are encouraged to give each other “appreciations.” An appreciation is a note from one student to another stating a thank you or other form of positive reinforcement the student feels is necessary. These appreciations are posted on the appreciation board that hangs on the wall in each classroom and students can post or pick up appreciations daily. Appreciations can be about anything the student feels the other student needs to feel appreciated for, for example “he was a good group member who worked hard” or “I appreciate her helping hold my poster during my presentation.” Written appreciations do not have to be elaborate or technical; they are just positive affirmations intended to build community within a class.

Students also give appreciations after other class members complete assignments such as class presentations. When students are finished with their presentation, other students often give verbal appreciations to the presenter, such as “he did a good job explaining the water cycle” (Classroom Observation, 2003) to “I like the colors she used on her poster” (Classroom Observation, 2003). Simply, an appreciation is a compliment given to a student, verbal or written and specific to some part of a daily activity.

Along the lines of appreciations is the fact that students at Thoreau practice what they call a no “put down” policy. This is not an official school policy in the school’s student handbook; it is an unwritten rule that is enforced by students and teachers alike. When a student has a problem with another student or teacher, the two persons involved

are to discuss the problem to come to a mutual agreement or understanding. They are not to use name calling or put downs when angry or frustrated. The researcher witnessed a student calling another one “stupid” and several other students all reminded the student of the no “put down” rule. That student then apologized to the other student and tried to more appropriately explain what caused the put down.

At Thoreau, student mobility is not only accepted, but encouraged. Students are free to get up and move around the room whenever it is necessary. In many classrooms, students do not have to ask permission to move around the room at any time, except when another student is doing a presentation. As long as the students are not interrupting or bothering others in the class, they have this freedom. Students are, however, required to carry hall passes when leaving the classroom.

Noise and commotion are also encouraged at Thoreau, which is opposite to traditional schools. One teacher put it simply: “just because a class is quiet does not mean that learning is taking place” (Teacher Interview 5, 2003). This idea was pervasive throughout all of the school. Most motion and commotion are considered a good thing as long it is “communication and not conversation” (School Tour, 2003) as another teacher put it. Because such a heavy emphasis is placed on group work, it is only natural for there to be noise and talking in the classrooms. Of course, as in most educational situations, if one specific student or group of students gets so loud that they are distracting others, the teachers request that they tone it down and usually the students comply.

The classes at Thoreau are more teacher-directed than teacher led. While it can be argued that the difference between the two is subtle, there is still that difference. In a

teacher-directed class, the teacher gives an assignment to the students and then the students have the ability to choose how exactly they want to approach that assignment and the form the completed assignment will take. In a teacher-led class, the teacher gives the assignment and also tells the students exactly how they will approach it and complete it. No student input is allowed.

To further the case for teacher-directed classes, as opposed to teacher-led classes, the concept of student choice is important at Thoreau. For example, in the 6th grade social studies and literature core classes, the students were studying Latin America. Each student was assigned a different country to cover, by means of a random draw to decide which student covered which country. The students also had a choice between three ways to complete the assignment. They could choose between writing a paper, doing a poster presentation, or doing a Powerpoint presentation. Even allowing these simple choices gives the students a sense of empowerment; they feel like they are part of the educational process, like they have some say in their own education.

THOREAU IN ACTION

The day-to-day activities at Thoreau might appear to be typical when looked at briefly from the outside. Teachers teach, students sit in their proper area, books are read and learning is taking place. But upon closer examination many of these daily activities cannot be described as typical at all.

Thoreau practices the educational philosophy of Integrated Thematic Instruction, because the administration and staff believe that this philosophy has benefits that make it a better educational approach than traditional education. One of the first benefits of the

school is its relaxed atmosphere. Students are free to move around the classrooms to complete necessary tasks such as sharpening pencils or getting other necessary supplies without fear of teacher retribution.

Many classes at Thoreau stress student choice in assignments and group work. Because cooperation is essential for students to succeed at Thoreau, there is not an air of competition in the school. Students cooperate, rather than compete for grades. This cooperation allows students to be relaxed in their educational endeavors. They understand the importance of their assignments, but also understand that in a real world situation, one must cooperate with people to be successful.

Another reason for the relaxed atmosphere is the school environment. As previously mentioned, the school is decorated in earth tones, which teachers who were interviewed said are soothing and calming colors. Also, in many classes, teachers play music from stereo systems. This music, low and in the background of the classroom activities is usually tied directly to the subject being studied and adds to the relaxing atmosphere of the school. In a class that was studying Greek history, the teacher was playing traditional Greek music as the students worked on their assignments. Another class was studying Latin America and the teacher had Latin American music, in native languages, playing softly in the background. The music can not only work as a learning tool, allowing the students to hear music native to certain geographical regions, but also as a way for the teacher to have more control over the background static.

Another benefit for a student who attends Thoreau is a positive attitude toward education, other students, and teachers. It is the administration's firm belief that the educational philosophy of the school assists in producing students who are considerate,

caring and helpful. Administrators say the way students treat each other at this school sets it apart from the other schools in the district. The students respect the rights of others and treat each other fairly and appropriately. One teacher described a situation where she was teaching with students from every middle school within the district, but she could immediately tell which students were from Thoreau because of the way they treated other students and the teachers.

Integrated Thematic Instruction is based on brain research and, therefore, uses this research to attempt to guarantee that students in an Integrated Thematic Instruction school will receive a well-rounded and thorough education. Thoreau administrators have adjusted their daily schedule based on this brain-based research. One major difference at Thoreau is the starting time of the school. Most schools in the Tulsa Public School system begin at 7:50 in the morning. According to the school's principal, research shows that adolescent's minds are not awake that early in the morning. For this reason, Thoreau begins the school day at 8:45, which the research shows is a better time for adolescents to be awake and ready to learn.

The philosophy of education at Thoreau also encourages and demands students develop a sense of responsibility toward their own education. The students understand they must take ownership of their education. They can learn as much as they want to learn and their choices in completing assignments allow them the freedom to learn in the best possible manner. The students seem to understand that because they have a choice in their educational experience, they also have a huge responsibility to go along with those choices. It is up to them to take advantage of this freedom and get the most of out their education.

According to the school's principal, part of the initial introduction for sixth graders to the school is teaching them "how to live at Thoreau" (School Tour, 2003). Helping the students understand the importance of developing a sense of personal responsibility is part of that initial introduction. In elementary school, many students did not need to develop this sense of personal responsibility, however students will not succeed at Thoreau without it. According to teachers, students understand that the educational philosophy of Thoreau not only gives them a quality educational experience now, but also prepares them for life after secondary school.

Another part of the initial introduction is teaching the students the unique rules and philosophy of the school. While understanding the rules at any school is very important, it is even more important at Thoreau because of its unique educational philosophy. Administrators realize that students need an adjustment period when they enter Thoreau and that students need to be taught how to survive and thrive in Thoreau's educational environment.

At the beginning of each quarter all students are introduced to the new theme for that quarter. The students spend a day with every core teacher in their grade. The students even spend time learning with the core teachers whose classes they normally do not attend. The students become familiar with each teacher, learning their differences and the varying types of inquiries they might encounter that quarter on that theme. In this way students become aware of the importance of the quarterly theme to the curriculum of all of their classes.

LEARNING STYLES

Teachers at Thoreau focus on making sure to address different learning styles in their classes to give all students the opportunity to succeed and learn in class. Within the curriculum, the teacher's lessons address the concept of multiple intelligences. Because students can choose the best way for them to complete an assignment, they can use their individual strengths. Many activities are designed to encourage group cooperation and touch on the different learning styles present in a classroom. For example, when a history/language arts class was doing an assignment on Sparta, the students designed posters, wrote journals, or presented a monologue. Whichever way was more suited to their learning style was the way they could complete the assignment. Students are also aware of the fact that the school tries to address multiple learning styles. They commented that they were allowed to use their strengths when completing assignments.

GETTING STARTED

At the beginning of every class, the students come in and immediately get to work. Most class periods start with the students filing into the room and beginning work on their Daily Oral Language (DOL) or Daily Oral Math (DOM). A DOL or DOM is an assignment written on the board or overhead for the students to work on to begin the class. These assignments are usually turned in or placed in the class folders that all students are required to have. This activity usually lasts about the first five minutes. At this time most classes begin on their daily inquiries or assignments.

Another activity that is used to begin a class is called a "brain gym," an integrated activity that incorporates physical movements with a mental challenge. One observed

brain gym was that, instead of sitting down and getting to work on an inquiry, the student stood beside their tables. A class leader said “sevens” and the class started counting to seventy by sevens. As they counted each ascending number the students raised their arms and brought their right elbow to their left knee and then vice versa. The teacher described this activity as a way to not only wake up their minds, but also their bodies as well.

Each student carries a daily schedule called a “mind map.” The mind maps, which are also usually written on the board for convenience as well, are designed to make sure the students are always aware of their assignments and other important school information. The students have to write the mind maps to put in their folders so that they are responsible for knowing what assignments are coming up and when they are due. If a student has a question about assignments, inquiries or other academic work, many times the teacher refers them to their mind map for a reminder about what is coming due.

CURRICULUM

The curriculum at Thoreau is based on Integrated Thematic Instruction; therefore it is flexible, integrated, and makes connections to other parts of the curriculum and the outside world. The thematic aspect is of primary importance. The theme is the major idea that all lessons and topics per quarter are related to and around. In an interview, one teacher described this idea as “conceptual teaching of yearlong themes.” There are four quarters to a school year, and therefore, Thoreau uses four major themes each school year, one per quarter. The themes during the current year are diversity, exploration,

survival, and interdependence. All lessons in every core class are related to the theme of the quarter.

Teachers at Thoreau are allowed to cover the material in the best way that they see fit. If this means the students work in groups and do a group presentation, then that is what happens. If this means that students do individual work, then that is what happens. One teacher informed the researcher that in a majority of her classes and inquiries she uses a lot of group activities, “we divide for more tedious work and more hands-on work” (Teacher Interview 5, 2003). Within the philosophy of Integrated Thematic Instruction, teachers have the flexibility to use a teachable moment to its fullest extent, even if it means straying from the lesson assigned for that day. If a student asks a question related to the topic being studied, but not part of the current lesson, teachers have the flexibility to use the student’s curiosity to explore and learn about the specific question.

Another example of the flexibility of the educational philosophy at Thoreau is the freedom the teachers have to adjust the curriculum to make sure their lessons meet the new standards and benchmarks established by the Tulsa Public School District. The current top administration has recently issued new benchmarks and standards the school must meet. Quarterly testing determines if these benchmarks are being met. These quarterly tests are part of a district-wide testing system. The teachers at this school have not previously experienced this testing system, but because of the flexibility of the curriculum, they can adjust their lessons as needed to meet the quarterly benchmarks so their students will succeed on the tests. The school district also determines, as demonstrated by the standards and benchmarks, the curriculum all schools in the district must cover. However, Thoreau has flexibility in the way that curriculum is conveyed.

According to the principal at Thoreau, even though the curriculum is determined by the district, “how we (Thoreau) deliver that curriculum is very different” (School Tour, 2003).

Because integration, much like the use of themes, is a fundamental part of Integrated Thematic Instruction, core classes integrate math/science and language arts/social studies. Despite its unique educational philosophy, Thoreau is still a public school and has to follow the public school guidelines of four core classes; however they are scheduled in two blocks of two integrated classes as described above.

There is, however, one exception at Thoreau where a set of core classes is not integrated. In the 8th grade, math and science classes are not integrated, primarily because of the certification of the 8th grade math and science teachers. To be able to teach both math and science or language arts and social studies, the teacher needs to be fully certified in both academic areas. In the 8th grade, the math teacher does not currently hold certification in science; therefore, that particular teacher can only teach math so the other teacher in that core area teaches only science. However, the teachers of 8th grade math and 8th grade science informed the researcher that at times they work together on projects. These teachers pursue this occasional integration so that their students also get to experience integrated class work.

Integration does not mean that both core classes are working on the same topic. Integration can also take place within one particular core class. There are times when an outside observer would not know whether the class was studying math or science because the integration is so complete that the topic can be addressed and learned, without needing to distinguish between the math part of the lesson and the science part of the

lesson. Skills from both math and science can be used simultaneously, and this distinction is not necessary for anything other than labeling.

Another example of a type of integration that can occur within one core class happens when a math/science class takes lesson time for the students to write in journals. The students write about the math or science lessons they have been working on for the week or the day or about some other aspect of the class. This integration of writing and journaling into a math/science class occurs in most classes regardless of the title of the class.

Not all topics are taught in an integrated manner all of the time. At times in these core classes the integrated subjects are taught independently. When a topic needs to be covered in a way that relates more to math or science, the teachers have the flexibility to teach that lesson independently of the other half of the core class.

The teachers at Thoreau realize there is more to the philosophy of Integrated Thematic Instruction than just simply integrating topics within the classroom. According to one teacher, one of the main points of emphasis for the teachers at Thoreau was to create “absolute connections with things in real life” (Teacher Interview 1, 2003). Many of the projects, lessons, and assignments are designed specifically with the idea that they need to give the students more knowledge of real life. The concept of integration also includes making connections to real life. The students are aware that their lessons are teaching more than simple school lessons. They understand that nothing in life happens in a vacuum, so school lessons should not either. In real life situations there are very limited times when a single academic skill is needed, so lessons are integrated and

connections are made to real life situations. This type of integration prepares students for situations that might arise in real life.

‘BEING THERE’

The main emphasis in the curriculum at Thoreau is to have the students relate their learning to real world experiences. This idea is called using a “being there” experience by the creator of Integrated Thematic Instruction. A “being there” experience occurs when the students travel outside of the school walls and actually physically experience the topic they are studying. Teachers at Thoreau try to use as many “being there” experiences as possible; however, because of time and budget constraints such an experience is not always possible. Teachers do, however, complete at least one “being there” experience per quarter.

During the fall 2003 semester one of the “being there” experiences completed by the 6th grade was a trip to observe a local cemetery. The students were divided into groups and given an inquiry to complete. The cemetery was divided into a series of grids. Each group was to take a census of its grid at the cemetery, finding the sexes, age at death and date of death on the tombstones. From this information the students compiled the data and created a chart showing the demographics for their grid in the cemetery. The students wrote a short essay on how they went about gathering this information. They also wrote about the different time periods for people buried in the cemetery. This inquiry required students to use many different academic skills all tied into one final product that they presented to the class. By going to the cemetery, the students got to actually experience what it was like there. They began to understand that

it was more than just names and numbers they were compiling, that it was real people they were dealing with.

Another smaller “being there” experience revolved around Thanksgiving. The students helped prepare a turkey for their family’s Thanksgiving dinner. To prepare for this experience, the classes practiced fractions using a recipe; one specific recipe many students wanted to try was a pie recipe. They learned how to measure by halving the recipes for smaller groups or doubling them for larger groups. The students also had to figure out how to prepare a turkey as well. They had to figure out how long it took to thaw a turkey at 24 hours per four pounds of turkey. For another part of the inquiry, the students had to calculate how long it took to cook the turkey at a certain temperature for a certain length of time, temperature and time could vary according to the needs of the student. After all of this preparatory work was done at the school, the students were given a 16-pound frozen turkey to actually try their skills at home. This activity, designed to make students use math and science skills, taught the students to “appreciate mom and grandma more” (Teacher Interview 6, 2003) by making them understand the amount of preparatory work that goes into preparing a large meal, as well as the actual time involved in the cooking of the meal.

Another set of students had to complete a “Make a Difference” challenge, another form of a “being there” experience. The students were charged with developing and carrying out a community service project. The initial work began in the classroom and the students’ fully developed projects continued into the community. The students also had to create a log of the development and delivery process as part of the project. Once their projects were completed, the students presented the projects to the class. Some

students became so involved with their projects they decided to continue them after the class assignment was completed.

ASSIGNMENT EXAMPLES

A school with Thoreau's educational philosophy is not going to stress assignments that can be described as typical. The vast majority of assignments or inquiries are integrated at some level. Even if the topic is seemingly from one academic discipline, some form of integration is taking place, be it physical movements built in or simply reinforcing proper writing skills taught in language arts class.

During the time of the study, the 8th grade science class was working on a large inquiry in which the students each chose a scientist to research. For the inquiry the class spent several days in the library doing the initial research, with each student collecting note cards of information about the scientist. The students were to present their findings to the class, with a visual aid, as well as prepare a paper to turn in. They had to use MLA format for the bibliography. The paper had to be written using proper English format with a strong introduction, body, and concluding paragraph.

At the same time, the 7th grade math/science classes were also working on a large inquiry similar in nature to that of the 8th grade class. Their assignment was to pick their "favorite" disease and research it. The class used the reference books in the library, encyclopedias, dictionaries, etc. as well as computer resources. The students were also to prepare a paper and a class presentation.

The 6th grade language arts/social studies classes also had a very interactive and integrated inquiry. These classes spent several weeks studying ancient Greece. The

students completed a wide range of written and oral assignments, including keeping a journal on their readings of Greek myths. They also had to write a short essay using the prompt “If I were a boy (or girl) in ancient Athens, my typical day would be like . . .” and it was the students’ job to answer the prompt. They read and listened to stories about ancient Greece. Many times when the students were working on in-class assignments, the teacher would have Greek music playing softly in the background.

At the end of the study on Greece the classes held Olympic games. The students were divided into teams. Each team sent a member up the starting line to answer a question on Greece. The questions came from all of the information the students had been studying during the previous few weeks. Each team member had a chance to answer an individual question. If the student answered correctly he or she got to compete in the physical challenges which also consisted of variations of games that were played in the ancient Greek Olympics, such as the javelin, discus, relay race, and long jump. The teams scored points for both questions and physical challenges. Each team of students had banners with the team names displayed, such as Burning Ponies of Zeus, The Olympians, Zeus Ninja Monkeys, Greece Lightening, and the Greek Players.

TRIBES

During the ‘Tribes’ time in the school day, students, in mixed aged groups, talk about and discuss topics of importance and build a positive community climate in the school. ‘Tribes’ times occur during the first 20 minutes of every school day at Thoreau. The topics range from child abductions to dining etiquette. In one instance, the teacher read a scenario about peer pressure situations in schools. The Tribe broke into smaller

groups to closely examine these peer pressure situations. The smaller group described a situation and talked about it within the group. Once the smaller group had time to discuss the situation, the members then came back to the full tribe to continue to discuss it with the full tribe. Because 'Tribes' is a time of community building, once a week the tribes go the gym and play team games.

The main function of 'Tribes,' according to the Tribes website, is also to encourage positive relationships among students. The 'Tribes' time is designed to build quality people and develop character in the students. 'Tribes' at Thoreau give students the opportunity to personally relate to real life situations. During 'Tribes' time, students talk about tough issues with teachers and other students in a non-threatening environment. In such an environment, they feel free to open up and discuss topics they would normally either stay away from, or be too embarrassed to discuss. The idea of a non-threatening environment is also carried to the rest of the school day. Several students discussed how safe they felt attending Thoreau school. Several also mentioned that Thoreau was safer than any school they had previously attended and that being a part of a Tribe added to that secure feeling.

MICRO-SOCIETY

Thoreau Middle School professes to follow the educational philosophy of Integrated Thematic Instruction, which includes a flexible approach to education that allows the faculty and administration at the school to find creative ways for the students to gain the best education possible. One of the creative ways that educators at Thoreau

give the students a well-rounded education is an official part of the school day called ‘Micro-society’ which occurs during the last period of the day.

In the ‘Micro-society’ the kids hold jobs, pay taxes, and create their own businesses. They have a criminal justice system that has the ability to prosecute and punish any students convicted of any wrong-doings. Each business has to have a business license, to prove that it is a legitimate tax-paying business in Oz or Emerald City, the two main areas of commerce at Thoreau. To obtain these licenses the students must apply for them, and go through required training to receive them. Not everyone who applies receives a business license. The students who do not receive a business license can apply for jobs within other businesses or other parts of the ‘Micro-society,’ such as being a lawyer or policeman.

The products sold in the school’s ‘Micro-society’ are produced and manufactured by the students themselves. Products or services are sold not only in Oz and Emerald City, but also in many other areas of the school where tables are set up for students selling everything from candy to stuffed animals. The ‘Micro-society’ at Thoreau has a radio station, a movie theatre, a bakery, and even a dance club. Just like everything else in the ‘Micro-society,’ all of these businesses are student-created and student-led.

The idea of the ‘Micro-society’ is a natural extension of the philosophy of Integrated Thematic Instruction, even if it is not actually an official part of Integrated Thematic Instruction. Because one of the main tenets of the philosophy is that students have “being there” experiences, letting the students run their own city and own businesses is the ultimate “being there” experience.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT FOR TEACHERS

Not everything that happens at Thoreau is positive. Several different teachers informed the researcher that working in an Integrated Thematic Instruction school creates a high level of stress. Teacher mobility is very high. In conversations and interviews, many teachers mentioned that the school loses approximately one-third of its certified staff every year because of the stress level of working in this school. They also noted that this particular school year the stress level in the school was higher than usual. One teacher described having the highest stress level in several years and that it “felt like it was my first year again” (Teacher Interview 2, 2003). That teacher went on to say that this increased stress could contribute to a higher number of teacher resignations at the end of this school year.

One source of stress at the school is the fact that teachers at the school are supposed to model the best educational practices available in Tulsa Public Schools. As one teacher described it, because “people look at Thoreau as a model school, maybe some (teachers) can’t handle the pressure” (Teacher Interview 2, 2003). The educational philosophy of Integrated Thematic Instruction creates a situation where teachers have to be prepared to teach multiple subjects in the same lesson, not to mention the same classroom. According to one teacher, working at Thoreau is “a ton of work and a lot of pressure” (Teacher Interview 2, 2003). A teacher in a traditional school has one subject to prepare for at a time. A teacher in an Integrated Thematic Instruction school might have to prepare one lesson that involves four different subject matters and make it all fit together in a way that the students will learn and understand the topic and have a choice in the way that they are graded on the lesson.

Another source of stress is the constant flow of people observing the school. Because Thoreau is a demonstration academy, teachers from all across the district travel to the school for one-day observations. Teachers from other school districts, counties, and states also come in to see how a school of this type handles its day-to-day activities. The constant observation creates a high stress level on the teachers because they feel they have to always be performing at their highest level and are not allowed a moment for their students to simply work on what could be considered typical classroom assignment. Because Thoreau is a demonstration academy, one teacher stated, “I think we’re held to a higher standard” (Teacher Interview 2, 2003) and that higher standard is a major source of stress for teachers.

BENCHMARKS

This school year one of the main sources of stress is the benchmarks, and the testing associated with those benchmarks, that has been imposed on the Thoreau staff from the administration of Tulsa Public Schools. The benchmarks are stated and specific curricular goals that students are supposed to meet. The administration of Tulsa Public School district established benchmarks for each quarter of the school year. Despite the fact that the benchmarks determine what is supposed to be taught in the school, the faculty still has flexibility in the way the curriculum is delivered in the classroom.

CHAPTER VI

ANALYSIS OF ON-SITE RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

The examination of the literature in the previous section illustrates that in theory Integrated Thematic Instruction is a holistic form of education; however, the question remains about its practice. Is it flexible enough to be implemented in public schools, even with all of the requirements and restrictions placed upon public educators? While trying to build character components into the philosophy, Integrated Thematic Instruction stays away from words that would probably cause problems in public school settings, such as spirit.

Through observations and interviews, the researcher discovered the educational philosophy of Integrated Thematic Instruction has similar principles and common ideas so it could be considered a holistic educational philosophy. Holistic educators understand there are many different ways to implement holistic education into school settings, and Integrated Thematic Instruction falls within the cannon of holistic education.

The researcher also discovered that because of the constraints of being a public school, and being required to follow the demands of being a public school, it is virtually impossible to be a completely Integrated Thematic Instruction school. Specific district

requirements take away the curricular freedom needed for a school to completely follow the philosophy of Integrated Thematic Instruction. These specific district requirements are beyond the control of teachers, students, and local administrators of Thoreau Middle School. The major district requirement that limits the ability of educators at Thoreau to completely follow Integrated Thematic Instruction is the pre-determined and inflexible quarterly benchmarks. When asked how much flexibility they have one teacher replied, “not very much right now. Most of it (because of the) benchmarks” (Teacher Interview 3, 2003). While the school is able to address the benchmarks in any way the teachers see fit, they do not have the ability to rearrange the benchmarks or to do away with the quarterly testing of those specific benchmarks.

DEVELOPING THE WHOLE CHILD

Developing the ‘spirit’ of the student is of primary concern in holistic education, where developing the ‘emotional well-being’ of the student is of primary concern in Integrated Thematic Instruction. There are many concepts in Integrated Thematic Instruction that a holistic educator would describe as developing the spirit of a student and therefore are part of developing a ‘whole’ person. One such example is students said they felt safe attending school at Thoreau. This feeling of safety demonstrates the development of a caring spirit within the school community. Students at Thoreau showed concern and courtesy for other students. Another such example was the appreciations students gave to each other. By developing positive self-esteem in a student, Thoreau Middle School addresses the spirit of the child.

Responsibility can be tied to the interconnectedness of all things and creation of a whole person. Developing responsibility could also be seen as transforming the way students think about learning and the world around them. When students take responsibility for their education, they realize they have to take control of their education and not think the teacher, principal, or school will do it for them.

The educational philosophy of Integrated Thematic Instruction tries to develop the whole child. Starting with the color scheme, which is to calm and soothe students, the concept of Integrated Thematic Instruction is in agreement with holistic education. The positive relationships students have with each other demonstrate the school is developing self-aware, whole people. The students have relationships with each other as well as the teachers, which is not commonly found in traditional schools. The use of physical touch at the doors and entry ways to classes breaks down barriers, which is a way to educate the whole child. Physical touch nurtures more than the mind of the student; it gives the student a sense of personal worth. This simple act of physical contact is a way the teachers acknowledge students are important people and recognize them as such. Teachers in Integrated Thematic Instruction make students aware that all things are connected in the real world, a simple definition of “holistic.” A ‘being there’ experience, which is the central goal and fundamental to Integrated Thematic Instruction, educates the whole child by placing the child into a situation in which he or she has to use multiple course skills in a single setting. The students are not just told that all things are connected in the real world, they actually experience these connections in a real world situation. “Thoreau definitely tries to lend itself to real world experience learning in that students are given opportunities to use what they know not just in a school setting but

outside of class as well” (Teacher Interview 1, 2003). The students have to be able to successfully handle the mental, physical, and emotional aspects of living in a real world setting.

One of the ‘being there’ experiences, the Thanksgiving turkey experience, is an example of how Integrated Thematic Instruction creates a caring self-aware whole person. The students not only learned about school subjects, math, science, etc, in an integrated manner, but they also learned to appreciate their mothers or grandmothers or whoever typically prepares Thanksgiving dinner. The teacher’s classwork reflects holistic principles because “we always try to relate the . . . topics into real life situations as much as possible” (Teacher Interview 6, 2003). This experience teaches much more than simple integrated subjects it teaches emotional aspects and aspects which a holistic educator would term ‘spiritual.’ This is further evidence showing why Integrated Thematic Instruction should be considered a holistic form of education. The appreciations also create a caring, self-aware, whole person.

INTEGRATED CURRICULUM

As previously discussed, the concept of integration can be much more than the simple combining of two school subjects into one course. Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education both stress integration, as a primary philosophical educational component. Integrated Thematic Instruction at Thoreau uses integration in many different forms, from simple combining of core courses to the fully integrated ‘being there’ experiences. In some classes and activities at Thoreau, such as brain gyms

and the Olympics, the physical movements are as integral to the activities as the academic challenges.

Addressing the multiple intelligences of students and using different teaching styles, which in turn address different learning styles, is important in both Integrated Thematic Instruction and holistic education. When connections are made and multiple intelligences are addressed, learning is easier for students (Miller, 1990). One teacher (Interview 1, 2003) stated the school tried “to hit upon all the child’s learning perception, multiple intelligences so that the child is well developed. We try to teach both sides of the brain so to speak.” The school does this because addressing the student’s multiple intelligences “helps to develop patterns. Learning is a pattern seeking device, by using Integrated Thematic Instruction students are able to create these patterns associate them with what they know and build upon them” (Teacher Interview 1, 2003). Integrating physical movements with academic lessons addresses many different types of intelligences, which is in accordance with the literature of both educational philosophies, and further demonstrates Integrated Thematic Instruction is a holistic form of education.

Student choice, an idea in practice at Thoreau Middle School, is also a holistic concept because it allows students to select their learning preference. As Miller (1990) stresses, the concept of choice emphasizes the development of an individual’s talents and strengths. The fact students at Thoreau have choices in their education further demonstrates the holistic nature of Integrated Thematic Instruction.

Another difference between Thoreau Middle School and a completely traditional school is teachers at traditional schools might have the option to do the hands-on and group-oriented activities that are practiced at Thoreau Middle School, however, at

Thoreau such activities are an every day occurrence in almost every class. One teacher stated “we encourage students to practice cooperation” (Interview 1, 2003). Another teacher went on to say students “have to work together so they have a better concept. Even if they don’t like people they must be able to work with them. They’re learning skills they’re going to use later” (Interview 3, 2003). The use of group work, a fundamental part of Integrated Thematic Instruction, helps stress the acknowledgement that all things are interconnected, further strengthening the argument that Integrated Thematic Instruction can be considered a form of holistic education.

The use of music to soothe students is a holistic concept. The use of music also serves as a way for the students to further connect with assignments and addresses the mind and emotional well-being, or spirit, of the students. Teachers and administrators believe students emerge from the school as a caring and ‘whole’ person. Faculty are educating the emotional well-being of the students and not just the minds of the students. Using music and integrating physical movements in lessons help students develop into well-rounded, whole people.

Addressing the spirit of the student is part of educating the whole child. One teacher (Interview 4, 2003) stated “you are out to educate them, not just by their knowledge level but also by their emotional level and, their spiritual well being I guess you could say without it being religious.” Public schools are not allowed to address anything in a religious way, but the ‘spirit’ of the child can be addressed as the emotional well-being of the student. The principal at Thoreau was very explicit in this regard. He said they could not do anything for the spirit, but when the concept of ‘spirit’ was explained in holistic terms of emotional well-being and character education he agreed the

school did develop those concepts in students. A teacher (Interview 4, 2003) agreed with the principal's approach by saying the school taught a child's spirit "in a non-religious sense in that they are at peace. I guess you could say in a non-religious sense with where they're at and who they are." The helping that takes place between students because of the educational nature of the school is creating a caring person, very much in accordance with holistic education. A whole child is described as having a reverence for life by Miller (1990). A reverence for life can be found in the positive relationships exhibited by the students at Thoreau Middle School.

TRANSFORMING STUDENT THINKING – USING ‘THEMES’

The philosophy in action at Thoreau Middle School helps develop a caring, self-aware, whole person. The students own 'no put-downs' policy helps keep them feeling positive toward each other and toward the school. The students' positive feelings go further than just the use of 'no put-downs' between students, it reflects the entire school and how the faculty and staff run the school by creating positive self-images in the students.

The educational philosophy at Thoreau Middle School encourages students to take ownership of their education. The students have to become responsible for their own education. They have choices in their education. They can also help decorate the school and put their own personal touch on the physical appearance of the school. Students do not just go to school because they have to go to school, they go to school because they want to and they enjoy it. They feel a part of the educational process.

Using themes, as much as using integration, is a primary part of Integrated Thematic Instruction. A theme provides a connection within subjects and connects different subjects, topics, and inquiries together; it ties all lessons together under a single overriding idea. One teacher noted, “right now our concept is exploration and so basically what ITI says is that you need to connect conceptually” (Interview 2, 2003) to the theme. Using themes to create connections is also part of holistic education. This idea helps students establish that all things are connected and need to be treated as such.

Inquiries combine subject integration and the transformation of student thinking. Because inquiries are “a large group-oriented, multi-leveled task” (Teacher Interview 6, 2003), they help students realize that all things are interrelated and connected and need to be addressed as such, especially in a school setting. Students begin to understand the importance of working in group settings and being able to cooperate with a variety of people. Things do not happen in a vacuum in the real world, and therefore, should not happen in a vacuum in school either, a concept grounded in holistic education and being taught in a school that practices Integrated Thematic Instruction.

MICRO-SOCIETY AS A HOLISTIC EXPERIENCE

Micro-society demonstrates the education of the whole child, integration, and connections in a real world situation. Micro-society is the ultimate example of a ‘being there’ experience, which is the ultimate Integration Thematic Instruction demonstration, and can be a vital part of holistic education. While performing the functions of micro-society, students learn more than just simple academic lessons; they learn a diverse array of subjects, topics, and skills, such as operating a business, obtaining proper business

licenses, paying taxes, and all of the other intricacies of the responsibility of living in a community.

LIMITS ON INTEGRATED THEMATIC INSTRUCTION

Integrated Thematic Instruction in a public school setting has natural limits that prevent it from being fully holistic. One example is the benchmarks and quarterly benchmark tests that have been imposed on Thoreau by the administration of Tulsa Public schools. “It seems that there’s more pressure to teach the standards and benchmarks that are set before us,” said a teacher (Interview 4, 2003). These benchmarks determine what has to be taught during each quarter of the school year. It is hard to run an Integrated Thematic Instruction school with inflexible pre-determined quarterly benchmarks.

The school uses the lifeskills as prescribed by Integrated Thematic Instruction in its day-to-day activities. Flexibility, one of the lifeskills of Integrated Thematic Instruction, is also a fundamental idea in holistic education. By adding benchmarks and the quarterly benchmark tests, the school district is in effect taking away creative control from the school and limiting the flexibility to make changes teachers see necessary. If the questions asked by students indicate they want to take a lesson in a different direction than the teacher originally planned, the teacher might not be able to adjust to satisfy the students’ curiosity. One teacher asked, “why do I have to teach (this subject) in the 5th week of the 2nd quarter, when I can cover it better at a different time?” (Teacher Interview 4, 2003). This lack of flexibility could potentially limit the amount of knowledge students could gain on a particular subject.

The use of standards and benchmarks as done by Tulsa Public Schools is very traditional in nature because the benchmarks and standards are teacher-centered and emphasize testing as the determining factor in educational quality. Several teachers at Thoreau were resentful of the fact the benchmarks and benchmark tests were limiting the way they could apply Integrated Thematic Instruction in their classes. One teacher stated there was “some resentment toward benchmark testing for forcing the school more toward traditionalism” (Teacher Interview 2, 2003). Teachers did not have complete flexibility in planning or implementing their lessons. Curricular freedom is needed in a school that practices Integrated Thematic Instruction.

During the first quarter of 2003, many teachers at Thoreau were not happy about the benchmark tests. They felt the tests added to the already high stress levels at the school. One teacher stated “we don’t know what they’re going to do with those tests” (Teacher Interview 4, 2003). The teacher went on to ask, “do they affect salaries or employment” (Teacher Interview 4, 2003)? This lack of knowledge made teachers uneasy and added to the fact that these tests were forcing Thoreau more toward traditionalism.

The concept of pre-determined quarterly benchmark tests goes wholly against the idea of curricular freedom in Integrated Thematic Instruction. It is an idea completely grounded in traditional educational philosophy. The administration of Tulsa Public Schools is limiting the effectiveness that Integrated Thematic Instruction can have on the students at Thoreau Middle School.

There are many difficulties in operating an Integrated Thematic Instructional school in a public school setting because of the constraints and requirements placed on

public schools. The recent No Child Left Behind Act, because of its increased use of standardized testing as the way to determine educational quality, will continue to add to this pressure.

Thoreau Middle School has very little drill and practice as suggested by traditional education proponent Hirsch (1999). The educational process at Thoreau is teacher-directed instead of teacher-led. At Thoreau one teacher stated they use “lots of student choices and inquiries, so students are able to choose what they are interested in. When we do that we find that they are able to get more in-depth on a particular subject” (Teacher Interview 1, 2003). The learning does originate from the teacher, but the student has flexibility in many lessons. In this instance, Thoreau is not quite a holistic school because the education does not originate with the students. The teacher is more than a guide, however, the students do have input on their education. The same teacher (Interview 1, 2003) went on to say “generally the curriculum is already planned out, the students do have some choice as far as their assessments go; that’s how they have their input.” It is, however, not completely a child-centered curriculum. The idea of developing responsibility in the student is a form of child-centered curriculum. Holistic educators believe that the student will intrinsically pursue education, but this does not always happen and, because of the limitations placed on it at Thoreau, it is not completely allowed to happen.

Another limit at Thoreau is not all classes are always integrated. In the 8th grade, the science and math classes are taught separately much of the time. Because not all core classes are integrated, Thoreau has a combination of holistic and traditional philosophies. It also demonstrates the current conflict within Thoreau between the stated philosophy of

Integrated Thematic Instruction and the traditional educational influences as directed by the top level administration of Tulsa Public Schools.

It is also difficult to operate a completely Integrated Thematic Instruction school when teachers within the school do not completely buy into the system. Even some of the teachers working within the school have issues with the idea of going to a school faculty accepting the Integrated Thematic Instruction philosophy. One teacher (Interview 4, 2003) stated “I would say that I don’t think that ITI is the only way to teach. I just think that it’s a school that can meet different needs for different kids.” After one teacher who was struggling with teaching in an Integrated Thematic Instruction setting had gained more time in the school and had attended several more days of training in the philosophy and delivery of Integrated Thematic Instruction, he said he was much more comfortable teaching in a school that practices Integrated Thematic Instruction because he had a better understanding of the philosophy.

There was an interesting difference of opinion as to how much choice the students were given in their assignments and in the curriculum. Several teachers believed the students had very little choice within the curriculum. “As our job we have to teach to a certain standards and benchmarks so they don’t have any input on what they get to learn” (Teacher Interview 4, 2003). The students, however, believed they do have some input in the curriculum. “Oh we have a lot of input. We have times where she’s asks us questions or we can input or have suggestions. It just depends on what teacher (it is)” (Student Interview 6, 2003). The researcher discovered, as previously mentioned, that the students did have many choices within the subjects being studied. Within assignments the students had choices as to how they would complete it. In some cases

the students could even choose the specific topic they want to study within a teacher assigned inquiry. An example of this is when, within the limits of a large paper assignment, the 7th grade students chose which disease they would write about. The researcher discovered this difference of opinion is because of those teachers' inability to fully buy into the Integrated Thematic Instruction concept that stresses student choice within the curriculum.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Integrated Thematic Instruction is not so much a unique educational philosophy as it is a unique educational packaging. That packaging is the use of brain-based research to try to establish itself as a unique educational philosophy. In the early section of their book, Kovalik and Olsen (2002) briefly acknowledge that teachers have been doing similar types of education for years. With this acknowledgement, they are showing that they accept the educational progress that occurred before Kovalik developed Integrated Thematic Instruction. However, by making this brief acknowledgement Kovalik is disassociating herself and her educational philosophy from other educational philosophies.

The creator of Integrated Thematic Instruction might claim because it is based on brain research it is unique. However, when the literature is examined and the philosophy put into action, it is very similar to holistic education. However, as discovered in this study, because of the limitations of public education, an educational philosophy cannot be truly holistic nor can it be Integrated Thematic Instruction in its pure form as described in the literature. Because holistic education and Integrated Thematic Instruction

deemphasize high stakes testing and public schools are required to adhere to a strict regimen of high stakes testing, a natural limitation is placed upon a pure form of Integrated Thematic Instruction being practiced in a public school such as Thoreau Middle School.

This fact in no way diminishes the educational value of Integrated Thematic Instruction. It is still a high quality and viable educational tool. However, Integrated Thematic Instruction does need to be recognized as a holistic educational philosophy, as it falls within the boundaries of holistic education.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The researcher recommends that this study be replicated in a private school setting. The holistic nature of the educational philosophy is evident, but the limitations of the public school setting have placed restrictions on the study. An examination of this educational philosophy in a private school setting, primarily because private schools do not have to adhere to the state testing guidelines, will give an interesting contrast, and possibly more information on the true nature of Integrated Thematic Instruction.

Another recommendation for further study would be to examine if, in the age of No Child Left Behind, schools are moving more toward holistic or traditional philosophy? Is an educational philosophy like Integrated Thematic Instruction compatible with No Child Left Behind?

Another question to study would be to replicate this study at an elementary school that practices Integrated Thematic Instruction. A similar study in an elementary school setting could help confirm the findings of this study. Also, if a similar study was

conducted in a high school that practices Integrated Thematic Instruction, the findings reached in this study could be confirmed.

Other recommendation for research include looking at how the working conditions at Thoreau affect the ability of the teachers to properly use Integrated Thematic Instruction, and do the limits placed on Integrated Thematic Instruction affect those working conditions?

These studies combined will help us understand Integrated Thematic Instruction in its broadest terms and new settings such a private schools, other public schools and through government legislation.

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School Tour

Thoreau Middle School tour conducted by school principal. (Fall, 2003).

Student Interviews

Oral Interview of Student 1 with Jeremy Cook (Fall, 2003).

Oral Interview of Student 2 with Jeremy Cook (Fall, 2003).

Oral Interview of Student 3 with Jeremy Cook (Fall, 2003).

Oral Interview of Student 4 with Jeremy Cook (Fall, 2003).

Oral Interview of Student 5 with Jeremy Cook (Fall, 2003).

Oral Interview of Student 6 with Jeremy Cook (Fall, 2003).

Oral Interview of Student 7 with Jeremy Cook (Fall, 2003).

Oral Interview of Student 8 with Jeremy Cook (Fall, 2003).

Oral Interview of Student 9 with Jeremy Cook (Fall, 2003).

Oral Interview of Student 10 with Jeremy Cook (Fall, 2003).

Teacher Interviews

Oral Interview of Teacher 1 with Jeremy Cook (Fall, 2003).

Oral Interview of Teacher 2 with Jeremy Cook (Fall, 2003).

Oral Interview of Teacher 3 with Jeremy Cook (Fall, 2003).

Oral Interview of Teacher 4 with Jeremy Cook (Fall, 2003).

Oral Interview of Teacher 5 with Jeremy Cook (Fall, 2003).

Oral Interview of Teacher 6 with Jeremy Cook (Fall, 2003).

Appendix A

Schedule of questions and probing questions for teachers/administrators:

Have you ever worked at a traditional school?

What was the difference between a traditional school and Thoreau?

What special training did you receive to teach at Thoreau?

To what extent do your classes combine subject areas?

Describe times when subjects are combined?

What do you enjoy about using an integrated curriculum?

What do you not enjoy about using an integrated curriculum?

In what ways does an integrated curriculum help students?

When do you allow your students to express their creativity and self-expression?
Please give me examples.

How does this school encourage student reflection?

How does this school encourage deep questioning of subjects, areas, or topics?

To what extent do students have input on their curriculum?

Do you believe that students leave this school with a better understanding of the world around them?
Why or why not?

What does it mean to educate the whole child?
How successful do you feel you are in doing that?
How successful do you feel the school is in doing that?

What does it mean to produce well-rounded students?
How successful do you feel you are in doing that?
How successful do you feel the school is in doing that?

Appendix B

Schedule of Questions for students:

Have you ever attended a different kind of school?

How long have you attended Thoreau?

What was the difference between a traditional school and Thoreau?

If a new student came to this school and asked you “what is this school like,” what would you tell them?

To what extent do your classes combine or integrate subject areas?

What subjects are combined (or integrated)?

What do you enjoy about using a combined (or integrated) curriculum?

What do you not enjoy about using a combined (or integrated) curriculum?

How much input do you have on what you study in class?

How do you get to express your creativity?

How do you get to express your self-expression?

What is your favorite part of this school?

What is your least favorite part of this school?

Does this school educate the whole child?

Appendix C

(REVISED 10/29/03)
STUDENT CONSENT FORM
FOR INTEGRATED THEMATIC INSTRUCTION RESEARCH

General Information

You have been asked to be interviewed regarding the way your school runs itself by using Integrated Thematic Instruction. The interviews will be conducted by an Oklahoma State University doctoral student, Jeremy Cook. Your parents' are also being asked for your permission to participate in this study. This form gives you the chance to decide if you want to participate today.

There is very little information in the study of my topic: Integrated Thematic Instruction. My interview with you will help me do three things: (1) complete my doctoral dissertation, and (2) write for books, journal publications or presentations and (3) come up with new ideas about Integrated Thematic Instruction.

The interview should last approximately 30 to 45 minutes. The interview questions are based on the idea of Integrated Thematic Instruction, like your school uses. Everyone who participates will be asked the same general questions. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed for analysis. The project director may review this analysis. All tapes and transcripts are confidential and will be kept locked away. At the end of the research study, all tapes will be destroyed. Only the project director and doctoral student will have access to this information.

The researcher will assign fake names for each participant of this study so no one will know who participated. These fake names will be used in all transcripts and written materials involving the interviews. No interview will be accepted or conducted without a signed consent form. The form will be filed and retained for at least one year after the completion of the project.

Participant Understanding

I understand that participation in this interview is voluntary, and there is no penalty for not participating. I understand that I can quit at any time as long as I tell the researcher or my teachers I do not want to participate any more.

I understand that the interview and research I am participating in will be conducted appropriately. I understand that I will not be identified by the information taken from the interviews.

I understand that my parents also have the opportunity to give me consent to participate in this study or to decline to participate in this study.

I may contact Jeremy Cook, 150 Athletic Center, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 74078; telephone (405) 744-7926; email jwc@okstate.edu or the doctoral advisor, Dr. William Segall, 258 Willard, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 74078; telephone (405) 744-8023; email wes1@okstate.edu, should I wish to receive further information about the research. I also may contact Carol Olson of the Institutional Review Board, 415 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 74078; telephone (405) 744-1676.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. I have received a copy of this form.

DATE: _____ TIME: _____(a.m./p.m.)

SIGNED _____
(Signature of Participant)

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of the form to the participant before requesting the participant sign it and provided a copy of this form to the participant.

DATE: _____ TIME: _____(a.m./p.m.)

SIGNED: _____
(Signature of Doctoral Student)

Appendix D

(REVISED 10/29/03)
PARENTAL CONSENT FORM
FOR INTEGRATED THEMATIC INSTRUCTION RESEARCH

General Information

Your child _____ has been asked to be interviewed regarding
(Child's name)
the educational philosophy of Integrated Thematic Instruction. The interviews will be conducted by an Oklahoma State University doctoral student, Jeremy Cook.

There is very little information in the study of Integrated Thematic Instruction. The interviews will serve three purposes: (1) data collected in the interviews will be used by the doctoral student for a dissertation, and (2) data collected by the researcher may be used in scholarly publications or presentations of the doctoral student and/or the project director and (3) this data might be able to generate new ideas or perceptions about the philosophy of Integrated Thematic Instruction.

The interview should last approximately 30 to 45 minutes. The interview questions have been developed by the doctoral student based on the literature of Integrated Thematic Instruction. All participants will be asked the same general questions. The interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed for analysis by the doctoral student. The project director may review this analysis. All tapes and transcripts are treated as confidential information and will be kept under lock and key for a six-month period. At the end of the research study, all tapes will be destroyed. Only the project director and doctoral student will have access to this information.

The researcher will assign pseudonyms for each participant of this study. These will be used in all transcripts and written materials involving the interviews. No interview will be accepted or conducted without a signed consent form. The form will be filed and retained for at least one year after the completion of the project.

Participant Understanding

I understand that participation in this interview is voluntary, and there is no penalty for my child not participating. I understand that my child can withdraw from participation and consent in this project at any time without penalty after notifying the proper personnel.

I understand that the interview and research my child is participating in will be conducted according to accepted research procedures. I understand that information taken from the interview will be recorded in such a manner that participants will not be identified directly or indirectly through participant identifiers.

I understand that my child will also have the opportunity to consent to participate in the study or to decline to participate in the study.

I may contact Jeremy Cook, 150 Athletic Center, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 74078; telephone (405) 744-7926; email jwc@okstate.edu or the doctoral advisor, Dr. William Segall, 258 Willard, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 74078; telephone (405) 744-8023; email wes1@okstate.edu, should I wish to receive further information about the research. I also may contact Carol Olson of the Institutional Review Board, 415 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 74078; telephone (405) 744-1676.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I give consent for my child _____ to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this form.
(Child's name)

DATE: _____ TIME: _____(a.m/p.m.)

SIGNED _____
(Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian)

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I do NOT give consent for my child _____ to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this form.
(Child's name)

DATE: _____ TIME: _____(a.m/p.m.)

SIGNED _____
(Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian)

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of the form to the participant before requesting the participant sign it and provided a copy of this form to the participant.

DATE: _____ TIME: _____(a.m./p.m.)

SIGNED: _____
(Signature of Doctoral Student)

Appendix E

(REVISED 10/29/03)

TEACHER/ADMINISTRATOR CONSENT FORM FOR INTEGRATED THEMATIC INSTRUCTION RESEARCH

General Information

You have been asked to be interviewed regarding the educational philosophy of Integrated Thematic Instruction. The interviews will be conducted by an Oklahoma State University doctoral student, Jeremy Cook.

There is very little information in the study of Integrated Thematic Instruction. The interviews will serve three purposes: (1) data collected in the interviews will be used by the doctoral student for a dissertation, and (2) data collected by the researcher may be used in scholarly publications or presentations of the doctoral student and/or the project director and (3) this data might be able to generate new ideas or perceptions about the philosophy of Integrated Thematic Instruction.

The interview should last approximately 30 to 45 minutes. The interview questions have been developed by the doctoral student based on the literature of Integrated Thematic Instruction. All participants will be asked the same general questions. The interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed for analysis by the doctoral student. The project director may review this analysis. All tapes and transcripts are treated as confidential information and will be kept under lock and key for a six-month period. At the end of the research study, all tapes will be destroyed. Only the project director and doctoral student will have access to this information.

The researcher will assign pseudonyms for each participant of this study. These will be used in all transcripts and written materials involving the interviews. No interview will be accepted or conducted without a signed consent form. The form will be filed and retained for at least one year after the completion of the project.

Participant Understanding

I understand that participation in this interview is voluntary, and there is no penalty for not participating. I understand that I can withdraw from participation and consent in this project at any time without penalty after notifying the proper personnel.

I understand that the interview and research I am participating in will be conducted according to accepted research procedures. I understand that information taken from the interview will be recorded in such a manner that participants will not be identified directly or indirectly through participant identifiers.

I may contact Jeremy Cook, 150 Athletic Center, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 74078; telephone (405) 744-7926; email jwc@okstate.edu or the doctoral advisor, Dr. William Segall, 258 Willard, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 74078; telephone (405) 744-8023; email wes1@okstate.edu, should I wish to receive further information about the research. I also may contact Carol Olson of the Institutional Review Board, 415 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 74078; telephone (405) 744-1676.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. I have received a copy of this form.

DATE: _____ TIME: _____(a.m./p.m.)

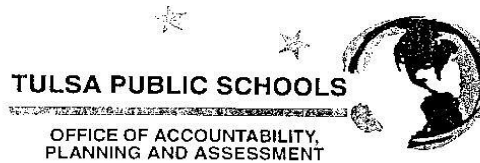
SIGNED _____
(Signature of Participant)

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of the form to the participant before requesting the participant sign it and provided a copy of this form to the participant.

DATE: _____ TIME: _____(a.m./p.m.)

SIGNED: _____
(Signature of Doctoral Student)

Appendix F



February 25, 2003

To whom it may concern:

Jeremy Cook has permission to conduct research at Thoreau Middle School in Tulsa Public Schools. The research is limited to his study on the concept of Thematic Instruction as a holistic philosophy of education. Jeremy has been granted permission to conduct observations, interviews and other research on this matter from the building principal.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Todd Orme".

Todd Orme
Coordinator of Testing
Tulsa Public Schools

Appendix G

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 10/28/2004

Date: Wednesday, October 29, 2003

IRB Application No ED0442

Proposal Title: Integrated Thematic Instruction: A Case Study

Principal
Investigator(s):

✓
Jeremy Cook
150 Athletic Center
Stillwater, OK 74078

William Segall
258 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and
Processed as: Expedited (Spec Pop)

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Dear PI :

Your IRB application referenced above has been approved for one calendar year. Please make note of the expiration date indicated above. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact me in 415 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, colson@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Carol Olson, Chair
Institutional Review Board