2004

Developmentally appropriate practice: a case study of mentoring for teacher change

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DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE:
A CASE STUDY OF MENTORING FOR TEACHER CHANGE

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Science

In

The School of Human Ecology

by

Judi Martin McCaslin
B.S., University of Phoenix, 1989
December 2004
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my parents:

Anna Rose Williams Martin

Born October 31, 1914
Died January 27, 2003

and

Chester Edward Martin

Born April 9, 1908
Died November 12, 2003
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the generous support and encouragement that Dr. Diane Burts, my major professor in the School of Human Ecology, has given me between June 2001 and the end of this project. She has been my professor, my mentor, and my friend. She has taught me nearly all I know about developmentally appropriate practice with young children. She has taught me what it means to be a researcher and a scholarly writer. Her patience and her wisdom have been inspirational to me. Without her, I would not have reached this point in my education and professional career.

Dr. Terry Buchanan has been an inspiration to me. She has challenged me to increase my academic rigor and to improve as a researcher and to grow as a professional in early childhood education. I was thrilled and humbled that she would contribute her time to join the thesis committee of a student who has never been in one of her education classes.

Dr. Loren Marks, both as a professor and a member of my committee, has taught me all I know about qualitative research. He has been patient, supportive, and encouraging throughout the process of my research for this project. He has given me numerous timely insights into how qualitative research can be done well. Thank you, my friend.

Dr. Betsy Garrison made me feel welcome in the School of Human Ecology from the first day I arrived from Tennessee, scared and lost. She agreed to be on my first thesis committee, and later generously stepped aside to recommend another who she thought would contribute more to my qualitative research. Even when no longer on my committee, she helped in so many ways, mostly with generous support and encouragement, and always with a smile.

Dr. Pam Monroe was the first person at Louisiana State University to give me encouragement to apply for admission to the graduate program in the School of Human Ecology. Since my prior education was not in a related field, I was a long way from believing that I would be accepted at Louisiana State University, much less that I could graduate with my Master of Science. She encouraged me to believe in myself and take those first scary steps towards enrolling to begin my master’s study. She helped me find a course to take that first summer that introduced me to Dr. Diane Burts and changed the course of my life. I would not be where I am now were it not for her generous help and encouragement.

During most of the summer sessions at Louisiana State University that I attended to meet the academic requirements for a Master of Science in Human Ecology, I lived with my parents, Chester Edward Martin and Anna Rose Williams Martin, at our family home in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. They gave me a home-away-from-home, encouraged me in my academic work, and cheered me on. Daddy, who had graduated from LSU in law in 1947, was then in his early 90s, and even attended several of my classes with me, where he charmed my professors and fellow graduate students. I had hoped that my parents would live to see my graduation, but that was not to be. However, I know they are smiling in heaven as I complete this task of a lifetime.
This project could not have been possible without the participation and cooperation of “Gigi” and the schools where she taught during the project. She gave me unusual access to her private life and thought processes that allowed me to gain a unique insight into the changes as a teacher through which she went during the project. Some of her supervisors shared their observations of her with me, allowing me a richer view of her practice. Although Gigi and her supervisors are given pseudonyms in this report, I want them to know how invaluable I found their participation in the study.

Finally, I want to thank James Melvin McCaslin, my husband of nearly twenty-five years, who has supported me to pursue my degree at Louisiana State University even though it was so far away from our home in Pulaski, Tennessee, and even though it meant that I was to be away from him and our home for weeks at a time. He has provided the support, encouragement, patience, and editorial help that have made my graduation from Louisiana State University possible. I love you sweetheart! Thank you so much for making this possible.
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ABSTRACT

This project was a qualitative case study that recorded and analyzed the professional development of one certified elementary teacher as she studied developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) and pursued her Pre-K and Kindergarten add-on certification. It focused on the changes in her classroom practice from mostly developmentally inappropriate practice (DIP) at the beginning of the project towards mostly DAP at the end of the project. The project recorded her acquisition of concrete knowledge about DAP, and her beliefs regarding DAP as she taught young children over the course of one year, June 2003 through May 2004. It included study of the supports and barriers to the teacher’s growth in her use of DAP that she encountered along the way. It also included observations about the researcher’s own practices as a mentor and source of support for DAP in early childhood teachers, and the changes in those roles that occurred over the course of the project.

This study found that the teacher made substantial progress along the DIP to DAP continuum during the project, particularly in her practice with preschool children. The study further showed that the various supports for DAP that served her during the year of the project were sufficient to allow her to overcome most of the barriers to DAP with which she struggled. It also revealed an area of developmentally appropriate practice, with kindergarten children, in which she has an opportunity for ongoing growth.

This study also looked at the role that a researcher-mentor may play in supporting and encouraging growth in an early childhood teacher, from developmentally inappropriate practice towards developmentally appropriate practice. It revealed that strategies that have been shown to be appropriate with young children in early childhood education can be similarly effective when applied to supporting teachers in DAP.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Justification

Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) is an important component of high-quality care and education. The emphasis placed on DAP is highlighted by two publications of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The NAEYC published a position statement on developmentally appropriate practice, frequently referred to as the DAP guidelines in 1987 (Bredekamp, 1987) (referred to as “the 1987 DAP guidelines” to distinguish them from the current, 1997 edition). The NAEYC revised the guidelines in 1997 (the DAP guidelines) (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) to reflect current issues in early childhood education and to address criticisms of the previous document.

Since the publication of the 1987 DAP guidelines, the positive implications for the use of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) in early childhood classrooms, along with the negative implications of the use of developmentally inappropriate practice (DIP), have been examined in several research studies (e.g., Burts et al., 1990; Burts et al., 1992; Burts et al., 1993; Charlesworth, Burts, Hart, 1994; Hart, Yang, Charlesworth, & Burts, 2003; Hart et al., 1998; Jambunathan, Burts, & Pierce, 1999; Marcon, 2002). Although the results of this research indicate that DAP is beneficial for children, only a minority of early childhood classrooms can be considered developmentally appropriate (Dunn & Kontos, 1997).

Although the majority of the research to date indicates the positive outcomes of DAP and the negative outcomes of DIP on young children, as summarized by Hart, Burts, & Charlesworth (1997), many teachers in early childhood education programs still use developmentally inappropriate methods. In fact, some research findings indicate that the same teacher may incorporate both appropriate and inappropriate practices in the same classroom and curriculum. According to Charlesworth, Hart, Burts, De Wolf, (1993), “A classroom may fall at the DAP end of the continuum but still have instruction in one or more areas that is not as effective as it could be because of a lack of appropriate guidance or scaffolding” (p. 22). The authors further note that “Some of the teachers have wholeheartedly embraced DAP while others have only progressed to using manipulatives as a supplement to their basal readers and workbooks.” Teachers may have acquired from their own grade school experiences a worldview, or scripts for action, of teachers as knowledgeable experts who are purveyors of knowledge to students who are passive recipients of that knowledge. This didactic approach is described in the DAP guidelines as part of DIP.

DAP is difficult to implement, and it requires continuing education and constant support to move teachers from these early-acquired scripts of inappropriate practice to the use of developmentally appropriate practice. This study adds to the body of literature on developmentally appropriate practice in general and mentoring for change toward developmentally appropriate practice specifically.
Statement of the Problem

This study is a qualitative case study of the beliefs and practices of a certified elementary teacher, who I call Gigi. At the beginning of the project, Gigi was teaching in a nonpublic Pre-K classroom in a state sponsored program for at-risk children. She also was working toward her Pre-K and Kindergarten add-on certification. To acquire the add-on certification she was required to complete six additional college courses in early childhood education (ECE), including her semester of student teaching in Pre-K and Kindergarten. I observed and recorded, during a portion of the summer of 2003, and during the 2003-2004 school year and a portion of the summer of 2004, the attitudes, struggles, and process of change for Gigi, and her and my own reflections on that process. I also recorded my own development during the project.

The study focused on data to determine (1) what changes occurred in her teaching beliefs and practices; (2) what factors seemed to lend support or to hamper change towards developmentally appropriate practice in Gigi’s teaching practice. During this analysis, I particularly noted Gigi’s and her supervisors’ responses to the college courses she took, to any mentoring available to her, to her efforts at journaling, and to each of our views and reflections on her practice.

Research Questions

Five research questions guided this case study.

1. What were the observed practices of the teacher as they related to developmentally appropriate practice at the beginning and at the end of the project, and how did these observed practices relate to the teacher’s self-reported beliefs and practices?

2. Did the teacher move towards DAP during the project?

3. With reference to any recorded change in practice:
   a. What factors were supportive in her progress towards DAP?
   b. What factors acted as barriers to her progress towards DAP?

4. What common themes between developmentally appropriate practice for children and practice that tends to support adult teacher development and change were revealed during the study?

5. What changes did I notice in myself as a result of this study?
   a. How were my own beliefs about developmentally appropriate practice affected by my research and this study?
   b. How has my view of myself as a trainer of early childhood teachers been affected?
Limitations

1. I lived in one southern state and Gigi lived, was employed, and attended college in another southern state – 525 miles away. Time I spent with Gigi was limited to 4 visits during the school year of about 2-3 days each and a 6-week summer session.

2. Communication between myself and Gigi, except during those short visits, was in the form of journal entries (limited by the teacher’s time and inclination to write in her journal), occasional phone calls (limited by time and coordination of schedules), and email (limited by Gigi’s discomfort with using email), all of which acted to limit the quantity and quality of the contact between Gigi and myself.

3. The length of time allowed by the project was too short to record all the changes in Gigi that occurred as a result of her self-study, course enrollment, and the impact of her various mentors reported during the project. Change probably continued to occur after the termination of this project. This report has provided a snap-shot view of where she was when the project began and where she was when the project finished, but not a complete picture of her as a fully-developed early childhood professional.

4. The data recorded and the analysis of it was colored to some extent by my pre-existing beliefs about developmentally appropriate practice and teachers’ roles in the classroom, and by my prior experience as a mentor and instructor of early childhood teachers.

5. It was not possible for me to record, or to take into account in analyses, all the influences that might have impacted Gigi’s change in classroom practice during the term of the project.

Assumptions

The following were assumed to be true and fundamental to this study:

1. Based on previous research indicating the positive academic and behavioral outcomes for children who are taught in classrooms where developmentally appropriate practices are used (e.g., Burts et al., 1990; Burts et al., 1992; Charlesworth et al., 1993; Jambunathan, Burts, & Pierce, 1999), it was assumed that developmentally appropriate practices were desirable.

2. The information conveyed to me in Gigi’s journal, in classroom observations, in interviews with Gigi and her supervisors, and provided by Gigi in completed “Teacher Beliefs and Practices Surveys” was assumed to be an accurate representation of the participant’s view of reality.
3. The classroom practices used by Gigi and the atmosphere in the classroom as I and others observed her were assumed to reflect the typical conditions of her classroom.

Definitions of Terms

The terms used in this study are defined as follows:

Classroom practices are defined as the instructional methods a teacher uses in the classroom. In this study, practices were depicted as along a continuum from developmentally appropriate to developmentally inappropriate based on the DAP guidelines.

Developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) are defined conceptually, according to the DAP guidelines as decisions made about teaching based on:
1. what is known about child development and learning – knowledge of age related human characteristics that permits general predictions with in age range about what activities, materials, interactions, or experiences will be safe, healthy, interesting, achievable, and also challenging to children;
2. what is known about the strengths, interests, and needs of each individual child in the group to be able to adapt for and be responsive to inevitable individual variation; and
3. knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which children live to ensure that learning experiences are meaningful, relevant, and respectful for the participating children and their families.” (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. 9)

Examples of developmentally appropriate practice would include those that “include an emphasis on the whole child (physical, social, emotional, and cognitive), planning with consideration of each individual child, learning as an interactive process, and concrete activities relevant young children’s lives” (Charlesworth, Hart, Burts, & DeWolf, 1993, p. 6). For the purposes of this study, DAP was defined as Gigi’s classroom practices that appeared to be congruent with DAP as it is depicted in the charts of developmentally appropriate and inappropriate practices included in the DAP guidelines (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) on pages 123-135.

Developmentally inappropriate practices (DIP) are defined conceptually as the opposite end of the continuum from DAP as defined conceptually above.

1. They would not be based on what is known about child development and learning.

2. They would not be based on what is known about the strengths, interests, and needs of each individual child, but would be based on teaching the same preordained information to each child in the class without respect to the interests, cultural background, strengths, or weaknesses of the children in the
class, whether the teaching is done individually, in small group, or in a whole group setting.

Examples of DIP may include teaching practices that “emphasize the cognitive, treat all group members as if they are the same, attempt to pour in knowledge through lecture and other whole group activities, rote learning procedures, and emphasize learning through workbook/worksheet, drill and practice activities that focus on discrete skills” (Charlesworth, Hart, Burts, & DeWolf, 1993, p. 6). For the purposes of this study, DIP was defined as Gigi’s classroom practices that I or others observed to be congruent with DIP, as it is depicted in the charts of developmentally appropriate and inappropriate practices included in the DAP guidelines (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) on pages 123-135.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This study was a qualitative case study of the change in classroom practices exhibited by a certified elementary teacher as she worked toward Pre-K and Kindergarten certification. Specifically, I focused on teacher change toward developmentally appropriate practice.

I attempted to determine what factors seemed to lend support to the changes in the practices of the teacher; what factors acted as barriers to that growth and change; and the response of the teacher to the process of mentoring, journaling, and reflection on her practice. Additionally, I recorded my own responses to the processes revealed during this study, acknowledging my bias in favor of developmentally appropriate practices both as a trainer of early childhood teachers and as a director of an early childhood program.

This chapter contains a review of literature related to developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) and developmentally inappropriate practices (DIP). Specifically it presents background information about DAP, the impact of DAP and DIP on children, the process of growth and change in teachers’ developmentally appropriate practices, and the supports and barriers to that change.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Background

The world’s largest professional association for early childhood educators is the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). This organization and its members have devoted extensive time and resources to defining practices that they believe have the most positive outcomes for children. In 1987, primarily in response to nationally increasing pressure on educators to push down into early childhood classrooms those formal, didactic teaching practices commonly found in the upper elementary grades, NAEYC published the first edition of guidelines that defined developmentally appropriate practice and developmentally inappropriate practice (Bredekamp, 1987). It set forth a position statement and specific guidelines, including presentation of a chart that illustrated appropriate and inappropriate practices. It was intended to move early childhood teaching practices away from a formal, pencil-and-paper, rote-drill-and-practice curriculum toward a constructivist, child-centered, hands-on, exploratory curriculum that allowed children to use all their modalities of learning. In the next several years, there was widespread acceptance as well as wide-spread debate concerning the 1987 DAP guidelines. The profession reflected on, discussed, and critiqued the 1987 DAP guidelines and continued to research the effects of DAP and DIP on children.

In response to the criticism of the 1987 DAP guidelines and the new research and theory, NAEYC published a new position statement on DAP in 1997 (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). The editors included more emphasis on the incorporation of children’s social and cultural context in teaching, the importance of family involvement in
children’s learning, the individualizing of instruction and making it more inclusive of children with special needs, and the roles and responsibilities of teachers as active decision makers. In addition to knowledge about how children typically developed, teachers also needed detailed knowledge of the strengths, weaknesses, ways of learning, social and cultural background, and individual needs of each child in the classroom. Teachers were expected to apply these kinds of knowledge in planning classroom experiences to meet the needs both of the group and of each individual child in the group.

Like the 1987 DAP guidelines, the 1997 DAP guidelines emphasize child-centered, hands-on, exploratory interactions with people and materials in the child’s environment. It depicts a classroom in which the child learns by making choices and discovering the effect those choices have on people and the environment. Developmentally appropriate practices are also presented as those that enhance a child’s self-esteem by offering child-selected opportunities for both success and challenge at many individual levels.

In contrast, the DAP guidelines present DIP as those that involve mostly formal, teacher directed, skills-oriented group lessons, particularly those that make substantial use of pencil-and-paper, drill-and-practice, and rote learning. According to the NAEYC (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997), these practices offer little opportunity for children’s choice and frequently involve punishment and extrinsic rewards to maintain children’s engagement and control misbehavior of disengaged children.

Child Outcomes

Since 1987, there has been substantial research on the outcomes of the use of DIP and DAP in early childhood classrooms. One body of work is by researchers at Louisiana State University, collectively known as The LSU Studies (e.g., Burts et al, 1990; Burts et al., 1992; Burts et al., 1993; Charlesworth, Hart, Burts, & DeWolf, 1993; Charlesworth, Hart, Burts, Thomasson, et al., 1993; Hart et al., 1998; Hart, Yang, Charlesworth, Burts, 2003; Jambunathan, Burts, & Pierce, 1999). Other researchers have also explored developmentally appropriate practices (Dunn, Beach, & Kontos, 1994; Frede, Austin, & Lindauer, 1993; Hirsch-Pasek, Hyson, & Rescorla, 1990; Hyson, Hirsch-Pasek, & Rescorla, 1990; Marcon, 1992; Marcon, 1994; Marcon, 2002; Sherman & Mueller, 1996; Stipek, Feiler, Daniels, & Milburn, 1995).

The LSU Studies revealed that children in classrooms whose teachers used DAP exhibited fewer stress behaviors in the classroom than children in classrooms where teachers used DIP. They also found that children from low socio-economic status (SES) families who attended DAP classrooms in kindergarten had better reading achievement scores in first grade (Burts et al., 1993). A more recent study (Hart, Yang, Charlesworth, & Burts, 2003) found that

1. DIP kindergarten experiences, and the related stress behaviors observed there, were associated over time with
   a. greater growth in child hostility / aggression,
   b. hyperactive / distractible behavior,
   c. slower growth in math understanding through 3rd grade
2. Boys from DIP kindergarten classrooms were more likely to have slower growth in reading vocabulary, reading comprehension, and expressive language that their peers from DAP kindergarten classrooms.

These researchers concluded that

1. Children of any SES, race, or gender whose kindergarten experience was in a DIP classroom were more likely to experience noticeable behavior problems and slower acquisition of math abilities.

2. Children of any SES, race, or gender whose kindergarten experience was in a DAP classroom had slower growth in problem behaviors and faster acquisition of math abilities over time.

3. Growth trajectories that begin in kindergarten tend to persist into 3rd grade, despite pre-kindergarten ‘readiness,’ SES, race, or gender, and the type (DAP or DIP) of 1st and 2nd grade classrooms they attend.

Other researchers found similar positive correlations between developmentally appropriate practices and positive outcomes for children (e.g., Dunn, Beach, & Kontos, 1994; Frede, Austin, & Lindauer, 1993; Hyson, van Trieste, & Rauch, 1989; Marcon, 1992; Sherman & Mueller, 1996; Stipek, Feiler, Daniels, & Milburn, 1995). Dunn, Beach, and Kontos (1994) found that children in developmentally appropriate classrooms with high-quality literacy environments had better receptive language development. Sherman and Mueller (1996) found that children who were in developmentally appropriate classrooms from kindergarten through second grade had better reading and math achievement test scores than did their peers from developmentally inappropriate classrooms. Frede, Austin, and Lindauer (1993) found a positive correlation between developmentally appropriate preschool practices and the children’s academic success in first grade.

Hyson, van Trieste, and Rauch (1989) also studied academics in preschool programs. They found that, although children from developmentally inappropriate (academically focused) preschool classrooms initially showed greater academic performance as compared to children from a developmentally appropriate (child-initiated) classroom by the end of kindergarten those differences had disappeared. In addition, by the end of kindergarten, the children from developmentally inappropriate preschool classrooms showed lower initiative and creativity and more negative reactions to school than their peers from developmentally appropriate preschool classrooms. In another study, Hyson, Hirsch-Pasek, & Rescorla (1990) found that children from developmentally appropriate classrooms scored higher on measures of divergent thinking and creativity than did children from developmentally inappropriate classrooms. They found that children in developmentally appropriate classrooms had more positive attitudes towards school than children from developmentally inappropriate classrooms. In this study, they found no difference between the academic achievement of the children from the developmentally appropriate and the developmentally inappropriate classrooms.
Marcon (1992) found that children in developmentally appropriate (child-initiated) preschool classrooms had better verbal, math, and science skills, as measured by their public school progress reports, than did children from developmentally inappropriate (teacher-directed) academic preschool classrooms. They were also seen as having better social skills and better work habits, and viewed themselves as being more cooperative than did their peers from developmentally inappropriate classrooms. In a longitudinal study, Marcon (1994) found that children from developmentally appropriate kindergarten classrooms exhibit more positive social behavior in later elementary grades than their peers from developmentally inappropriate kindergarten classrooms, while maintaining comparable or better academic outcomes. Marcon (2002) found in a follow-up longitudinal study of the all of the children included in her earlier study who were still in that school system (64%), in addition to other findings, 

By the end of the children’s fifth year in school [3rd grade], there was no significant differences in academic performance of children who had experienced three different preschool models [child-initiated, academically directed, and a combination of those two models]. By the end of their sixth year in school [4th grade], children whose preschool experiences had been academically directed earned significantly lower grades compared to children who had attended child-initiated preschool classes. Children’s later school success appears to have been enhanced by more active, child initiated early learning experiences. Their progress may have been slowed by overly academic preschool experiences that introduced formalized learning experiences too early for most children’s development status (p. 1).

Stipek, Feiler, Daniels, and Milburn (1995) also looked at correlations between developmentally appropriate practice and success in particular cognitive areas. They found that, although the children from developmentally inappropriate classrooms, where basic skills were emphasized, had higher reading achievement scores, those same children were rated lower in motivational measures. In contrast, they found that children from developmentally appropriate classrooms showed higher levels of motivation, were more independent in their exploration, were more willing to proceed to more challenging academic tasks without adult encouragement, and had higher expectations of their own success in academic tasks.

In summary, even though some researchers found that the didactic, skills-based teaching in developmentally inappropriate classrooms provided some short-term academic advantage (e.g., Stipek et al., 1995), taken as a whole, this large body of research revealed substantial empirical support for the benefits of DAP, as well as for the negative effects on children of the use of DIP in early childhood classrooms.

Another area of research that was embodied in the current study is the research of developmentally appropriate practice and the process of teacher change. The following literature explored the process of change in the level of developmental appropriateness of teachers’ classroom practices. All these studies included some discussion of the barriers to and supports for positive change towards DAP.
**Teacher Change**

Bidner (1998) reported that the elementary school teachers she studied listed the following factors as primary supports to their teaching practice: administration that is supportive of DAP, co-workers who are supportive of DAP, DAP curriculum requirements, continuing education, previous experiences, family (their own), the children’s parents, and resources. The teachers in her study reported as barriers such factors as: administration, class composition, co-workers, curriculum requirements, the parents of the children, resources, school duties, and other miscellaneous unclassified factors. Bidner noted that a given factor affecting a teacher’s practice can act either as a support or a barrier, depending on its context and function in the life of the teacher.

Charlesworth and DeBoer (2000) presented self-study as a useful tool to help a teacher change from DIP to DAP. In her journal DeBoer recorded daily her teaching activities and the children’s and her own reaction to those activities. Her major professor and her district curriculum director observed her classroom using a checklist of DAP (Charlesworth, Hart, Burts, Thomasson, et al., 1993). DeBoer also rated her own classroom using the same instrument. Charlesworth and DeBoer compared their observations of DeBoer’s practices. They focused on: (1) strategies and techniques that were best to help at-risk children develop self-initiated behaviors; (2) strategies and techniques that were considered more developmentally appropriate or academically focused; (3) DeBoer’s observations, insights, and struggles in implementing DAP; and (4) what factors influenced a teacher to use DAP or DIP. One major outcome of the study was seeing the value of daily journaling as the teacher attempts to move towards DAP. They concluded that self-study was a very appropriate tool to allow the teacher and her advisor to observe the process of change.

Gronlund (1995) presented the view of an ECE consultant and discussed what she had learned in years of training early childhood teachers to implement DAP. She found that there were barriers that many teachers experienced to implementing DAP as follows:

1. Preset curriculum they ‘had to cover’

2. The need to administer, and to teach children to take, standardized tests

3. The perception expressed by administrators, colleagues and parents that DAP was ‘just playing’ or ‘not real work’ or that the children were not really learning what they needed to know in a DAP classroom

4. The lack of one or more of the elements of complex change all of which are needed to support meaningful complex change, such as the change from DIP to DAP:
   a. vision (a lack results in confusion)
   b. skills (a lack results in anxiety)
   c. incentives (a lack results in only gradual change)
   d. resources, (a lack results in frustration), or
   e. an action plan (a lack results in ‘false starts’ or uneven change)
Gronlund (1995) said that “Just as children learn by doing, so do adults. Giving teachers opportunities to explore and play with DAP in their own classrooms is essential to building the skills they need to use these approaches successfully” (p. 10). According to Gronlund, many teachers reported that it had taken them two to three years to significantly move from traditional practices to DAP and around five years to become comfortable and proficient with DAP. She concluded that it takes substantial time, resources, and commitment, both from the teachers and their administrators, to fully implement and benefit from the implementation of DAP.

Jones and colleagues (Jones, Burts, & Buchanan, 2000) conducted a mixed-method study of early childhood teachers who graduated from the same ECE program at one university. Quantitative analysis revealed that the teachers reported significantly more developmentally appropriate than developmentally inappropriate beliefs and practices. These self-reported beliefs and practices correlated in this study, with the exception of one teacher, with the researchers’ classroom observations of significantly more DAP than DIP for these same teachers.

In the qualitative analysis of this study, Jones et al. (2000) discussed the supports and barriers to their teaching practice that were reported by the teachers they studied. They listed the following factors as primary supports: administration that is supportive of DAP, DAP curriculum requirements, previous experiences, their own families, parents of the children, their self or personal inner attributes and resources, and other miscellaneous unclassified factors. They also reported the factors that the teachers mentioned as sources of barriers to DAP, as follows: administration when it supported DIP, class composition and high teacher-child ratio, co-workers who support DIP over DAP, DIP curriculum requirements, parents of the children who lacked understanding of DAP, and a lack of necessary resources.

Jones et al. (2000) also found that the teachers reported that a lack of appropriate teacher preparation was a barrier to their practice. These teachers mentioned some frustration with their undergraduate preparation for teaching. They reported that they had, prior to beginning to teach, inadequate field experience or practicum, education and practice in classroom management, and preparation for the “real world” of teaching. These teachers suggested that more hands-on teaching practice presented earlier in their undergraduate study would have prepared them better for success as teachers using DAP.

May’s (1992) study presented an administrator’s point of view of making the change from DIP to DAP in kindergarten. As the district assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction, he discussed the “Turner Project,” a project conducted in the Turner Unified Schools in Kansas City, Kansas, that introduced DAP to the subject schools. May discussed his journey through various views of early childhood teaching. His growth in understanding of child development led him to the belief that adults, like children, construct meaning from their experiences. He wrote of the barriers to and difficulty in the process of change in a school district. He recommended the a model of change using four independent and inter-dependent cornerstones upon which to build change: (1) promoting ownership of the ideas by the teachers; (2) promoting vision of the desired outcome among the stake-holders; (3) making sure that the supports for change are there at the administrative and district levels; and
(4) ensuring that the teachers who must institute the change, and their administrators that must support them in that effort, have the “capacity” for change (i.e., the necessary training, knowledge, dispositions and opportunity for that change). He recommended that district and school level leadership make their belief in DAP, and their desires to foster change towards it, well-known and clear to all affected personnel. May discussed time, personnel, money, policies, and power that are necessary if change is to be successful.

Murawski (1992) wrote of teachers as change agents in changing kindergartens, of the teacher-level motivations for changing from DIP to DAP, and of the supports and barriers to such change. She made several recommendations to teachers who are attempting to institute developmentally appropriate classrooms practices in schools or school districts where DIP prevails. She gave advice to teachers about fostering change, primarily in seeking and getting administrative support and weathering opposition with patient perseverance.

Pelander (1997) discussed his own process of change towards DAP. He had been a primary grades teacher for 14 years, using “the traditional or conventional approach.” When he had been teaching 3rd grade for two years, he read a written evaluation of the primary grades in his school “suggesting that the children be given more opportunities for movement and mentioning NAEYC as a resource” (p. 19). Despite his lack of knowledge and understanding about DAP at that first encounter, he engaged in a process of chronicling his own construction of understanding of DAP and the changes towards DAP that he implemented in his own classrooms. He noted that his first change was in doing away with ability grouping in reading. Next, he began “to allow children to share in decision making, have choices, and be in control of much of their learning” (p. 21). Then he moved away from a pre-set curriculum to allow the curriculum and classroom projects to emerge from the interests and needs of the children. Finally, he began to engage the parents of his children in planning for their children’s learning experience, and to provide them with the information they needed to understand how DAP can work to help their children achieve their goals for their children. He concluded by saying that he had begun to measure his success as a teacher “by my ability to facilitate, the number of choices I offer, and how meaningfully I impart cognitive skills – academic and every day problem solving skills – rather than by how many dittos and workbook pages I give and grade” (p. 24).

The 1998 NAEYC book, When Teachers Reflect – Journeys Towards Effective, Inclusive Practice (Tertell, Klein, & Jewett, 1998) provided interesting reports of individual early childhood practitioners’ change as they considered various aspects of developmentally appropriate practice in their own classrooms and their own process of change during the Best Practices Project reported on in the book. The format of the book also provided, in addition to the practitioners own reflections on their journeys, the reflections of their mentors on their respective mentee’s reflections and a list of suggested questions and activities for reflection in each of the areas of developmentally appropriate practice discussed in each chapter. The journeys depicted, although focused primarily on inclusion of children with special needs in developmentally appropriate classroom
activities, provided a good picture of adult learning about developmentally appropriate practice and appropriate practices in adult learning models.

Vander Wilt and Monroe (1998) discussed the process of change from DIP towards DAP between 1986 and 1991 in a small Midwestern school district. The district planned and implemented district-wide change from traditional approaches to developmentally appropriate practice in its kindergarten, first, and second grade classrooms. The project included twenty teachers in five elementary schools. They collected self-reported beliefs and practices, interviews with administrators and teachers, observations in classrooms, responses from children, and achievement data from standardized readiness tests and basic skills tests. The researchers found that implementation of DAP must have certain elements to succeed:

1. Administrative support at the district level, both financial and time commitments
2. Teacher commitment to the change
3. Collaboration and mutual ownership of the concepts of change
4. A united front the school and teachers present to the community to answer the questions about DAP raised by the parents and the general public
5. Positive promotion of the goals of DAP
6. Allocation of sufficient time to allow the process of change from DIP to DAP to achieve its ends – time for teachers to embrace DAP and time for those teachers to develop proficiency in DAP

Vander Wilt & Monroe (1998) also indicated that implementation of DAP in the primary grades will require curriculum and instructional modification in subsequent grades. … If, in fact, one is committed to DAP and the theory that under-girds it, one must conclude that DAP does not apply to young children only. (p. 22)

They concluded that, for teachers, principals, teacher educators, DAP and the many benefits it embodies for children seemed to be worth the substantial time, resources, and effort needed to implement it.

Wein (1995) studied several child care teachers and the supports for and barriers to implementing developmentally appropriate practice in their classrooms. She observed their practice and allowed the teachers to review and comment on her observations and the conclusions she drew about the appropriateness of their classrooms. She then reported their comments. Wein provided an example of a way to study teachers of young children as they struggle with the concepts embodied in DAP as they teach their classes.
In a follow-up article, Wein (1996) explicated the roles that a preconceived notion of classroom schedule, and a rigid adherence to that schedule, plays in restricting or supporting the level of developmental appropriate practice. She presented case studies of three teachers from different childcare centers who responded to the pressures imposed on their practice by the time demands of a pre-ordained schedule. Only one of the three teachers reorganized all of the suggested curriculum and practice – including the daily schedule – to allow for more developmentally appropriate practices. Wien (1996) concluded,

I suggest we question the tacit acceptance of the production schedule organization of time in programs for young children and invite reconsideration of its impact on the lives of children and teachers so that there might be room for the … curriculum cherished as developmentally appropriate in programs for young children.” (p. 400)

In summary, developmentally appropriate practice has been found to provide positive benefits to children’s education, but it is a difficult construct to implement. The process of change from DIP towards DAP takes time and substantial support and there are barriers that impede that change. For change from DIP to DAP to be successful, there is required: teacher commitment to the change; substantial allocation of time and resources, financial, physical, and personnel; support of the teachers’ efforts by the administrators, both in terms of patience, encouragement, time, and material support; coordination of positive information and effort among teachers and between teachers and administrators; and dissemination of positive information regarding the benefits of DAP among the stake-holders in ECE.

Developmentally Appropriate Adult Education

There is a substantial body of research that references the ways in which teacher educators can teach in ways that are developmentally appropriate for their adult students. Many of the strategies recommended for developmentally appropriate practice with children are also recommended for use in the college classroom and in workshops and seminars.

There is a well-known gap between what early childhood teachers know, as revealed by their self-reported beliefs, and what they practice in their classrooms, as revealed by their self reported practices and by classroom observations. Burts and Buchanan (1998) discussed ways in which teacher educators can help bridge the gap by using developmentally appropriate teaching strategies with their adult students similar to DAP recommended for use with young children. According to the authors, when teacher educators teach their adult students in traditional didactic ways

This presents a real problem to students who leave teacher education programs with the understanding that they should teach using an ideology that they may understand cognitively, but have not experienced personally. … If teacher educators expect students to teach children using
developmentally appropriate practice, then they must also teach in
developmentally appropriate ways. (p. 134)

Burts and Buchanan (1998) recommend that early childhood teacher
educators, and all those who would support teachers in their DAP, should plan
their teaching strategies in ways that are developmentally appropriate for adults.
Teacher educators should act as models of developmentally appropriate practice
as they teach college classes, workshops, and seminars in modeling. Teacher
educators need to understand that their students learn from the structural
processes of their course, workshop or seminar as well as from the content being
presented. Developmentally appropriate structural strategies may include such
concepts as managing resources, and projecting the image of an early childhood
educator as a professional. Teacher educators should have knowledge of how
adult students learn, given the variances in their age, individual educational
backgrounds, and levels of experience. Teacher educators should:

a. Use age appropriate strategies that take into account what is relevant to
adult learners, how adults learn and develops, and what motivates
adult students to pursue further education

b. Use individually appropriate strategies that take into account the
differences among the students in the course (workshop or seminar),
both culturally and experientially

c. Use a curriculum that is integrated, varied, relevant, playful and
balanced.

Burts and Buchanan (1998) conclude that it is possible for the teacher educator
who wishes to support students’ learning about DAP by using these adult applications of
DAP in their own classrooms and lessons to allow the students to leave the course,
workshop, or seminar with an internalized understanding of how to use DAP in their own
classrooms gained from the model of DAP they experienced in the course.

Buchanan, Burts, and Pellar (1998) also reported on a college professor’s use of
the developmentally appropriate adult education practices discussed in Burts and
Buchanan (1998). The first author, discussed her use of DAP in one semester of teaching
one undergraduate course and one graduate course. She reported on her implementation
of many of the strategies that Burts and Buchanan suggested, and the acceptance by and
perceived impacts on her undergraduate students and her graduate students. She found
that many of the undergraduate students responded to the disequilibrium of the
developmentally appropriate class settings and lesson plans with rejection of the DAP
framework of the class. These students reported concrete learning of class objectives, but
discomfort with the process. In contrast, Buchanan found that the more experienced of
her undergraduate students and her graduate class seemed to enjoy the developmental and
interactive approach that she took, and to benefit from it in ways that were individual to
each student.
Buchanan (Buchanan, Burts, & Pellar, 1998) concluded that she found the use of the developmentally appropriate approach to teacher education fun, interesting, challenging, satisfying, and stimulating to the growth of the instructor. She shared her own experience with having to give up some of her traditional role of teacher and learn to share power in the class with her students. She told about the hard work of assessing her students’ understanding and needs, and of participating in the journal-based dialogue with them. She indicated that a professor’s use of DAP in college courses, as with DAP in public schools, sometimes came into conflict with college standards and expectations; conflict between the traditional need to cover the material of the course and administer standardized tests and the professor’s need to adapt course criteria, assessment, and grading to the individual needs, experience level, and developmental level of the students in the course.

Charlesworth discussed what she learned about adult education from her participation in the self-study project with DeBoer (Charlesworth & DeBoer, 2000). “I found that when a teacher is motivated to change and when an advisor is available to provide support and suggestions, not pressuring but applauding each small step, behavior change can take place” (p. 151).

She reported on the improvements in DeBoer’s DAP, and on her growth in self-confidence and security in DAP. By the end of the project, the developmentally appropriate adult education strategies utilized permitted DeBoer to construct her own understanding of the value of DAP for children and how to implement it with self-confidence. It also gave her the knowledge and confidence to resist pressure from academically focused administrators or peers to return to more traditional DIP.

Charlesworth concluded that making progress in DAP is difficult and takes time, energy, reflection, and persistence. She said that she had learned that teachers need, but frequently do not get, support and encouragement to take risks and make innovations. She noted that the methods used during the project gave her personal insight into the process of teacher reflection and growth in DAP.

In summary, teacher educators and mentors can use successfully strategies to support DAP in teachers that correspond to developmentally appropriate strategies recommended for teaching young children.

This project recorded the story of one teacher’s journey as she attempted to move from developmentally inappropriate to developmentally appropriate practice. It is also the story of my own growth as a teacher educator and of changes in my view of teachers as they struggle with the daily challenges of implementing developmentally appropriate practice in their classrooms.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

This project was a case study that recorded and analyzed the data I collected as I observed and recorded the professional life of Gigi, a certified elementary teacher who was working towards Pre-K and Kindergarten add-on certification. The change in Gigi’s classroom practices, or the lack thereof, was the primary focus of the project. I also focused on barriers to and supports for change that Gigi encountered along the way. In addition, I recorded changes in my own practice as an early childhood teacher educator as a result of the study. The following section describes the methods I used, my strategies for data collection, and the analysis procedures I used for this project.

The Case Study

The ways the data were collected, reviewed by me and the subject teacher, analyzed, and reported were guided by knowledge gained from my review of available resources in qualitative research and case studies. There is a substantial body of information available that defines what qualitative research is and is not, and what a case study is and is not.

Miller and Salkind (2002) provided a detailed description of the types and history of case studies. Most importantly for this study, however, it provided a clear and concise listing of procedures for conducting a single or multiple-case study. They suggest that the researcher:

1. **Provide an in-depth study of a bounded system.** I studied a single teacher and her process of change in teaching practices over time.

2. **Ask questions about an issue under examination or about the details of a case that is of unusual interest.** I have not found a case study over time of an individual teacher who was working to add Pre-K and Kindergarten certification to her current elementary certification.

3. **Gather multiple forms of data to develop in-depth understanding - documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observations, and physical artifacts.** I used direct observation, interviews with Gigi and her supervisors, review of Gigi’s journals, and review of her self-reported beliefs and practices to develop in-depth understanding of her beliefs, attitudes, experiences, and her process of change. Included in this study is her response to the process of to adding early childhood theory and practices to her knowledge base.

4. **Describe the case in detail and provide an analysis of issues or themes that the case presents.** I have sought issues, trends, and themes that relate to (1) the change in Gigi’s practices over the time period of the study, (2) the supports for and barriers to change that seemed to affect that process of change, and (3) the process of change in my own attitudes that I encountered.
I have described those issues, trends, and themes in sufficient detail to allow the reader to develop his or her own viewpoint of those issues and themes.

5. **In both description and issue development, situate the case within its context and setting.** I collected and recorded a deep and rich data set for this case, of Gigi’s life and work setting, such that it allows the reader to position him or herself in the case and understand its complexities.

6. **Make an interpretation of the meaning of the case analysis.** - In the final interpretive phase, the researcher reports the lessons learned from the case. I interpreted for the reader the meaning that I derived from the study: (1) its place in the current body of knowledge about change in teacher practices; (2) similarities and differences between this case and others that I have reviewed; (3) implications I found for my own practice as an early childhood teacher educator; and (4) implications I found for continued study.

As was noted by Campbell and Russo (2001), I was guided by the idea that it is not possible to be unbiased in a case study, but that biases should be explicated so that the reader may judge what impact those biases have on the analysis I reported. According to the authors, “almost invariably the social scientist undertaking an intensive case study by means of participant observation and other qualitative commonsense approaches to acquaintance, ends up finding out that his prior beliefs and theories were wrong” (p. 289).

I anticipated that many of my beliefs and theories with which I approached this study would be found to be incomplete or erroneous, necessitating revisions of my proposed procedures. I reported those changes later in this study, as I discuss the data and how I analyzed them, and the conclusions that I drew from them.

Campbell and Russo (2001) made a few suggestions for improving single-case studies.

1. “**The researcher doing a single-site case study should keep explicit records of the analogous aspects of his problem-solving activities.**” (p. 289-90)

I have kept careful records of all observations, interviews, and the comments Gigi made on those records. The data derived from those records have been used to highlight unexpected results and I have attempted to integrate them with other observations.

2. **Use triangulation of multiple methods of diagnosis and multiple sources of data collection to correct arbitrary or incorrect analysis and interpretation of the data.** According to the authors, “When, however, observations through several instruments and separate vantage points can be matched as reflecting ‘the same’ objects, then it is possible to separate out the components in the data due to observer (instrument) and observed.” (p. 293)
The multiple methods of data collection used for this study (researcher observations, supervisor observations, interviews with Gigi and her supervisors, journal writings, and Gigi’s self-reported teaching beliefs and practices) has allowed for rich, in-depth reporting and analysis that separates for the reader the various influences on the teacher, her attitudes, her struggles, and her process of change.

3. Each researcher (including Gigi, in this case) should “be asked to cross-validate, and invalidate, the other’s interpretation of the culture they had studied in common” (p. 294).

I asked Gigi to review, as soon after the recording as was practical, the logs of observations and interviews in which she was a participant. As I analyzed the data and selected portions of it to be used in this final report, I submitted that analysis to Gigi for her review and comment. As the final report was written, I asked Gigi to review and comment on it prior to final publication. All the corrections that Gigi made were agreeable to the researcher, and the data were corrected.

Neuman (1997) presented the value of the case study and some of the pitfalls of the case study and how to avoid them. He stressed the importance of the context in which the case and its subjects are studied. According to Neuman,

Whereas the quantitative researcher looks for patterns in the variables on many cases, a case study researcher faces an overwhelming amount of data, but has been immersed in it. Immersion gives the researcher an intimate familiarity with people’s lives and culture. He or she looks for patterns in the lives, actions, and words of people in the context of the complete case as a whole. (p. 331)

Neuman (1997) discussed the impact the researcher herself, or her presence in the setting, can have on what occurs. He observed that the researcher “sees, hears, remembers, and records only some of what occurs, and puts only some of what is in his or her field notes into a final report” … “replication is rare in qualitative research, and researchers usually work alone” (p. 333). As a result, the integrity of the researcher’s finding and thus the value of the report can come into question. He suggested some measures to assure the integrity and value of this type of study that were included in the methodology I used as I conducted this study.

1. “In talking to a given subject, the researcher should consider what other people say on the same subject, looks for confirming evidence, and checks for internal consistency. He or she should ask whether the information being reported is first-hand knowledge and try to determine whether the subject’s feelings or self-interest might lead him to lie. Even if the subject makes a false statement, it may provide evidence of the subject’s perspective.” (p. 333)

I have used the different sets of data collected to show where any given data source can be confirmed or must be questioned or studied further.
2. “The greater volume of data collected on a case study, the better. It should include detailed written notes, detailed verbatim interview transcriptions, references on data sources, commentaries, quotes, maps, diagrams, paraphrasing and counts.” (p. 333)

The data set for this study included the written transcripts of interviews, written observation logs, copies of written journals, and Gigi’s and my written reflections.

3. “The living subjects of the study should read, correct, and comment on the details of the study.” (p. 333)

As discussed earlier under Campbell and Russo’s contribution to the methodology for this study, I have submitted this report to Gigi for her review and have included her corrections where appropriate.

4. “Other researchers can check references and sources.” (p. 333)

My major professor, committee members, and their graduate assistants have helped me to ascertain that the references and sources are checked and correct.

5. “The researcher should present the context and detailed information so that the readers can feel they are there and trust the researcher.” (p. 334)

The final study does not contain the raw data, but rather only those pieces of that raw data that I thought would support or contrast with my analysis to make a reasonably complete record of Gigi’s experience during the course of this study. It was my intent to present such a rich and colorful depiction of Gigi’s process of change – the attitudes and struggles – that the reliability of the data was clear to the reader.

Neuman (1997) suggested that the researcher should not interject personal opinions or screen the data to support a personal prejudice. Instead, the researcher takes advantage of personal insight, feelings, and perspective as a human being to understand the social life under study, but is aware of his or her values or assumptions. He or she takes measures to guard against the influence of prior beliefs or assumptions when doing research. Rather than hiding behind ‘objective’ techniques, the qualitative researcher is forthright and makes his or her values explicit [italics added] in a report. Qualitative researchers tell readers how they gathered data and how they see the evidence. (p. 334)

In so doing, the study allows the reader to reflect on, verify, and accept or reject the researcher’s findings. I have attempted to present my own biases and values in such a way that the reader can ascertain their impact on this study.

Neuman (1997) also presented suggestions on how to conduct field interviews so that the information is helpful to the study, but not unduly colored by the way the question is asked, or the imposition of the researcher’s viewpoint into the data collection.
I was guided by these suggestions in formulating interview questions and approaches, arranging and conducting interviews, and recording the responses.

According to Stake (2000), the case study should be organized around the research questions, issues and thematic lines, that “invite attention to ordinary experiences but also to the language and understanding of the common disciplines of knowledge … For all the devotion to science or to a client, [asking] ‘What can be learned here that a researcher needs to know’” (p. 440). I believe that the story of Gigi’s process of change, her attitudes towards change in her teaching practice, and her struggles with change, needs and merits further exploration. It may prove to be representative of the struggles of other teachers as they attempt to construct DAP in their classrooms and with their students.

Stake (2000) suggests that the researcher attempts to tell the story of the case, and without dismissing the desirability of telling the story that best represents the case, he or she chooses what that story is, what to include and what to leave out, more will be learned than is reported. Although the researcher cannot tell the whole story, he can choose the data, and the associated reflections and emphasis, that in his opinion, tells the story that he and the reader finds illustrative and interesting.

For the purposes of designing the research methodology for this project, and to improve my telling of the story, I was guided greatly by the project format and research practices used by several other qualitative researchers (e.g., Goffin & Stegelin, 1992; Myerhoff, 1980; Tertell, Klein, & Jewett, 1998; Wein, 1995; Wein, 1996). These works served as examples of how a researcher can: gain access to a subject; develop a trusting and confidential relationship; and observe, record, reflect on, and finally report the life and struggles of an early childhood teacher as she wrestles with developmentally appropriate practice.

These qualitative research reports also presented how qualitative researchers can present the story even if it presents ideas that surprise the researcher and the subject. When their findings were disappointing, they admitted this and discussed it. They showed how qualitative research can present a balanced view and reduce the influence of personal biases and values while admitting that they exist as potential influences on the study. I have attempted to emulate their honesty and their approach to revealing the story to show Gigi’s story as I found it.

Data Collection Strategy

Prior to commencing the study approval of the Institutional Review Board at Louisiana State University was obtained (See Appendix A). Written informed consent was obtained from Gigi and her supervisors to conduct the research with Gigi in her classroom (See Appendix B). Gigi has been given a pseudonym to protect her identity, as were the schools at which she taught. The informed consent form for both Gigi and her supervisors guaranteed the anonymity of the children in the classroom, using pseudonyms to identify the subject schools, the teacher, and the children throughout the study and in all subsequent publications and presentations thereof. All data linking pseudonyms with real names have been kept separate from the project report in a locked location accessible only to me and my major professor.
In the initial phase of the case study, I interviewed Gigi to determine her teaching history, motivation to change, and current teaching beliefs and practices. I discussed with her various aspects of her practice including class schedule, room arrangement, materials used in the classroom, and curriculum. These data were used to triangulate and compare to my own observations of her classroom practice. I arranged, as a supplement to the State mandated college courses, the availability of mentor relationships for Gigi with other experienced early childhood practitioners who were familiar with and supportive of developmentally appropriate practices. Mentoring activities could have included observations by these mentors of Gigi in her classroom, modeling skills for her, and support by the mentors as she desired. Gigi did not make use of these alternate mentors during this project.

During the second phase, I gathered data from my own observations, interviews with Gigi and her supervisors, observations by her supervisors, Gigi’s written journal kept during the project, and “Teacher’s Beliefs and Practices Survey” completed by Gigi at the beginning and end of the project. The instrument was similar to one developed for use in kindergartens as a part of a study by Charlesworth, Hart, Burts, Thomasson, et al. (1993). The instrument used in the current study was developed at LSU in 2001 (by Diane C. Burts, Teresa K. Buchanan, Joan H. Benedict, Sheri Broussard, David Dunnaway, Stephanie Richardson, & Mary Sciaraffa) for use in preschool classrooms, and was based on the 1997 DAP guidelines (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

During the entire project, it was intended that Gigi maintain journals recording her own day-to-day impressions of the ongoing activities in her class and her own responses to her college coursework, mentoring contacts, and other project-related activities, and provide me with copies for review and use in this project. Although she did not keep an ongoing journal as planned, she was required to keep a journal of her reflections on her view of DAP during an independent study course during Summer 2003, on assigned readings during one of her college courses in the Spring 2003, and for student teaching in Pre-K and Kindergarten during Spring 2003. I have used those journals for triangulation in this report.

I conducted periodic interviews with Gigi and her supervisors, tape recording these interviews for later transcription and content analysis. For the time that I was an active participant-observer in class with Gigi during June of 2003, I tape recorded classroom activities to aid me in writing about my observations later in the day. Gigi’s students were not the focus of the study, but rather how they interacted in the environment Gigi provided for them. I made notes of my interviews with and observations of Gigi in her classroom and my own reflections on that data. I shared them with Gigi for her review, and her comments have become a part of this project report.

During the third and final phase of the study, in addition to the ongoing analysis of data required of a qualitative study during the earlier phases, I conducted a final analysis of the data. The data included tape recorded interviews, photographs, both Gigi’s and my journals, “Teacher Beliefs and Practices Survey” self-assessment by Gigi, and interviews with and observations by her supervisors. I looked for themes and trends of change in Gigi’s teaching beliefs and practice as revealed in the data. Additionally, I looked for themes of supports and barriers to her growth as a teacher attempting to implement a developmentally appropriate teaching program.
I was guided in my content analysis by *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (Miles & Huberman, 1994), and in particular a modification of the processes of data content analysis that they term a pre-structured case, which begins with an case outline that describes anticipated data categories, and guides the researcher in formulating questions to be asked and triangulating data sources to be examined. According to the authors, this process reduces data overload common to qualitative studies, and the related time spent in data analysis.

Assuming that the researcher has established an explicit conceptual framework, a rather precise set of research questions, and a clearly defined sampling plan, the pre-structured case begins with a case outline, developed before any data are collected. The outline includes detailed data displays, as well as narrative sections accompanying them. The outline is, in effect, a shell for the data to come. Over several rounds of field visits, the researcher fills in successive drafts of the case, revising steadily; the final version of the case is ready shortly after the last field visit. (p. 84)

I was familiar and experienced with developmentally appropriate practice and with the barriers and supports encountered by early childhood teachers who are attempting its implementation. Thus, I formulated my research questions from my own experience and a study of available literature. I have gone into the data to identify passages that spoke to those pre-formulated questions (in lieu of the formal outline they described), looking for explicit and implicit meaning. This seemed a better approach than the word-by-word, line-by-line, open-coding and axial coding process recommended by Strauss & Corbin (1998), which appears to be better suited to assist inexperienced researchers who are unfamiliar with the subjects under study to discover all of the possibly obscure and unanticipated meanings from the words of their subjects.

I visited Gigi and her classroom several times during summer 2003, at the beginning and the end of the fall 2003 school semester, and again early and late in the spring 2004 school semester. I used my classroom observations of Gigi as a spring-board for formulating questions to be asked at each interview. Data gathered during each interview, along with my analysis of it prior to further research visits, provided guidance in formulating questions to be asked during subsequent interviews. I transcribed the interviews. I analyzed those transcripts, the copies of my observation field notes, and the other written data sources using open coding and content analysis, based on my specific research questions, as described in Miles & Huberman (1994). Using my own experience and understandings gained during the data collection process, I coded data associated with my research questions with notes written in the margins of the copies. I created descriptors for these notes that related to my research questions: Gigi’s beliefs and practices related to DAP; supports and barriers to DAP; and the roles I played as I related to Gigi, along with the ways that Gigi related to me as I played those roles. This process was repeated as further data were collected, in a constant and iterative process of mining the data fields for useful and salient information about Gigi, her attitudes, her aptitudes,
her beliefs and teaching practices, changes in all of these over time; and for useful information about my own role, and my views of that role, in the process.

Next I made a numerical record and cross-reference to the data of the various categories that I found in the data. Then, by collation and aggregation of the above referenced margin notes, I developed a list of the most prevalent and important categories of data associations. I included in the final report categories of associations of data that were found most frequently or with sufficient salience in the data. I neglected, or grouped with other data associations that seemed to have more impact on Gigi, those influences that appeared only infrequently or, based on my own experience or Gigi’s direct testimony, seemed to have had low impact on Gigi. In using my experience and participation in the data collection process to identify salient categories, I intended to remain true to the qualitative nature of this project.

In my final report of the data, its categories, and their relationships, I intended to let the data speak for itself, to include sufficient quotations directly from the data such that the reader could see Gigi’s story clearly, and be able to trust the results I derived from the data. In so doing, I hoped to provide a rich and deep picture of Gigi’s life as an early childhood teacher.

Throughout the project, I also looked for themes and trends in my own attitudes and beliefs as a trainer of early childhood teachers. I have recorded changes I have made in my own practices of coaching and observing teachers that result from my participation in this study. I looked for themes common between developmentally appropriate practices for teachers of children and developmentally appropriate practices for teachers of adults.

I admit to a bias in favor of developmentally appropriate practice. It was difficult to remain objective and detached as a researcher in the face of that bias. However, this project was to tell the story of Gigi and her struggles as she worked with young children and learned more about developmentally appropriate practice with young children. As a researcher, I have had to restrain my value judgments on her efforts in favor of reporting those efforts as she and I reviewed the data together, and in favor of letting the reader make his or her own value judgments on the reported data.

I admit to being passionate about the value to children of developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs. I admit to being passionately in favor of early childhood teachers’ learning about and using developmentally appropriate practice in their classrooms. As a result, I hoped that I would be able to observe and record a change in Gigi’s practice in the direction of more developmentally appropriate practice in her classroom. I hoped that Gigi would begin to understand and to value DAP. I hoped that, even after she completed her add-on certification, she would remain engaged in an ongoing study of DAP and how she could implement it in her own practice. I acknowledged that, even after she completed her add-on certification, it was possible that Gigi might find teaching young children so stressful that she might, as have many other teachers, leave the field again as she did after her first year of teaching. I would have found such an event to be intensely disappointing.

No matter what the outcome for Gigi personally, this study of her efforts towards DAP, along with her reflections about DAP, would be interesting, informative, and cause for my own personal reflection.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

In this project, I conducted a case study in which I recorded and analyzed the professional life of one certified elementary teacher, Gigi, who was working towards a Pre-K and Kindergarten add-on certification. I focused primarily on the changes in her classroom practice, and knowledge of and beliefs about developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) and developmentally inappropriate practice (DIP) with young children over the course of one year, June 2003 through May 2004. I also studied the supports for and barriers to her development of DAP that Gigi encountered along the way.

I have presented here the findings that I derived from the data that I collected in the way that they relate to my research objectives. I have organized those findings in the following sections: (a) the context in which I encountered Gigi in June 2003; (b) Gigi’s beliefs and practices as I and others recorded them throughout the project, including changes in her levels of DAP and DIP; (c) the supports and barriers that I found to her implementation of DAP; and finally (d) changes that I found in my own view of DAP and my practice as a teacher of early childhood teachers.

Context and Environment

Background

On June 11, 2003, I was introduced to Gigi by Dr. Diane Burts, my major professor. Gigi was a teacher at a small suburban private elementary school. She taught in a state-funded preschool program aimed at providing a developmentally appropriate preschool program for at-risk children, mostly children from socio-economically deprived families. Her class included some children with developmental delays. Gigi’s prior educational background was with elementary children. It provided little training in child development, in developmentally appropriate practice with young children, or in child guidance and behavior. Gigi had graduated from a small southeastern university several years before and had completed her student teaching in second grade with predominantly middle class children. She had taught second grade for one year in an inner-city school in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Gigi said that she had taken, at the undergraduate level, a one semester-hour course in classroom behavior management that gave an overview of theories of child behavior, mostly focused on the behaviorist theories. She said that the professor of that class suggested that the students “choose one that works for you and use it.” She said that she had been exposed to “assertive discipline,” an extrinsic discipline system that utilizes stoplights and clothes pins to manage child misbehaviors. Because student teaching began several weeks after the school district began the school year, she only saw classroom management after the system was already in place and the students were familiar with it.

Gigi told me in our first interview that she felt unprepared by her college and student teaching experience for the kinds of behavior problems that she encountered in her first year teaching 2nd grade. The class composition was predominantly black
children from low socio-economic status families. She said that she had been assigned a
mentor teacher, but that her mentor was too busy with her own class to be of much help
to her. She said that her principal asked a behavior specialist from the school district to
work with her on classroom management, but that person “gave up on me!” and that “I
was the most inconsistent teacher she’d ever seen” (as to classroom management and
child discipline).

Gigi tried the assertive discipline model in her class and “it just didn’t work.” She
tried having a behavior calendar on which she marked down good behavior marks and
bad behavior marks each day. At the end of the week she used these cards to develop
behavior grades. The children with few bad behavior marks at the end of the week could
choose a treat. She even allowed children with good behavior grades to have a salad with
their lunch because the children loved salad, but children with bad behavior grades could
not have a salad. Every strategy that she told me she had used during that teaching period
involved an extrinsic punishment and reward system. She seemed to equate discipline
with punishment.

Gigi said that, as a result of her child guidance and behavior problems, her
experience as a teacher that year was “so horrifying” that she quit teaching at the end of
that year. In fact, she admitted that it was only with her own parents’ help and support
that she completed the year. At the end of that year, she vowed that she would “never,
ever, ever return to teaching … it was just so horrifying, I was never going back to that!”

Gigi worked for an attorney for a time as a clerical employee. She had no
medical or annual leave benefits, but said that she enjoyed the work and felt challenged.
At the end of that time, her mother, a school psychologist, and her father, a retired
professor of psychology, were pushing her to get a real job, a job with benefits and
hopefully better pay. She told me that she began to think about returning to teaching as a
result of her parents’ urging, as a result of her personal long-time desire to teach, and as a
result of God’s guidance in response to her prayers.

Gigi applied for a teaching position at a private school near her home, Southern
Suburban School, where she interviewed for a middle school teaching position. The
principal told her that, given the classroom management and behavior issues in her prior
teaching experience, she felt that it would have been inappropriate to assign Gigi a
middle school class because middle school children “can be very challenging.” However,
the principal called her a few weeks later and told her that she had been impressed with
Gigi at her interview and wondered if she would consider teaching a four to five-year-old
preschool class.

Gigi said that, although she had applied there, she was unconvinced that going
back into teaching was what she should do. She prayed about it and felt that God was
guiding her back to teaching at that particular school. So Gigi started teaching in the
state-funded non-public school early childhood development program in fall of 2002.

During this time, the state monitor of that program, Dr. Elizabeth Brown, visited
Gigi’s class and began to urge her to use developmentally appropriate teaching practices
with her young students. Gigi stated that she was totally unfamiliar with DAP, in fact
“I’d never heard the term ‘DAP,’” but I just loved teaching the little ones, and I wanted to
know how to do it better. I wanted my students to enjoy my class and wanted them to get
the most out of it that I could offer them.” She admitted (in our July 2004 closing
interview) that at first, and even when she first became involved in this project, “I really
thought DAP was a bunch of hooey.” Even so, she began to try to do as Dr. Brown suggested, and in spring 2003 enrolled in an ECE class at Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge, Louisiana (LSU). By the time I met her in June 2003, she had completed that spring 2003 course in ECE practice and had begun some movement towards DAP.

Gigi enrolled for a summer independent study class with Dr. Burts. Originally, she selected a topic of “integrating science in an early childhood curriculum” as her independent study topic focus. However, given the behavior issues Gigi had in her prior teaching experience and the behavior problems that Gigi was having with her current summer preschool class, it seemed that a study of developmentally appropriate child behavior and guidance would be more beneficial to Gigi before she moved on to learning more about developmentally appropriate academic curriculum.

Dr. Burts told me about Gigi and said that she thought that with my educational and working background and interests in DAP I might be able to help her move towards DAP. She made arrangements for the two of us to drive out to Southern Suburban School to meet with Gigi after school one day that week. She did not tell me ahead of time what issues she thought Gigi had as a teacher, but wanted me to meet her, see her classroom, and talk with her myself. I would then be able to decide what kind of thesis research project Gigi might present for me and how I might be able to conduct that research while helping Gigi accomplish her goal to become a better early childhood teacher.

Physical Environment

On June 11, Dr. Burts and I drove out to the school where Gigi taught. It was located on a major boulevard in a commercial area. It was housed in a building that looked like it might at one time have been a small, single story office building. There was a driveway with parking on each side surrounding the building, and a small courtyard on the inside of the “U” shaped building. Inside, I found a front reception area and a corridor that led left to a child care center, and right to the elementary school. There was a small administrative office for the child care center located immediately behind the reception area. The office for the school was located in the right wing just to the rear of Gigi’s classroom. In addition to the main building, the owners of the school had acquired an adjacent small two story block of apartments with a concrete parking lot in front, and had fenced in that parking lot as a basketball court and physical education area. The apartment building was used for classrooms for the second through sixth grade classes. On the opposite side of the main building, there was a fairly large fenced playground with swings, a large climber, and some sand patches. It was used by both the child care center and the elementary school at different times of the day.

As we walked down the hallway towards Gigi’s classroom, I peeked into several of the rooms. I noticed how small the classrooms were; about 20 feet long along the corridor and about 12 feet wide from corridor to windows, with a bulletin board near the classroom door. Each room was set up with traditional rows of student desks all facing a blackboard. There was one very small windowless room with a desk and some shelves on the left of the corridor. Gigi later identified this as a room used by the special resource teacher for one-on-one work with special needs children. It also was
used as a disciplinary “time-out room.” The corridor was very narrow and was being used to store excess furniture.

We reached the corner of the corridor and turned left, heading towards the rear of the building. I saw a sign saying “Ms. Gigi’s Preschool Class” on a door on the right of the hall, and two adult-eye-level bulletin boards on the hall walls, one on each side of the door. My professor went with me into the classroom and introduced me to Gigi. After we talked for a while, she left me with Gigi.

As I looked around the room, I was amazed at how small it was and how cluttered the play centers were. I hadn’t realized until after I got in the classroom that there were actually three doors into the classroom, only two of which were in use and one of which was blocked by a large grey metal storage cabinet inside Gigi’s classroom. The room measured about twelve feet wide from corridor wall to exterior windows that faced out on a concrete paved parking lot on the west side of the school. The windows were covered with mini-blinds against the hot afternoon summer sun. The room measured about twenty-four feet in length, for a total area of 284 square feet. In my home state, the area required in a classroom for each child is 35 square feet per child. Using that criterion, I would have said that this classroom would accommodate only 8 preschool children. I was surprised when Gigi said that her class the prior year had varied from 10 children, with her as sole teacher, to 12 children when she had an assistant. In summer 2003, Gigi had 8 students.

The classroom’s entry door was at the south end, the end nearest the school office. At that end of the classroom, there were three large round preschool-height tables with preschool-size chairs around them, one for each child in the class. Gigi told me that day that my professor was “trying to get me to get rid of my tables” (referring to the large round tables) “but I like them and really don’t want to lose them. I’m going to develop a list of reasons of why I should keep my tables. Maybe I can convince her to let me keep them.” There was a dry-erase board covering the entire south end wall of the classroom near the tables, and a green chalkboard covering the north end wall. There were several adult-eye-level bulletin boards on the other walls. The floor was covered with blue commercial carpet. The ceiling was a suspended acoustical grid ceiling with recessed fluorescent light fixtures.

Around the perimeter of the classroom, there were several small play centers stocked with numerous play materials in shelves and bins. Gigi told me she had bought almost all the bins, shelves, and play materials with her own money. There was a narrow walkway down the middle of the room. Centers included: blocks (combined with manipulative toys), art, reading, dramatic play, and sand and water (in plastic tubs on a low table). However, these centers looked more like cluttered and disorganized toy storage areas than useful children’s learning centers. Gigi told me that she had no storage area available to her at the school outside her classroom. She said that she really had no space at her home where she could store the excess play materials and books that she had bought. She said that she knew she needed to rotate her center materials, but was unsure of what to keep and what to put away, even if she had access to a storage space.

At the northernmost end of the classroom, there was a small library and soft area for reading and relaxing. The library shelves there were jammed with many books stored in such a way that all that showed of the books were their edge bindings. They were so jammed together that I had a hard time pulling any of them out to see what kind of books
she had. Gigi told me that she loved books and reading and went to garage sales to build her library of children’s books.

Also at the northern end of the room, near the library and soft area, was a rug that she had taped down to the carpet, on which she had taped down two rows of children’s names to identify the spots on which the children were to sit at group time. It looked like two little rows of student desks, except that the children all sat in their rows on the rug facing the teacher’s chair, which was located with its back to the green chalkboard at the north end of the classroom.

The Teacher

Gigi and I talked for a while about her goals for her class. She told me that, although neither the state nor school administration had required her to get the add-on Pre-K and Kindergarten state teaching certification, she was pursuing that goal. Dr. Brown had told her that, of all the state program Pre-K teachers that she was supervising, Gigi was one of the top three. She told me that Dr. Brown had suggested that she pursue her add-on certification and that she learn as much about DAP as she could. I wrote in my journal that day,

Gigi truly seems to love the children. I met one of her little girls who beamed up at her, shy with me. Her eyes showed her love of Gigi. True love of young children will help Gigi move in a developmentally appropriate direction like no other force will. I can see she wants her children to enjoy her class as well as learn.

I also noted, “I got a copy of [her] schedule. [It] appears to have a good deal of group time or teacher assigned activity time with only about 1 hour between 8:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. for true child-selected activity [except for outside time].”

I stayed there that afternoon long enough to measure the room and measure all the equipment in it. We made arrangements for me to come the next day during the morning center time from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. to allow me to observe her class.

Another point of view I got on Gigi’s practices came from interviews with her principal, with whom I visited twice during summer 2003. Her school principal that summer, Ms. Bacon, told me during my first interview that she had seen a lot of improvement in Gigi’s practice over the past school year and that Gigi had been very open to the suggestions Dr. Brown had made throughout the year. She said Gigi was “willing to try things, very receptive towards any sort of assistance” and “came back [from state program workshops] so ready to implement those things.” She also said about Gigi’s teaching practices, “At the beginning of the year [there was] way too much paper and pencil, all sitting down at the tables and working” but that later Gigi “did a lot of [whole group] language experience activities,” and “did a lot of sing-song that she hadn’t done at the beginning [of the school year].” Ms. Bacon said that Gigi’s major challenge appeared to be in the area of classroom management and child guidance. Ms. Bacon stressed how much importance she, as a principal, placed on “firm, but gentle discipline.” She told me she had been concerned with Gigi’s loud and strident tone of voice, which she did not feel were necessary for “firm discipline.” She said that early in
the school year she had suggested to Gigi that she lower her voice with the children when correcting them. She said Gigi was “keeping her voice up too loud – she would get louder and they would get louder.” She said “that has definitely improved.” When I asked her about the discipline strategies Gigi used in her class, she told me Gigi “Sometimes was putting her child in time-out” and “on occasion she’d have the aide [when there was one] remove the child from the classroom” and “they would not get a treat when others would get a treat.” I had already seen that Gigi kept a bucket of “goldfish” cheese crackers in her room to use as treats for compliant children. Ms. Bacon also said that more recently, she’d frequently heard Gigi say such things as “I like the way so and so is … [acting in the desired way]” and sometimes, when all else failed “she would tell them she would have to call papa or mama and have them come to school to talk to the child.” Ms. Bacon said that Gigi still sometimes forgot “to organize them [for transitions] – just says ‘line up!’ or ‘let’s go’ and they still sometimes are rowdy going down the hall or in the cafeteria.”

I recorded in my journal the first day I visited Gigi’s classroom, “… given that Gigi is … prepared to teach older children in a didactic format, and given the size of the room and no partner with whom to collaborate, I think she has done amazingly well with her room.”

I thought that a room arrangement that would allow for more meaningful play for her children might be helpful for Gigi. It is frequently said by early childhood professionals that “Classroom arrangement is an extra teacher in the classroom” in reducing problematic child behaviors. I understood why, as Gigi had told me, my professor was trying to get her to get rid of those large round tables and rearrange the room. The only use that she made of them was to have a single group morning activity when her students first arrived for school, and to have snack twice during the day. There was a cafeteria down the hall where her students ate their lunch. The rest of the day, Gigi used those tables primarily as a place for her to sit and write in her independent study journal and to do planning work while the children were in their short center play time and during nap.

I noted in my journal that evening,

I’m going to tinker with a few room arrangement ideas to see if some eye level wall space can be freed up for children’s art display. Some really amazing free art is now stored in a basket. Children who are not engaged now in free art expression may be supported to try that if they see others’ (artwork) displayed. What children’s art [is] displayed is project [i.e., all the same] art and on the bulletin board at adult eye-level.

I also wrote that night,

I’ll also look around school to see if the principal could give Gigi a nitch for storage of rotation materials outside her room. Even plastic boxes in the hallway would be better than cluttered centers. … I intend to observe her class at all times of day for activities, function and possibilities before I make many suggestions – ask questions and find limitations first – then see what may be possible to help where I see difficulties or DIP practice.
We arranged to have supper on the evening of June 20, 2003 for a much longer getting acquainted interview.

**Researcher’s Challenge**

I thought in my visit with her that Gigi was resistant to making change and seemed to have a defense ready to any observation or suggestion I made about her room. I saw even at that first meeting that a major challenge for me would be in exercising care with her so as to be helpful while avoiding raising her defenses to receiving that help. She had told me at that first meeting that she was busy marshalling her defenses and rationalizations so that she could avoid doing what her independent study instructor had suggested about her room arrangement. I could see that, as an outside observer, this was going to be a challenge for me, and I would have to be at my diplomatic best if I was to help her make any progress towards DAP. Unfortunately, given my devotion and commitment to DAP and my past experience as a boss at my preschool, diplomacy with teachers who don’t want to move towards DAP was difficult for me.

Gigi told me after I had observed her that summer,

I don’t understand how children can be expected to learn their ABC’s and 1-2-3’s if you don’t directly teach them. That’s what I do at group time! I teach them! How are they going to learn those things if all they do is play in the centers?

She reflected in her independent study journal “I thought I was doing so well! Dr. Brown told me I was one of the best. Now I feel like I’m being told that I don’t know what I’m doing at all!” At that first visit, it seemed to me that she was strongly wedded to DIP, perhaps from her own prior school experiences and college background. It appeared she may have been relying on what Wein (1995) called scripts for action. It appeared to me that it might be difficult for her to move away from DIP towards DAP.

At that first visit, it seemed that there might be a major barrier to Gigi’s moving towards DAP: her resistance to change and defensiveness. I had observed her apparent love of the children she taught and thought it might provide a major support for her change towards DAP if she could begin to use DAP with her class and the children responded positively to the change.

Early in this project, I saw that I was going to have to change my approach to helping Gigi move towards DAP. As I began to work with her, it began to appear that I was taking the approach that I had the information, and if I could just impart it to Gigi, she would automatically change her practices towards DAP. This is a restatement of a developmentally inappropriate, didactic, approach to adult education. I, too, needed to move my practice relative to adult education of early childhood teachers towards a more developmentally appropriate approach.

**Early Project Redesign**

As a result of the effect on Gigi of my active presence in her classroom and of my making direct suggestions for change towards DAP, we made the first of several changes
that I had to make during this project. Between June 12 and 28, 2003, I visited Gigi’s room several times, interacting with the children, and modeling DAP. I made direct suggestions that I thought would help Gigi better engage the children in what she was trying to teach them and better manage the behavior problems that I could see she was having. In late June, I worked on a Saturday to help her to re-arrange her room into more functional centers. We used a plan that she had developed from a floor plan and equipment footprints that I had drawn for her to use for that purpose. We worked together to store the excess materials in a storage location that I had persuaded her principal to allow her to use for rotation materials. During that day Gigi broke into tears of anger and frustration. She said that she thought that I was being “a steam-roller” and that “it isn’t even my own classroom anymore, and I just hate this!”

After only two or three weeks, my professor and I could see that Gigi was not responding in a positive way to my presence in her classroom as a helper. My committee and I decided that instead of my being a direct model and mentor, a participant observer, it would be better if I became a “fly-on-the-wall” silent observer. We decided that I would interview and observe Gigi several times throughout the coming school year and be available as a mentor only if she sought me out in that regard. My committee and I decided that I should let her principal, her professors, and her student teaching advisors provide direct suggestions and modeling of DAP. It would be a slower process for Gigi, and it would preserve the project.

This provided my first insight into her level of resistance to input from someone outside her “chain-of-command” (i.e., employer or supervisor, her professor for a college course, or her supervisor when she was student teaching). It seemed to me that she responded to suggestions to change with little resistance if it came from someone she viewed as an authority figure, someone she viewed as being in her chain-of-command. With nearly any other mentor, it appeared to me that her first response usually was to defend her status quo of teaching.

Assessing Beliefs and Practices

Summer 2003

I observed Gigi’s practice in her classroom on June 12 and June 17. Over the last weekend in June we worked together to rearrange her classroom to provide larger, more separated centers, to reduce the amount of play materials to a more appropriate level, and to display and label the storage of those materials in such a way that the children would have better use of them. I observed her again on July 3 and again on July 9, after we rearranged the room. I made the following observations in June about the arrangement of her room:

1. many play materials available to children at center time

2. cluttered, overstocked, crowded centers, with little labeling of storage containers
3. little in the way of enhanced art materials such as play dough, clay, collage materials, variety paints, etc. accessible to children

4. no children’s art at displayed at child eye-level, all child art put in cubbies to be taken home to parents

5. fixed rows of seating assignments on rug, grouped in front of the teacher for use at group time, with teacher sitting in chair with her back to chalkboard

6. too many library books, with books arranged spine out

7. theme related books arranged face-front on rail of chalkboard behind teacher’s group time chair

8. adult-sized, clearly labeled “time-out chair” prominently placed in classroom

During June, I made the following observations of DAP in her room:

1. teacher used mostly a loving, respectful way of addressing children

2. teacher used effective transitions between activities, including alerting the children a few minutes before beginning the transition

During that same period, I made the following observations of DIP:

1. teacher designed whole group sit-down project each morning, including worksheets

2. teacher treated center time as playtime (not education) and treated whole group sessions as teaching time, including rote learning activities

3. teacher dedicated substantial amount of the daily schedule to teacher-directed, non-child-choice activities, with 30 minutes or less in center time

4. teacher spent substantial amount of time using of harsh-voiced correction of non-compliant children, time-out, and extrinsic rewards (such as food rewards) and punishments for discipline, and non-specific “good job” praise

5. teacher asked one-right-answer questions not designed to stimulate higher order thinking

6. little engagement by children in extended play

7. several children frequently engaged in disruptive, off-task behaviors during both whole-group time and center time
8. teacher spent little time in extending conversations with children

9. teacher did not individualize work for children of differing abilities

10. teacher discouraged children from talking among themselves in whole group except to answer direct questions from the teacher

11. teacher used a pedantic, teacher directed, scripted method of having children act out a book in large group: teacher read the child’s lines to them to be repeated verbatim, while the audience sat for long periods (up to 25 minutes) and squirmed or whined to have a turn at acting

12. teacher sometimes left children unsupervised in classroom due to the lack of another adult present or available during emergencies

After I had acted as a participant-observer with Gigi that summer, and after we rearranged her classroom, I recorded noticeable changes towards DAP in her overall practice, as well as in how the children used their room and centers. In early July, I made the following observations about the room arrangement:

1. centers with adequate space for play are well-stocked, but not over-stocked with developmentally appropriate play materials

2. organized and well-labeled storage of play materials

3. proper separation of centers with plenty of room to extend play

4. separated block and manipulative centers

5. children cooperate with each other as they construct their own play

6. children’s art displayed at eye level where they can see and add to display

7. still too many books in library, with display spine out instead of covers facing the front

I made the following observations of Gigi using DAP during that same period:

1. extended time (45 minutes) allocated in schedule for center time

2. children engaged in quiet conversation during center play, with very little rowdy, disengaged play evident

3. teacher carries on extended conversations with children at center play time

4. teacher called upon children to vote on the day’s activities
5. (on one occasion) teacher encouraged children to leave their block construction up with a child-made sign to protect it, or to take a picture of it to post on block center wall

6. teacher offered natural consequences for misbehavior

7. teacher encouraged children to negotiate solutions to problems among themselves

I made the following observations of Gigi using DIP during that time:

1. teacher used time-out and harsh-toned verbal threats for discipline when coaching strategies were not quickly successful in achieving compliance

2. teacher interrupted planned 45 minute center-time at 25 minutes to vote on staying in center time or going outside to swim

3. children had to clean up all centers before going outside to swim (see above)

4. teacher failed to enforce natural consequences for a non-compliant child when the child threw a tantrum, and teacher made idle threats repeatedly before enforcing rules

5. children were left unattended at times for administrative reasons or for emergencies

6. teacher established arbitrary and confusing rules for children, usually not natural consequences

7. children were expected to be nearly silent at all times in classroom, hallway, and cafeteria (an external barrier to DAP - due to proximity to school office)

8. books read to whole group only, never in single or small group setting

My overall assessment of Gigi’s practice for that summer, after she had completed a full year of preschool teaching and six semester hours of ECE college courses, was that her classroom practices were more developmentally inappropriate than developmentally appropriate. This was confirmed by my interviews with her that summer. It appeared that Gigi had already begun to move towards DAP from her early developmentally inappropriate scripts for action. However, in her interviews that summer, she still voiced belief in DIP, supporting such practices as:

1. rigid, thematic teacher-developed and teacher-directed lesson plans

2. limitations on child-choice and viewing play as being “not educational”
3. trying a DAP approach, then abandoning it if it was not immediately successful; not allowing adequate opportunity for children to become familiar with a new DAP routine

4. using whole group, didactically presented activities for all education of children; saying “I just don’t think I can get behind all this play”

5. using state-mandated standardized testing as the sole method for child assessment; voicing lack of understanding of the use of meaningful assessment or portfolios

6. defending her teacher-directed format for children to act out books; voicing lack of understanding of the purpose of allowing children to demonstrate their own understanding of books being read in class

7. defending her use of time-out and extrinsic rewards and punishment for discipline; voicing lack of confidence that DAP child guidance techniques would work for her

Using a count of the number of DAP and DIP observation entries I made on my observation logs to make a very informal scoring of her level of DAP, I found that her practice over the entire summer of observations showed about 1½ times the number of DIP observations to DAP observations, or substantially more DIP than DAP. However, comparing those observations before classroom rearrangement to those after classroom rearrangement, I found that her practice before classroom rearrangement was much more heavily weighted in DIP over DAP (about twice as many DIP observations as DAP). After classroom rearrangement, again using a count of DAP and DIP observations for an informal scoring mechanism, I found her practice to be a virtual balance of DAP and DIP. This seemed to confirm that appropriate classroom arrangement could serve to support Gigi in implementing DAP.

Gigi completed a reflective journal during her study with Dr. Burts during that same summer in which she discusses her participation in this project. I have used it as data to triangulate my findings. My analysis of it shows the following themes, which confirmed her continued attachment to DIP and her resistance to movement towards DAP:

1. She voiced resistance to change and rationalized her resistance to change.

2. She stated, essentially, that DAP can’t work to truly educate young children.

3. A stressful day usually made her want to abandon DAP and retreat to DIP, particularly as to the use of time-out for discipline. Her journal indicated that she had returned to the use of DIP child guidance strategies after I left for my home after studying her that summer.
4. She spoke of a lack of concrete knowledge about, and strategies for implementing, DAP in her classroom and with her children, particularly as to child guidance and the use of DAP teaching strategies.

Her journal showed that she was willing to try to implement DAP in the following circumstances:

   a. if someone in her chain-of-command, such as her principle, Dr. Brown, or her professor, suggested it (and that she was resistant to suggestions by other than such an authority figure)
   b. if I suggested a developmentally appropriate strategy, and it worked immediately to produce a quieter, less stressful classroom for her
   c. if she followed children’s interests and/or the children enjoyed the lesson

I also examined the self-reported “Teacher Beliefs and Practices Survey” that I asked Gigi to complete at the end of that summer. The survey scores showed that her practices to be slightly more developmentally appropriate than developmentally inappropriate. Other researchers have found that self-reported beliefs and practices may be somewhat more DAP than actual observed practice. Therefore, her scores on this measure tended to confirm my findings from my analysis of other data.

An Unwelcome Change

I observed Gigi’s classroom and interviewed Gigi twice during the fall 2003, as she continued to work at Southern Suburban School. The new school year had brought with it an unwelcome change for Gigi. The principal, Ms. Bacon, who had hired her and encouraged her when she started work in the fall of 2002 and throughout that school year and the summer of 2003, had left the school. In her place came a new principal for the school, Ms. Older, who had been an elementary teacher and admissions manager at another private school in the area. She had, in her own description, limited knowledge of developmentally appropriate early childhood practice and no prior experience as an assistant principal or principal.

Gigi came into conflict with Ms. Older nearly immediately over early childhood classroom equipment, storage of playground toys, and over the quality of the lunches and snacks being provided for the children. Gigi drew on her love of her students to fight for what she felt was right for them and for what was required for them by the state-funded program that they attended. Restrictions and reductions in expenditures by the school on the preschool program that fall seemed to provide barriers to DAP for Gigi.

In addition, she conflicted with Ms. Older over the new principal’s requirements that the children be silent inside the building at all times, whether in the classroom, in the hallway, or in the cafeteria. This was a substantial change from the requirement by her former principal that the children “use their inside voices” and not disturb other classrooms when they were transiting the hallways, or in the cafeteria. This conflict was reported to me by Gigi and by Ms. Older when I interviewed her on September 11, 2003. It seemed to me that Gigi was now in an environment that was not as supportive for her growth in the use of DAP as it had been the prior school year.
At this September 11 classroom visit I observed in Gigi’s classroom and collected
gigi’s end of summer beliefs and practices survey and her summer independent study
reflective journal. She mentioned her conflict with Ms. Older and seemed distressed at
the change. We made arrangements to meet the next day, when we reviewed my
September 11 observation notes and talked for a long time about her current situation and
her future aspirations.

Fall 2003

I observed Gigi’s practice in her classroom in the fall on September 11, and
November 14. In September, I observed that Gigi had made some changes in her
classroom to improve the children’s utilization of the centers, particularly in the art
center. When we rearranged her room in late June, the art center was located along the
west wall, between the sand and water center and the library. At that time, we had placed
some Styrofoam sheets on the back of the library shelves to allow the children to display
their work there. The easel was next to the aisle with a round table next to the wall, on
which children could set out their art supplies next to the easel.

September 2003. In September, I observed that Gigi had moved the art center
into a more enclosed location in the southwest corner of the room, adjacent to the dry-
erase board covered wall on which the children could now easily display even more of
their artwork. She had moved the manipulative center to a location between sand and
water and the library. Gigi’s small white standard bookshelf that she had used as a
library during the summer had been replaced by a typical preschool library shelf that
displayed the fronts of the books to the children. Gigi said that, with the addition of two
more state-funded preschool classes, the school had purchased this type of shelf for the
other classrooms. She said “I demanded one for my classroom too!”

Other than these changes, I made the following observations about the
arrangement of her room in September:

1. books in library displayed so children can see covers
2. children have individual journals accessible in a basket on “writing center”
table
3. circle time area is circular with children allowed to lounge or sit on rug or soft
area (in library)
4. good shelf and bin labeling; toys and materials visible, organized, and
accessible
5. writing center table too small to allow more than one child at a time to use it
6. no display in room so children can keep track of whose turn it is to be a
“helper”
7. teacher had removed most of the unit blocks, a large set of which had been purchased by the school in July, from the block center because “it took too long to clean up the block center with all of them out”

For my September visit, I made the following observations of DAP:

1. tricycles were available for outdoor play stored near playground, one for each child (Gigi purchased them with her own money)
2. children actively read books at first activity of the day (in library)
3. teacher encouraged community feeling by asking children “who’s here, who’s missing” at early morning group time
4. teacher encouraged math concepts by having children count “boys, girls, all of us” at early morning group
5. teacher allowed children to help develop classroom rules, and the few, simple rules are reviewed by the children themselves before center time
6. teacher scaffolded children’s learning in sand and water
7. children, for the most part, quietly engaged in centers
8. teacher requested children to tell her what they are building, cooking, drawing, etc., extending learning and language
9. teacher engaged in lap-reading with one or two children in soft area at library
10. teacher gave 5-minute warning of end of center time and beginning of cleanup
11. teacher modeled cleaning up and encouraged children to help clean up the centers where they played
12. teacher allowed children to transition individually to reading center to read as they finish cleaning up centers – no waiting for whole group time
13. teacher allowed class to vote on how the book would be acted out in whole group
14. teacher discussed the natural consequences of tearing the cover on a book with the class
15. teacher used the color of the children’s clothing to dismiss them to lineup for lunch a few at a time
16. teacher had continued to assess center play and revise room arrangement where necessary to allow for more engaged play

17. (noted from my interview with her later in that visit, after she had a chance to review my observation notes) – teacher amended the sand and water center rule from “if you mix sand and water together, the center will be closed” to “if you mix the sand and water, you’ll have to move to another center and let some of your friends play there instead”

18. teacher played actively with children on the playground (after she ate her lunch there)

19. teacher had abandoned worksheets for morning activity in favor of child-selected and more developmentally appropriate activities

During September 2003, I made the following observations of DIP:

1. morning reading time was a filler, too short, 5 minutes or less; teacher told children who were actively reading to put up their books in order to attend morning group

2. children sat too long while transitioning one at a time to centers

3. teacher moved from center to center with little time to stimulate higher order thinking at any group

4. teacher spent too much time overseeing children’s behaviors instead of observing and interacting with them to extend their knowledge

5. teacher used an arbitrary way of regulating number of children in centers, and movement between centers, that children themselves seemed to find arbitrary and confusing

6. teacher did not observe child in book center who is really reading out loud to another child – thereby missing an assessment opportunity

7. teacher closed sand and water center due to a rule violation there (instead of sending child who violated a rule there to another center and letting others play in sand and water – Gigi revised this rule after she read my observation log)

8. constant need to discipline non-compliant children continually interrupted teacher’s attempts at small group lap-reading in library
9. child who needed social skills was banned from playing with another friend in a confusing enforcement of the rule about the number of children allowed per center

10. children leave room by themselves to go to out-of-sight bathroom down the hall

11. teacher failed to observe a child in destructive, disengaged behavior when she is engaged in another center

12. teacher used scripted, teacher-directed format at whole group when the children act-out a book with which they were familiar

13. teacher took 8 to 9 minutes to choose actors for story while entire group waited, squirmed, crawled around, and fought among themselves

14. teacher had to constantly interrupt the group activity to correct unengaged children, but continued even when the activity did not seem to be engaging in meaningful learning

15. teacher spent 17 minutes on acting activity – children in the audience seemed bored

16. due to tight lunchroom schedule, teacher was forced to pass-up an opportunity to allow little boys to discuss the tornado they saw at the drain of the hand washing sink

17. teacher did not notify children on playground of the end of outside time prior to calling for lineup (again a tight schedule appeared to control her practice)

18. teacher used only the standardized testing required by the state for her assessment of her children, in lieu of meaningful and appropriate assessment techniques such (e.g., observation, and portfolios, or work sampling)

19. teacher abandoned a developmentally appropriate practice after one try if it wasn’t immediately successful (e.g., varying the numbers of children allowed in each center); seemed to be excessively concerned about being “fair” and “consistent”)

20. teacher sometimes lost temper under stress over children’s non-compliant behaviors

**October 2003.** I visited Gigi on the evening of October 24, 2003, but due to a serious illness in my own family, I was unable to observe in her classroom at that visit. At that time, Gigi presented me with yet another of the many changes through which this project would transit. After my September visit, she had applied to teach at the child care
center that was under construction at LSU. If she was hired, she would start work in late May of 2004. She had not yet heard about the status of her application, but was very hopeful. She had also decided that she would leave Southern Suburban School at the end of the 2003-04 school year, even if she was not hired at the university child care center. This would still allow me to complete my observations of her for a full school year and would allow her to transition out of her preschool class when her students graduated and moved on to kindergarten.

This October interview was mostly devoted to my listening to her express frustration with the situation with her school administration, referred to in my notes as “the problem.” She returned numerous times to “the problem” despite my attempts to help her find constructive solution strategies to “the problem” and to move our discussion on to how her practice with her children was going. We spent nearly one and a half hours in that session before I called a halt and bid her goodnight. I told her that I would visit her again in November or December at a time that I would be able again to observe her room and interview her.

November 2003. When I visited Gigi on November 14, 2003, I found that her sand and water center, two clear plastic covered tubs on a low table underlain by white Formica on the floor, had been replaced by a commercially available toddler-size sand or water table. Gigi told me that, unfortunately, all the water leaked out of the table within a few minutes of its being filled. Instead of the Formica flooring, she was using a blue plastic tarp to try to capture the leaked water, posing a tripping hazard for the children. She told me that Ms. Older really did not want messy play in the classroom, but that Dr. Brown had told Ms. Older that a sand and water table was a requirement for this class, and this small table was what had been provided by the school. According to Gigi, it was “cheap and useless, much worse than my sand and water tubs, but I don’t know what to do now that the school has bought this one.”

I saw substantial improvement in her overall practice when I observed her classroom on November 14, 2003. Nearly all the observations were in the DAP column, with only a few in the DIP column. I made the following observations of DAP in Gigi’s classroom at my November observation:

1. teacher allowed children to choose from 3 activities for the early morning activity before morning group time: read a book (which several did very well), write in their journals, (which several did even when writing on their laps was difficult), or the (unvoiced but permitted) opportunity to lounge and wake up on the nearby comfy sofa

2. teacher allowed longer time (10 minutes) for early morning activity of child’s choosing

3. children chose song to sing in morning group time by voting, while teacher recorded the votes on her easel pad
4. teacher encouraged sense of community at roll taking noticing who’s here and who’s not

5. teacher encouraged children to read each other’s names from cards at roll taking

6. children engaged in silly singing of alphabet and good morning songs forwards and backwards while teacher indicated the words on her easel pad; teacher encouraged meaningful letter and word identification

7. children were active in reviewing class rules prior to center time, even when teacher forgot to prompt them to engage in that activity

8. growing plants were located in clear containers at window sill near library – teacher pointed out the growing roots that were just appearing, suggested children look for themselves at center time

9. teacher used circle time to review new materials to be added to centers, and discussed with the children their appropriate and inappropriate uses

10. teacher encouraged negotiation between children to solve problems

11. teacher alerted the children ahead of time of impending transitions

12. teacher allowed end-of-cleanup transition to book reading one child at a time

13. teacher used song to transition to short pre-lunch group time

14. teacher allowed children to select songs to sing while waiting to go to lunchroom

15. teacher used glove finger puppets to encourage math concepts with old McDonald song, asked children “How many animals do I have now?”

16. teacher used calendar activity to encourage letter, name, and number awareness in group

17. teacher conducted discussion among children of alternatives to “hitting our friends” and did not exact an apology but discussed separately with a child what “intentional hitting” meant

I made the following observations of DIP in Gigi’s classroom during that time:

1. teacher said children are seen as “acting out” for a visitor (me) – it appeared that visitors to the classroom (e.g., parents, special lesson presenters, book-readers, observers) were a such a rarity that the children responded to my
presence with inappropriate attention-demanding behaviors – showing possible lack of parent or community involvement with her class

2. teacher failed to notice two sick children for nearly 40 minutes before taking appropriate action – one child was lethargic and droopy on the sofa, the other was, according to Gigi, being unusually hyperactive and aggressive (for that child)

3. teacher used strident voice and time out for discipline during center time when her developmentally appropriate strategies were not instantly successful

4. various distractions, both disciplinary issues and emergencies, reduced her ability to engage in scaffolding the children’s learning at center time

My overall assessment of the improvement in Gigi’s practice over the fall 2003 semester might be attributable to the fact that Gigi had been taking a fall college course in preschool practices. This was her third course in ECE. Gigi had met the course only three times when I visited her in September, but had nearly completed it when I visited her in November. The professor was the assistant director of LSU’s preschool lab school and a strong advocate for DAP.

I used the same process of counting the number of DAP and DIP observation entries I made on my observation logs as I had for her Summer 2003 practice to develop an informal level of DAP. I found that her practice over my fall 2003 observations showed further movement towards DAP. I recorded nearly the same number of developmentally appropriate observations as developmentally inappropriate.

During fall 2003, I did not obtain triangulating data from a reflective journal because one was not required for her college course that semester, and she was disinclined to maintain one on her own for the purpose of this project. I was limited in my own observations and interviews, partially due to illness and death in my own family that interfered with my visits to Gigi in fall 2003. I lacked data from observations of others. Ms. Older had not observed Gigi when I spoke with her in September, and due to the problems she and Gigi seemed to be having, I didn’t ask her for a copy of her observation later that fall. That fall, I asked Gigi about the various mentors that I had suggested to her before I left her for the summer, hoping to get triangulating data from them. She indicated that “I just didn’t have time to meet with them, didn’t call them because I didn’t have time.” She indicated that she didn’t believe in email, saying “it’s just such a crock! It’s just too much trouble,” so she had not contacted me as a mentor either.

Given the various barriers to her progress in DAP that I had observed, I was pleased to see that Gigi had continued to move towards DAP. I observed that she had gained concrete knowledge about DAP, experience with DAP in practice, and increased belief in how DAP serves young children. Even though it had required a substantial amount of pressure from her professors and from me, she had begun to bring her resistance to change to bear on any outside source that worked to push her back towards DIP.
Spring 2004

**Teacher Returns to College Full-time.** By the time I visited Gigi on January 26, 2004, this project had taken yet another turn. Gigi had been selected by the university child care center as a preschool (4- to 5-year-old) teacher, to begin work in mid-May 2004. She had decided, with her parent’s emotional and financial support, to give notice to her current school as of the Christmas break and to enroll at LSU full-time for the spring 2004 semester. This would allow her to complete her student teaching for her add-on certification in both preschool and kindergarten teaching before she started work at the university child care center. She also enrolled, as I had suggested in summer and fall of 2003, in a graduate course in child guidance and behavior at LSU. This course was taught by the professor who was also the director of the university preschool lab school where she would be doing her preschool student teaching. She also enrolled in another ECE course on administration of child care centers. As a result of this unexpected change, I was not able to observe Gigi in her own classroom during spring 2004. Instead, I scheduled visits that spring to observe her student teaching in preschool and in kindergarten. With consultation with my committee, I decided to stay the course and follow Gigi through to May 2004 with this change to the project.

**Preschool Student Teaching.** I was able to observe Gigi and interview her during the first week of February of 2004 as she did her preschool student teaching. I was able to get additional observation notes from a graduate assistant at the preschool lab school who observed Gigi’s small group lessons with her 3-year-old group during the last week of January and the first week of February 2004. Gigi was required to keep a “reflective journal,” as part of her college course on child behavior and guidance, in which she discussed her class sessions, journal articles, and books that she was required to read. She also kept a student teaching reflective journal for both her preschool and kindergarten student teaching experiences. I was able to use the additional observations by the lab school graduate assistant and Gigi’s journals as triangulating data to my own observations of her and interviews with her for this phase of her teaching.

The graduate assistant and I commented on the following DAP strategies we each observed in Gigi’s practice. I have combined those comments as follows:

1. Gigi’s calm and gentle demeanor with the children and her engaging voice and mannerisms
2. her interesting and engaging lesson plans for small group
3. her way of enhancing and extending her 3-year-old students’ learning
4. the adaptations to participation that she made for children in her group who were having a hard time with the lesson, and for those that were more advanced and could move ahead of the planned lesson
5. her gentle approach to bringing disengaged children back to the small group
6. her receptive response to suggestions from the graduate student

The graduate student and I each noted as opportunities for Gigi to improve her practices, which I have termed DIP for the purposes of this study. She and I noted such things as:

1. *asking* children for compliance instead of giving simple direct instructions to children, particularly when she intended no real choice for the children
2. using stories or lessons too long for children’s attention span
3. continuing the lesson when children got restless before the end
4. allowing children to get up from circle, or crawl around on floor, thereby disturbing or blocking the views of otherwise engaged children
5. missing opportunities to extend children’s higher order thinking
6. using meaningless and judgmental praise statements, (e.g., “good job”)
7. using parts of several lessons that were confusing to the children, who were not able to understand and participate as the lesson was designed
8. sometimes losing temper with non-compliant children, sometimes being somewhat strident in speaking to them
9. addressing group, (e.g., as “children,” “hey, guys”) rather than using children’s names individually
10. failing to prepare the children for what is expected of them, to organize for success for the children
11. allowing too much waiting for turn-taking in lessons

I analyzed the data from this period in the same way I analyzed my earlier data. I found, using the same counting of DAP and DIP observation points as I used earlier that, during preschool student teaching, Gigi’s observed practice was significantly more developmentally appropriate than developmentally inappropriate, as indicated by a count of the graduate assistant’s observations of her practice combined with a count of my own observations. I found her practice to be somewhat more developmentally appropriate than did the graduate observer, but each of us found her practice as a preschool teacher substantially more developmentally appropriate than developmentally inappropriate.

**Kindergarten Student Teaching.** By the time Gigi began to student teaching in kindergarten, she seemed to be fully committed to DAP as she understood it for preschool. Gigi’s understanding of DAP practice primarily related to DAP in preschool acquired during her preschool teaching experience. Her kindergarten student teaching
experience revealed a lack of understanding of DAP as it applied to the second semester kindergarteners with whom she student taught. I had intended to complete this project with observation of Gigi in her kindergarten student teaching experience. However, when Gigi got to her kindergarten student teaching in late March through early May, this project was subjected to yet another unexpected turn.

**Another Project Change.** Gigi was assigned to a kindergarten class in a nearby small town school whose teacher, according to both Gigi and the supervisor of student teachers assigned to her for this phase, Ms. Allen, did not use developmentally appropriate classroom arrangement, teaching strategies, and child discipline. I found this particularly sad for Gigi because, according Gigi and her university supervisor, in the same school there was another kindergarten classroom in which Gigi might have had a more positive and developmentally appropriate student teaching experience. Gigi quickly developed an adversarial relationship with the kindergarten classroom teacher. The classroom teacher decided late in April that she did not want me to observe Gigi for her week of full-day teaching, as I had planned to do in late April and early May.

Fortunately, Ms. Allen, who supported Gigi’s DAP in that phase of her student teaching, collected her lesson plans, observed and made records of her student teaching, and coached her through her relationship with her supervising kindergarten classroom teacher. She agreed to be interviewed and to share with me her observations of Gigi for this phase. I was able to use her observations of this kindergarten classroom to get a second-hand view of what occurred there.

I was able to see, both in Ms. Allen’s observation logs and in Gigi’s journal, evidence that Gigi did not view the classroom teacher as being in Gigi’s chain-of-command. It seemed, at first, that Gigi spent some of her time trying to indoctrinate the classroom teacher in DAP. At that time it appeared, from Ms. Allen’s observation logs and from Gigi’s journals, that Gigi was taking an “all black and white” view of DIP and DAP. Many notations in her journal for that period reflected that she rejected much of what the classroom teacher had to show her about teaching kindergarten, DAP or DIP. When she observed any DIP as she understood it in this teacher’s classroom, Gigi blocked out any opportunity to learn from the classroom teacher, even when the kindergarten teacher had knowledge she could share about DAP applicable to second semester middle-class kindergartens.

The classroom teacher seemed to react poorly to Gigi’s attitudes and function in her classroom and to the effects she perceived on her students. She told Ms. Allen on April 20 that Gigi’s lesson plans contained “fluff” (e.g., dying Easter eggs for two hours); that she felt Gigi was not putting forth enough effort to make sure her lessons were appropriate for the development of the children in her class; that “she only goes so far – that she doesn’t/won’t/can’t do the higher level thinking with the children;” and that Gigi “doesn’t integrate (lesson themes) across curriculum.” Ms. Allen also noted that the classroom teacher indicated that Gigi needed to learn how to work with people, to develop some humility, and that she had mental blocks with working with people. It seemed to me that she was frustrated with Gigi at that point.

I analyzed Ms. Allen’s observation logs in the same way that I had analyzed my earlier obtained observation data. I counted twice as many developmentally appropriate observation points as developmentally inappropriate observation points. Her practice
appeared to be closer to DIP than to DAP for this teaching situation. Ms. Allen noted the following areas of practice on which she complimented Gigi, which I interpreted as developmentally appropriate observations. Due to large number of observation points, and to the fact that this was a secondary source, I have summarized general areas of her comments here.

1. teacher asked children reflective and review questions to introduce her group lessons, sometimes asked open ended questions about her group lessons to encourage children to actively think about and express their current knowledge and to extend it, and introduced good extended vocabulary during those lessons

2. teacher attempted to integrate her lesson plans across curriculum with free art opportunities, good children’s books, and with music

3. teacher used meaningful, hands-on activities with concrete, real materials to help children learn

4. teacher usually tried to give children specific directions for expected behavior

5. teacher made an active effort (late in her student teaching) to monitor the activities of the entire classroom even when working one-on-one or in small group

Ms. Allen noted the following opportunities for improvement, which I interpreted as observations of DIP. Again, due to large number of observation points, I have summarized general areas of her comments here. During much of her student teaching:

1. teacher apparently was not observant of entire classroom while working one-on-one or in small group, or allowed children to remain unengaged or non-compliant without taking effective measures to return them to what they are supposed to be working on

2. teacher used lesson plans, approaches, goals, objectives, not advanced enough for the group of children; teacher seemed unaware of different level of children’s understanding of concepts taught; many missed opportunities to enhance and extend children’s learning; frequently used closed-ended questions to children instead of asking open-ended questions; needed to tie lesson subjects and concepts together, make sure lesson is meaningful to the children

3. teacher’s assessment measures not clear, concrete and meaningful enough; frequently were not recorded for future use; teacher made no individualization of lessons for less advanced or more advanced students

4. while presenting a group lesson, teacher sometimes appeared unprepared, disorganized, rushing through concepts, or appeared to be inattentive to
children during group lessons, or was not fully engaged with individual children who participated in small group or one-on-one lessons with her.

It appeared to me from the observation data that, to some extent, the classroom teacher’s view of Gigi’s practice with her kindergarten class may have been understandable. Many of her voiced concerns were also noted by Ms. Allen in her observations of Gigi, and in her comments on Gigi’s lesson plans. It appeared from Ms. Allen’s observations that Gigi was not using DAP as it applied to second-semester, fairly-advanced, middle-class kindergarten students. She seemed to be using some of the same lesson plans and assessment procedures she had used successfully in her preschool student teaching with 3- to 4-year-olds. It seemed to me that Gigi had more to learn about DAP with kindergarteners. Reading the record of this time in her teaching, I was left to hope that someday she would be able to find the opportunity to research DAP for this age group and to observe in a DAP kindergarten classroom in the future to enhance what she learned in her kindergarten student teaching.

Summary of Beliefs and Practices Data Analysis

After I analyzed the observation data that I collected about Gigi’s practice and about her place along the DIP-DAP continuum, I found that Gigi’s practice had made significant progress toward DAP from when I met her in the summer of 2003. At that time, her practice appeared to be mostly DIP, and at the end of the project her practice at the preschool level that appeared to be mostly developmentally appropriate. This analysis was confirmed by the increase in the scores for the self-reported “Teacher Beliefs and Practices Survey” that she completed in September 2003 and again in June 2004. As stated earlier, her scores on those scales were just a little above that which indicated a balance of DAP and DIP. In June 2004, her scores indicated that her beliefs and practices were significantly more developmentally appropriate than developmentally inappropriate.

From the observations that I and others conducted of her classroom practice it seemed that Gigi had made significant progress towards DAP. The data indicated that there were areas of DAP in which she still could improve. I had personally observed Gigi’s struggle in moving toward DAP. I elected to do a final interview in June 2004 that primarily was intended to reveal Gigi’s viewpoint of the supports and barriers to her use of DAP. I coded and analyzed the data from that last interview as an important information source in formulating the Supports and Barriers section of this study which follows.

Supports and Barriers for DAP

In the following section, I have presented the sources of supports and barriers to Gigi’s progress toward DAP that I derived from my reading of the transcripts of my interviews with her and her supervisors and in my reading of her reflective journals. I found numerous references to many sources of supports or barriers for her, but have chosen the ones that appeared either most frequently in expression, or that which she indicated were most important for her.

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In the area of supports, I have relied most heavily on Gigi’s testimony during our final interview in June 2004. I had told her at that point that I had seen growth in her use of DAP. I have tried let her speak for herself as to what she had found most helpful in furthering her movement towards DAP.

**Supports for DAP**

The four most important supports for Gigi’s growth in DAP that I found in the data, and arranged in importance in accordance with her acknowledgement of them as “really important” or “primary” reasons for her development, are as follows:

1. **Concrete knowledge of DAP**: e.g., as obtained from college courses attended and journal articles and books read; and specific DAP information otherwise shared by professors, mentors, and supervisors

2. **Experience in the use of DAP**: e.g., hands-on practice in a classroom, whether in her own class or in student teaching, including observing the response of the children to her own practices

3. **Support by ECE professionals**: e.g. encouragement for her use of DAP, and modeling of DAP for her by mentors, professors, supervisors, school administration, or peers

4. **Personal attributes**: e.g., her desire to be a teacher from an early age; her professed love of young children; her determined adherence to a practice she thinks works for her; her reflection, when she used it, on her own practice; her ability, when she used it, to remain flexible in her thinking and practice

Interestingly, some of the sources of supports for DAP reported in other studies did not appear as important to Gigi. The influence of her family, friends, and parents of her students were mentioned, but not frequently. Gigi indicated in my last interview that, although her parents and friends were supportive of her being a teacher, they were not necessarily supportive of DAP, and sometimes, when they exhibited a DIP view of teaching, they acted as barriers to her DAP.

**Concrete Knowledge.** Throughout all my interviews with Gigi, she strongly indicated that attending college courses on DAP and reading journal articles and books about DAP were the single most important factor in her increased use of, and comfort with, DAP. According to Gigi, her ECE college courses had a huge impact! … But I really do … theories and stuff, … I learned so much from the classes that I took and … I mean I learned a lot just from reading articles and stuff that I would never have learned if I hadn’t taken those classes. … With the whole guidance issue, I learned so much this semester.
During our last interview on June 30, 2004, even after we had moved on to other subjects she voluntarily returned to her college work saying, “Can we go back to that? I need to be sure I said how important that was to me,” to reiterate how important concrete knowledge had been to her belief in and comfort with DAP. The journal articles and books she read while taking those courses “had a tremendous impact!” She referred to the library of journal articles that she was maintaining as a resource in dealing with questions from supervisors, peer teachers, and parents about her use of DAP, as a defense against being pushed away from DAP by others’ developmentally inappropriate beliefs and expectations.

She referred to the knowledge that she had gained from her courses and reading in helping her build a repertoire of developmentally appropriate practices, to allow her to have a “bag of tricks” supportive of DAP from which to pull in different classroom situations. Once she had gained a piece of concrete knowledge, many times during our interviews she was able to tell me about it, and discuss aspects of DAP, even if she had not yet been able to put it into practice. In June 2004, she said about concrete knowledge,

> What I’m saying is, with the theory [concrete knowledge], well you need both [knowledge and practice], but I think the theory is a little more important because, without it, you wouldn’t be able to have the hands-on … without a knowledge base you wouldn’t be able to implement new things in your classroom that have to do with DAP, … like if you don’t know what it is, how are you going to implement it?

When I asked her about her classroom practices, she told me about developmentally appropriate activities as if she had gained that knowledge in a concrete way, even when she did not quote specific instances of their use in her room. She summarized this area of support for her DAP saying,

> I’ve learned so much from … articles that I’ve read. That is a huge factor, I don’t know if I made that clear, but I think that’s probably more so than most of the other things; it’s like, the knowledge that I’ve gained from articles and classes [are most important].

I discovered during this year that Gigi was someone who learned best by reading things written by authorities in DAP, or from DAP that was taught or suggested by early childhood professional who were in positions of authority from her viewpoint, those persons in her chain-of-command as she saw it. If a concept about DAP came to her from an authority figure, she was quick to attempt to implement it.

**Hands-on Experience.** Gigi said several times that her *experience* in using DAP, once she had begun to learn about DAP, was a major factor that kept her moving towards DAP. According to Gigi in our first interview in June, when she began to implement DAP on suggestion from Dr. Brown, she began to see her students enjoy her class more. She said that the reason she had taken the first ECE college course, and had begun to move towards her Pre-K-K add-on certification, was in order for her students to enjoy her class even more. She indicated several times throughout this project that when she had
used DAP, and had seen it be successful in engaging the children in meaningful learning, she was encouraged to use it more and to continue to study more in those areas in which she still lacked knowledge.

According to Gigi during our final interview in June 2004, when she referred to classes she had taken and her hands-on experience,

I mean, you can’t have one without the other. You wouldn’t – for example – if you took all these classes and had all these theories, that’s all fine and good, but if you never put it into practice or see it in practice, how do you know it works?

There were times, especially during this final interview, that she told me about specific instances in her classroom, even as the assistant teacher she was in summer of 2004, in which she attempted to apply DAP. Her reflective journals, particularly the one she kept during her pre-K student teaching, reflected her pleasure in seeing the children respond to her use of DAP, and in seeing “how smart they are” and “how much they are learning” when she used DAP. She also said that she had been able to observe in a DAP kindergarten classroom during her kindergarten student teaching. She described it as a classroom that was a lot more DAP than the one I was in … I was able to go in there and observe one day, and you know, see how things might look in a DAP kindergarten – or more DAP kindergarten – so I think that played a part, too.

Sometimes, as when she talked about her kindergarten student teaching or as she acted as an assistant teacher at the university child care center, she told me about times that she had observed others around her struggling with or not applying DAP. At those times, she was able to tell me what she thought should have been done, or about what she would have done in the same setting. She summarized her feelings about hand-on experience as a support by saying “It’s all about being able to put it into practice in a developmentally appropriate setting.”

Support by ECE Professionals. For Gigi, being in an environment that included supportive supervisors, mentors, and peers seemed important in motivating her to move towards and sustaining her implementation of DAP, even when she was faced with barriers to DAP.

Gigi said in our final interview, regarding my mentoring of her for DAP,

I think that [referring to my mentoring] had a pretty big impact. I mean, as much as I was resistant and stuff at first, I think, you know, if you hadn’t been there, holding my feet to the fire, I may not have made any progress at all! I mean … you pointed out to me ‘you’re resisting, you’re resisting’ and that made me think, ‘well, maybe I’ll try it.’ … I think that, you know, it’s … mentoring by you and Dr. Burts and [her professor for ECE and the supervisor of her preschool student teaching] and everyone who’ve been willing to help me, has had a huge impact! … I probably
would not have learned as much. Because of what I said earlier about ‘holding my feet to the fire’ and having someone to answer to about things … [if not for her college work] it might have just been about the certification. … I figured out that one of mine [desired ways of having love expressed] is ‘words of encouragement.’ So, and I mean, you’ve been so encouraging, Dr. Burts has been so encouraging, everyone has been so encouraging, and you know, so positive about the strides that I’ve been making … and had I not had that, from other people, I might not have gone as far. I might not have blossomed, I guess, for lack of a better word.

She also said,

I learned from the other teachers who shared ideas in the preschool [student teaching] … When I was in the kindergarten [student teaching], there was teacher there, getting her master’s degree in early childhood, and she was student teaching down the hall, and we talked to each other quite a bit, and I think I learned a lot from her actually, too.

Gigi returned to this area of support in summarizing what she saw as supports “I’ve learned so much from other people, you know, from mentoring and other people’s views and ideas.”

From my own viewpoint, I believe this influence of others, particularly others who are in Gigi’s chain-of-command (e.g., supervisors and college professors) was the primary factor to begin her progress towards DAP, and the primary reason she continued to grow and learn about DAP. Once the other early childhood professionals with whom she interacted convinced her to move off the DIP pathway, and to start on the pathway to DAP, her concrete learning and her experience with the children were able to reinforce her continuance on that path. Gigi’s personal attributes that were supports to her DAP were then able to help her stay her course towards DAP.

**Personal Attributes.** One of Gigi’s personal attributes that acted as the major barrier to her growth as a DAP teacher also provides support for her DAP. Her strong resistance to change and determined adherence to the status quo of her practice, her reliance on her own scripts for action, once she had begun to learn about and see the value of DAP and to develop developmentally appropriate scripts for action, acted strongly to support her growth in DAP and resist any pressure to return to her DIP.

I was able to see this mostly in her resistance to and rejection of the DIP she observed in her kindergarten student teaching, as revealed in her kindergarten student teaching reflective journal. She said about DIP practices she observed in kindergarten student teaching, “That’s a tough one for me, because now that I thoroughly embrace it (DAP) … [as an example] the issue of keeping worksheets in the classroom? Like, first I was all about using worksheets, and then I was, like ‘no – worksheets are evil!’”

When she talked about times when she used DIP early in her teaching career and saw how poorly it worked for her, she said she thought at the time, “I’m just not going to
do that again!” In answer to my questions about what kind of school she might want to teach in the future,

The type of program that they had there would be a factor, in terms of whether it was … whether I thought it was appropriate or inappropriate. … If there were other preschool teachers there, what kind of training do they have? So that I would know like … the people that I would be working with, do they have the same knowledge I have about [DAP] … like, I would want to have like a support group, I guess. … They need to have the same [developmentally appropriate] mindset or educational background.

Although it appeared to me that Gigi was not naturally reflective, when I called to her attention ideas that I had tried to convey to her in summer 2003, and which she had resisted at the time, she responded reflectively. When I asked her if there were any of her former developmentally inappropriate practices that she would take back if permitted, she said, “I don’t think so. I can’t think of any, offhand. … Now, I think that that was kind of silly … Did I [say that]? My goodness, I was a mess! … Time-out just doesn’t make as much sense as it used to, I guess, to me.”

Another personal support, and a very important one to Gigi, was the fact that she was from a family of educators and had always wanted to be a teacher, “even as a little girl … I used to set up my dollies and teach school.” This was her primary reason to pursue her teacher’s degree to start with, and ultimately was what drew her back to teaching preschool after she left teaching after her first year of teaching second grade. It supported her return even when her early teaching experiences, and the disciplinary problems she had there, were “horrifying, just simply, so horrifying!” It supported her persistence in pursuing more concrete knowledge in DAP to help her continue to teach young children successfully.

It seemed to me that these supports to her DAP had helped her resist any pressure to return to DIP. She would be unlikely, according to her own words, to choose to work in a DIP environment that would act to push her away from DAP and back towards DIP. It appeared from her journals and my conversations with her that her “conversion” to DAP was well advanced.

Barriers to DAP

Some barriers hampering her movement towards DAP were recorded in my notes from early in the project. I found from my coding of data related to barriers to DAP that Gigi’s barriers to growth in her use of DAP were “the other side of the coin” to the supports I had found for her movement towards DAP. However, in impact on her, I found that these same influences on her practice were ordered differently in impact when they became barriers, as listed below in order of impact on Gigi’s practice.

1. **Personal attributes:** (early in the study), her DIP worldview of teaching derived from her early school experiences and her undergraduate teaching courses; her resistance to change; her inflexibility; her need to be in control as
a teacher at all times; her concern that input that she would attempt to implement should always come from someone in her chain-of-command and her resistance to input from anyone else; her lack of truly reflective practice; her need for solutions to problems to be handed to her in a “cookbook” format (i.e., supplied by someone else or as developed for some other use), ready for instant application without personal reflection or research; her black-and-white view of DIP and DAP

2. **Lack of concrete knowledge**: lack of developmentally appropriate undergraduate college courses, and lack of written resources on DAP

3. **Lack of hands-on practice in DAP**: lack of time in teaching in her own classroom after beginning to be familiar with DAP, and lack of time spent observing in classrooms where DAP was in use

4. **Lack of support of DAP in school**: belief in and support of DIP by either school administration or among peer teachers, or both.

**Personal Attributes.** Regarding her primary barrier, her personal attributes, I identified instances in my interviews with her, and in her journals, in which she seemed to get in her own way in development towards DAP. Mostly, Gigi did not seem reflective about her personal barriers, but those barriers appeared in her own statements in interviews and in her journals. When any of her mentors called her attention to a personal barrier, in general, she made an effort to examine the barrier and to try to overcome it. I saw evidence of this in her journals and in her interviews with me. When I asked Ms. Allen specifically about Gigi’s supports and barriers to growth in her use of DAP in my July 2004 interview with her, her comments seemed to confirm my findings about Gigi’s personal barriers. In our interviews, I found that I frequently tried to present to her a broader, more reflective viewpoint on her problems, trying to help her to back away from the problem at hand, and attempting to model reflection for her. Sometimes this seemed to help her begin to be reflective on the problem under discussion.

From the outset of this project, instead of taking advantage of information that I made available to her, she usually seemed to resist defensively. Only after repetition from a variety of sources, and with much patient support, would she sometimes implement my suggestions. Then, if it was immediately successful for her, she embraced it as part of her regular practice and began to build on it. An example of that would be in the area of room arrangement. Before the project, her room arrangement did not seem to enhance her teaching, but she actively resisted changing it. After we rearranged her room in June 2003, she said that the results were positive for her. She chose to keep it that way, making only small changes for the fall 2003 school year.

If a suggestion I made was not immediately successful for her, she abandoned it. She resumed it later only after she again heard it recommended by her college professors or student teaching supervisors. An example of this was her reversion (after I left her classroom in July 2003) to time-out and extrinsic rewards and punishments as her primary means of discipline. She continued to use extrinsic forms of guidance for the rest of her term at Southern Suburban School, even in face of my observations about it,
and in spite of my giving her a book about developmentally appropriate disciplinary strategies. Then, in spring 2004, she took the child guidance and behavior graduate course at LSU. The textbook for that course was the same one that I had loaned her earlier, but that she had “not had time to read that book. It’s kind of long.” Once she took that course, she embraced developmentally appropriate guidance. She then seemed able to understand developmentally appropriate guidance techniques and was able to discuss all the negative impacts of her earlier developmentally inappropriate disciplinary practice. Her kindergarten supervisor of student teachers, Ms. Allen, commented on her seeming resistance to suggestions from non-authoritarian sources. Ms. Allen said, “She might have come to the same conclusion [to a suggestion], but she has to get there [on her own], you know?”

Ms. Allen noted also Gigi’s apparent need to be in control and apparent inability to work well with someone else in a classroom when she was not in control or not the boss in the classroom. Ms. Allen said, “She doesn’t receive well, and that’s going to be [a problem for her] with other teachers – those interpersonal skills will be important.” Even Gigi acknowledged her own need to be in control. Gigi said about her discomfort with working with another teacher or a partner, “I know, it’s a control thing, a territory thing … I’m just such a control freak.” This personal attribute could make it difficult for her to work with a partner. In my experience, collaboration with a partner is one of the best ways to grow in DAP. Having a close peer colleague with whom you can discuss your lesson plans, your classroom strategies, and your problems can results in better and faster solutions. In this, it appears that, “two heads are usually better than one.”

**Lack of Concrete Knowledge.** Lack of concrete knowledge showed up in our interviews early and frequently. From the first, she said frequently “I just don’t know what to do!” As she attended ECE college courses and read book and journal articles, she made progress toward DAP. According to Gigi, she began to build a resource file of journal articles and to develop a repertoire of strategies for the use of DAP. By the time I interviewed her in June 2004, after taking several college courses that supported DAP, she appeared to feel comfortable and competent in teaching 4- to 5-year-old preschoolers. In May 2004, when the university child care center asked her to teach a younger age group with which she had no education or experience, she expressed to me her lack of understanding of DAP for children younger than three and her lack of self-confidence in teaching them. She seemed to understand that concrete knowledge supplied a great support for her DAP. In preparing to teach infant-toddlers at the child care center in May 2004, her first approach was to reach for the DAP guidelines to try to overcome her lack of concrete knowledge about that age group.

The lack of concrete knowledge as a barrier to DAP appeared again, when I asked her, about any advice for university teacher educators she might have that would help them to better prepare future teachers. She answered,

Yes! I think ECE and developmentally appropriate practice should be taught to all future elementary teachers, no matter what grade they intend to teach. And I think that child guidance and behavior, which is taught as a graduate course, should be taught at the undergraduate level instead,
perhaps in the senior year. That’s information that would have made a big difference to me when I started teaching!

**Lack of Hands-on Experience.** By the end of the project, Gigi’s concrete knowledge about DAP and preschool, and her hands-on experience with her preschool class and preschool student teaching had helped her to overcome, to a great extent, barriers to her DAP in preschool. However, I was able to see that lack of observation and practice in a developmentally appropriate kindergarten seemed to have limited her progress towards DAP in a kindergarten setting.

Lack of hands-on experience with DAP as a barrier appeared explicitly in our final interview in June 2004 when we reviewed her progress towards DAP over her entire teaching career. She specifically mentioned it when I asked her to “consider the following influences and rate them in importance as barriers to or supports for your progress towards DAP.” I asked her, as I mentioned earlier, if she had any advice for teacher educators that would allow them to better prepare future teachers. She said,

Yes, and I know this is something LSU is doing more of, but I had almost no practicum time and observation time at (her undergraduate teacher’s college) … I think every course, maybe from the junior year on, should be accompanied by practicum contact hours … there should be a lot more time for student teachers to observe throughout the teacher education school years … It would have made all the difference for me, I think. I might not have been so unprepared for the real world. Student teaching just doesn’t prepare you for the real world of teaching. You just need much more practice in real classrooms.

**Lack of Support for DAP at Work.** From time to time, Gigi seemed to experience her school administrators as a barrier. This seemed to occur when she taught in a school where the school district and/or the principal supported DIP or was unfamiliar with the benefits of DAP, or where her fellow teachers’ expectations for young children are developmentally inappropriate. In 2003, when her principal left and the new principal was not supportive of DAP, Gigi said she experienced her principal and the other elementary teachers at that school as barriers to her progress towards DAP. When she student taught in a kindergarten classroom where the teacher used DIP, she again experienced the system and administration as a barrier to her development in DAP in kindergarten. She said in our final interview that she wished that she had been able to student teach in the kindergarten class just down the hall, in which she had observed one day, and in which she felt she could have gained more in understanding of DAP at the kindergarten level. In our final interview in June 2004, she said she would not be willing to teach kindergarten in the future if the school district, administration, and other teachers were unsupportive of DAP.

Most of the discussed barriers can be overcome with time, practice, and an environment supportive of DAP. However, her personal attributes, if not addressed reflectively, could continue to be problematic for her construction of DAP. In the future, she could make less progress toward DAP if she was to assume that what she knew about DAP was *complete*, and was to close herself off to new ideas about DAP. She could miss
opportunities to grow in DAP if she was to reject all input from someone whose practice she viewed as not purely developmentally appropriate, as she seemed to have done with the kindergarten classroom teacher during student teaching.

**Impacts on My Own Practice**

Early in this project, I began to see that I had certain views of mentoring and teaching early childhood teachers about DAP, of trying to support their growth in use of DAP, which where were of themselves developmentally inappropriate practice! I brought to this project an approach that said to Gigi, “I’m the expert, I’m the purveyor of knowledge, I’ll impart this knowledge to you, and you should receive it and put it into use!” This didactic approach to teacher education was, like Gigi’s early approach to teaching, greatly based on my prior educational experiences, both before college and at the undergraduate level.

When I was beginning my own journey towards DAP as a child care center director, I had taken this same approach to early childhood teachers who worked for me. My approach to them was, “Just let me tell you what to do and you do it!” I found that approach less than productive with my teachers. My graduate level courses, I thought, had helped me to change that approach to one that was more effective in supporting DAP with early childhood teachers. It was only when I began to see my methods backfire with Gigi that I began to see how my own developmentally inappropriate attitudes and developmentally inappropriate approaches were getting in the way of my actually helping a teacher to grow.

With young children, we ECE professionals are likely to say that hands-on, active, engaged learning from a child’s own experience with a subject is the best way for a child to learn. We acknowledge that children do not learn best when they have a teacher who acts as a knowledgeable authority, and who treats the child as a passive learner or a sponge absorbing dispensed facts and figures. What I saw was that I couldn’t just tell a teacher developmentally appropriate strategies and have her absorb them and put them into practice. During my work with Gigi, I had looked back on my experience as a director and applied what I had learned there, I could have avoided strategies that backfired with her. I had tried those same approaches early in my leadership of my own school and had seen them fail.

So how does one stimulate the desire in an early childhood teacher to move away from DIP and towards DAP? I eventually adopted developmentally appropriate adult education strategies with my teachers at my own school and was more successful in supporting DAP. First, I found that a teacher has to be open to and want to address what doesn’t work for her children in her classroom. The teacher herself has got to be motivated to change from DIP to DAP. One reason this may happen is that DIP frequently results in unhappy, rowdy, unengaged children in early childhood classrooms. That is usually enough to make a beginning teacher look around for some relief from the stress of such a class. If the boss is supportive of DAP and not of DIP, they may begin to look in the direction of DAP. No teacher educator or leader can make a teacher change.

For Gigi, her positive response to authority figures, having a supervisor share ideas with her about needed change, responding by making those changes, and then seeing the positive impact on her students motivated her to continue moving toward
DAP. She followed her supervisor’s suggestion that she take a college class in ECE and
applied what she learned there to her class. She got positive feedback from her students
on the developmentally appropriate changes she made in her teaching, and she was
encouraged to take more classes, in what seemed to become an information-experience
feedback loop that lasted throughout this project. I was there to encourage and support
her, to observe and share with her my observations, and to allow her to learn from what I
recorded as if she was looking at a video of her own practice, but any effort that I made to
say “See there! You need to do that differently!” seemed counterproductive. She seemed
to respond most positively if she could see it for herself and was able to learn on her own.

When I look back on my own experience, I see that the process that was finally
most successful with Gigi was echoed by the practice that ultimately had proved effective
at my preschool. There, I had been actively supportive of DAP and I had made sure that
my teachers had the support of teaching in an environment supportive of DAP. I had
brought to every discussion and staff meeting a clear enthusiasm for DAP. I had
addressed each problem presented to me with what I thought might be a developmentally
appropriate approach to it. Teachers who began to move towards DAP on their own had
begun to be able to see their own progress as teachers.

I found that concrete knowledge was one of the best supports available for DAP.
I supported my teachers’ acquisition of concrete knowledge of DAP by making available
tuition-paid college work in ECE. I required my teachers to find and take outside
workshops and seminars in DAP even if they were not enrolled in college. I paid for
membership in NAEYC and SECA so that the various journals and books supplied by
those professional organizations would be sent to their homes to read. I also encouraged
my teachers to attend regional professional conferences where they would have access to
high-quality workshops and seminars about DAP. I found over the years that the
concrete knowledge they respected most come from such resources. I saw during this
project that Gigi began to seek my help as her mentor mostly after she had gained a fairly
large stock of concrete knowledge. She seemed to remember I had tried to share some of
those same strategies with her before she took those courses and began to try to take
advantage of my experience.

I supported my teachers hands-on experience with DAP by finding
developmentally appropriate classrooms in other schools, with teachers committed to
DAP, and arranging opportunities for my teachers to observe and talk to other teachers
and administrators who were familiar with and comfortable with DAP. I made release
time for such observations available, and encouraged more than one teacher to go to each
visit and to have lunch together on me during the outing. This gave each one a colleague,
with whom they could collaborate, who had seen the same things. I gave each teacher a
specific time in their weekly schedule to collaborate with their classroom partners and
other teachers in their own age level. Only after they had begun to move towards DAP
did they begin to seek my help as their mentor in DAP. I acted as a role model for them
in my interactions with the children and their parents, and when I taught class from time
to time as a substitute teacher. Once a teacher began to see DAP in action and to want to
move in that direction, other supports for DAP were more effective.

Sometimes Gigi shared with me a problem she was having, either with her
students or with her supervisors. These instances brought into play what was probably
my most successful mentoring role with Gigi. At such times, I usually shared with her
my personal experiences as an early childhood teacher or as a preschool director. I would tell her strategies that I had used, or seen used successfully, and then leaving it at that. Sharing my experiences gave her the time to reflect on her own, and perhaps decide to try something we had talked about, without feeling like she had to defend her current strategies.

**Summary of Results**

It seemed that Gigi had moved away from the DIP that had comprised her early and well-consolidated scripts for action. She had gained concrete knowledge, had put it into practice, and had become somewhat confident in herself as a developmentally appropriate preschool teacher. It appeared that there were situations in which she needed more education and practice, particularly in age groups younger and older than four to five-year-old preschoolers. She appeared to be in what I had observed among my own teachers to be a survival phase of being a teacher using DAP, with all the uncertainty and stress that entails. She seemed to lack total confidence in her DAP; this phase seemed uncomfortable and hazardous to her feelings of self-confidence. If she continued to practice, grow and learn, it seemed to me that after two to five years of teaching using DAP she should enter a consolidation phase of being a teacher. This should be a time when she should feel more confident and comfortable with her abilities, a time teaching using DAP should seem easier for her than it seems to her now, and a time when she may begin to mentor other teachers or a partner for development in DAP.

It appeared to me that Gigi was capable of continued growth through college courses, reading, practice, and accepting mentoring from others. If she could remain aware of the personal barriers that she erects to her own growth in DAP, she could be able to move through her current survival phase and enter sooner the consolidation phase of teaching. I hoped she would seek out other practitioners of DAP, to observe them and to seek their counsel. I remained hopeful for Gigi and vowed to remain her friend and confidante for as long as she needed me.
Chapter 5
SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

I have begun this chapter with a brief overview of the study. The discussion section summarizes the various components of the study and my analysis of the data I collected, arranged in the following sections according to my research questions: Gigi’s practice as it moves from DIP towards DAP during the study; the types of supports and barriers for DAP that I found affecting Gigi in the data; and the impacts of the study on my own practice as an early childhood teacher educator. I have concluded the chapter with ways in which this study may hold implications for others.

Review of the Study

This project was a case study that recorded and analyzed the professional development of one certified elementary teacher as she studied developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) and pursued her Pre-K and Kindergarten add-on certification. It focused on the changes in her classroom practice from mostly developmentally inappropriate practice (DIP) at the beginning of the project towards mostly DAP at the end of the project. The project recorded her acquisition of concrete knowledge in DAP and her beliefs regarding DAP as she taught young children over the course of one year, June 2003 through May 2004. It included information on the supports and barriers to the teacher’s growth in her use of DAP that she encountered along the way. It also included observations about my own practices, as a mentor and source of support for DAP in early childhood teachers, and the changes in those roles that occurred over the course of the project.

Discussion and Comparison to Other Research

The Teacher’s Beliefs and Practices

Near the conclusion of the study, it appeared that the teacher had learned about and had begun to use developmentally appropriate practices at the preschool level. It seemed that many of the practices that we had discussed during the course of the project had been consolidated in her practice: developmentally appropriate room arrangement to help the children sustain engagement in their self-directed learning; developmentally appropriate guidance and classroom management to help the children engage in self-management; a balance of developmentally appropriate child-selected activities with teacher-directed activities to allow the children to be active in their learning, with the teacher scaffolding that learning; and developmentally appropriate assessment of the child’s learning to allow the teacher to have knowledge of the individual children’s learning. The appropriateness of her practice at the kindergarten level seemed less evident in each of those same areas of growth.
Analysis of the observation data collected about Gigi’s practice indicated that she had made significant progress at the preschool level from her practice in summer 2003, which was mostly developmentally inappropriate, to her practice at the end of the project, which was mostly developmentally appropriate. The level of DAP observed in her classrooms was less developmentally appropriate than her self-reported beliefs and practices at the beginning and end of the project. Other researchers have also found that teachers were observed to use less DAP in their classrooms than were reflected by their self-reported beliefs and practices (Bryant, Clifford, & Peisner, 1991; Charlesworth, et al., 1991; Charlesworth, et al., 1993; Kontos & Dunn, 1993).

Supports and Barriers

Supports. Four sources of support were found for Gigi’s growth in DAP.

1. **Concrete knowledge of DAP**: obtained from college courses attended, journal articles and books read, and specific DAP information otherwise shared by professors, mentors, and supervisors

2. **Experience in the use of DAP**: hands-on experience with DAP in a classroom, whether in her own class or in student teaching, including observing DAP in other classrooms, and observing the response of the children to her own DAP

3. **Support by others**: encouragement for her use of DAP and modeling of DAP for her by mentors, professors, supervisors, school administration, or peers

4. **Her personal attributes**: her desire to be a teacher from an early age; her professed love of young children; her determined adherence to practices that “work” in her classroom; her reflection on her own practice, when she used reflection; her flexibility (increasing over the term of this study) in thinking and practice

Other researchers (e.g., Bidner, 1998; Charlesworth & DeBoer, 2000; Jones, Burts, & Buchanan, 2000; Pelander, 1997; Tertell, Klein, & Jewett, 1998; Van Wilt & Monroe, 1998) have investigated the supports and barriers to DAP and have found sources of support for DAP that affected the teachers they studied that were similar to those found in the current study. Bidner (1998) reported that the primary teachers she studied spoke at length about their personal attributes (i.e. self) as support for their DAP. Similarly to the current study, she reported that the established teachers she studied frequently reported continuing education workshops and seminars (“concrete knowledge”) as support for DAP.

Charlesworth and DeBoer (2000) studied a kindergarten teacher as she attempted to move from developmentally inappropriate practice to more developmentally appropriate practice with at-risk children. They reported on the usefulness of the teacher’s own and her major professor’s reflection in promoting her progress towards DAP. The current study also found that reflectivity acted as a support for Gigi’s DAP when she became reflective on her practice.
Similar to the supports for DAP found in the current study, Gronlund (1995) found that support by administrators and principals (others) was crucial to change towards DAP. She also found that a teacher’s personal commitment to DAP (personal attributes) was a key support for change towards DAP. She mentioned a protracted time for hands-on experience with DAP, and personal reflection (personal attributes), as being necessary to the process of change towards DAP for early childhood teachers.

Jones, Burts, & Buchanan (2000) reported, among other supports mentioned by the teachers, “self” (personal attributes), and “others” (administration, peers, and family), as frequently mentioned sources of support. The current study found similar sources of support among those reported for Gigi’s practice.

Pelander (1997) noted personal reflection on his practice as a support for his growth in DAP. He reported that he had begun his movement towards DAP as a result of exposure to consultants and supervisors who supported DAP. Gigi likewise started her exploration of DAP when she was encouraged to do so by the state monitor of her preschool program. Pelander continued towards more DAP, supported by his reflection on his practice and its effect on his students, a confirmation of one of the personal attributes that this study found as a support for DAP. As found in the current study, Pelander mentioned concrete knowledge as a support, as he continued to read about DAP theory, rationale, and research.

Tertell, Klein, and Jewett (1998) found that a teacher’s reflection on her own practice, and having a mentor to assist her in that reflectivity, were supportive of the teacher’s growth in DAP. The current study found support for Gigi’s DAP in her reflectivity, when active, and in having a mentor to encourage and support her in that reflectivity.

Vander Wilt and Monroe (1998) found that concrete knowledge about DAP was a precursor for movement towards DAP, but emphasized that support from others, particularly that from school administration and teacher peers, and hands-on experience in DAP over time, are necessary for successful movement towards DAP. They also found that a personal commitment to DAP on the part of the teachers (self) was necessary to sustain movement towards DAP. The current study found that concrete knowledge of DAP, hands-on practice with DAP, a school environment supportive of DAP, and a personal commitment to DAP on Gigi’s part were the primary supports for her progress towards DAP.

Bidner (1998) and Jones, Burts, & Buchanan (2000) found that a teacher’s own family was frequently mentioned by the teachers they studied as supports to their practice. However, in the current study the influence of Gigi’s family and personal friends, while not noted as major supports or major barriers, were most often mentioned by Gigi as barriers if they had any impact on her DAP at all. She indicated that her family and her friends were supportive of her being a teacher, but did not seem to know much about DAP and did not actively support her in it. She told me that her parents had supported her in her first year of teaching second grade, encouraged her to return to teaching in 2002, and provided emotional and financial support for her return to college full-time in 2004, all of which ultimately led to her growth in DAP.

**Barriers.** Forces similar to those that this study found to be supports for Gigi’s DAP also at times seemed to act as barriers to her growth in DAP. However, in impact
on her, these same influences on her practice were ordered differently in impact when
they became barriers.

1. **Her personal attributes**: her determined adherence to developmentally
   inappropriate scripts for action; her resistance to reflectivity; her resistance to
   input from mentors who were out of her chain-of-command; her desire for
   cook-book solutions to teaching problems without reflection and research, her
   black-and-white view of DIP and DAP

2. **Lack of concrete knowledge**: developmentally inappropriate prior education,
   lack of specific developmentally appropriate information to support her
   practice

3. **Lack of hands-on practice**: insufficient time after gaining concrete knowledge
   about DAP to consolidate DAP

4. **Lack of support of DAP by others**: a developmentally inappropriate
   worldview among school administrators, other teachers, parents of children, or
   one's own family

Other researchers (e.g., Bidner, 1998; Gronlund, 1995; Jones, Burts, & Buchanan,
2000) have studied the supports and barriers that affected teachers studied, as they
attempted to use DAP, and have found similar sources of barriers. Like the current study,
Bidner (1998) found that a school administration or fellow teachers with developmentally
inappropriate views of teaching could act as a barrier to a teacher’s DAP.

Gronlund (1995) also studied the barriers to growth in DAP in the schools where
she acted as a consultant. Similar to the barriers I found for Gigi, Gronlund discussed,
the negative affect on change towards DAP that was attributable to a lack of skill
(concrete knowledge and hands-on experience), and resources (support of “others”), and
vision and action plan (personal attributes).

Jones, Burts, & Buchanan (2000) also addressed the sources of barriers to DAP.
As in the current study, Jones and her colleagues found that lack of support for DAP or a
developmentally inappropriate view of education by administration or co-workers
(others) negatively impacted the practices of the studied teachers. Similarly to the current
study, they found that a lack of appropriate teacher preparation (concrete knowledge and
hands-on experience) was a barrier to the teachers’ practice. Teachers in the Jones study
mentioned inadequate field experience or practicum, lack of education and practice in
classroom management, and lack of preparation for the “real world” of teaching as
barriers. These teachers suggested, as did Gigi, that more practice earlier in their
undergraduate study would have better prepared them for success as teachers using DAP.

This researcher did not locate studies where a teacher’s personal attributes (e.g.,
determined adherence to DIP, resistance, lack of reflectivity, a black-and-white view of
DIP and DAP) acted as a barrier to her progress toward DAP. In this study, Gigi gave me
access to her inner feelings and her personal struggles with her move from DIP to DAP in
a way that might have been difficult to achieve in a larger study with more subjects.
Additionally, seemingly reluctant to practice reflection and introspection on her own, as
we discussed problems that she had encountered through the course of the project, she often opened up and shared her inner struggles in a way that other researchers’ subjects may have been reluctant to do.

**Impact on the Researcher’s Practice**

At the beginning of the project, I initially took a didactic, “let me tell you how to do it,” approach to helping Gigi progress towards DAP. I had tried the same approach with the early childhood teachers who worked for me at my own center, and had found it unsuccessful. However, I believed this to be the result of the boss-employee relationship and not as a truism about adult education in general. As a result of my experience with Gigi during this project, I have seen that the techniques that I eventually learned to use in helping the teachers at my center move towards DAP willingly were the same techniques that I found most effective with Gigi.

I have seen how a teacher’s inner motivation to change her own practice is a priori in moving away from DIP towards DAP. “You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make him drink (unless he is thirsty!”) seems to apply to this endeavor. I have seen that teachers must have concrete knowledge to reflect on and experiment with on their own. They must have time to observe others using DAP and explore how those practices would work for them in their own classrooms. I have seen the effect on a teacher of an environment supportive of DAP and of one not supportive of DAP. Most importantly, I have seen that different teachers have different personalities and personal attributes that can enhance or delay their progress towards and effectiveness in use of DAP. I have seen that I must be prepared to individualize my own approach to mentoring and coaching for DAP to accommodate those differences.

**Implications for Teacher Educators**

This study indicated that what works best with young children in ECE may work well in adult teacher education. Adults also seem to learn best as a result of their own individual motivations, by individual pursuit of concrete knowledge, by hands-on and active exploration and problem solving, and by seeing the results of our own efforts succeed or fail. Each setting must be interesting and engaging to the student’s active participation. In each setting, the support and encouragement of a more knowledgeable peer or mentor should be available, but not directive or dominating. In both settings, progress is made when that peer or mentor asks questions that cause the student to think and to extend from his or her current knowledge into new understanding. In each case, the mentor or teacher should use every available strategy to encourage and support personal reflection and introspection as a support for learning and growth. In each setting, the teacher should take into account each student’s individual ways of knowing and learning.

This study confirmed what other researchers have found: beginning teachers sometimes feel inadequately prepared by their undergraduate experiences for the realities of teaching in “the real world.” It suggests that a graduate course on child guidance and behavior could be taught at the bachelor’s level to give beginning teachers the skills they need in classroom management. Similar to what other researchers have found, it revealed
how important observation of developmentally appropriate classrooms and practice teaching in developmentally classrooms were to a beginning teacher in sustaining her developmentally appropriate practice. It suggested that every major teacher education course should be accompanied by a substantial number of hours of real classroom observation and teaching experience related to that subject. Finally, it presents the possible benefit of having the final student teaching experience begin at the first day of the class’s school year and extend through at least a full semester, preferably a fall semester.

Long ago, professionals were prepared for acceptance in their profession both by formal education and by practice in their own profession. Sometimes these practice settings lasted a year or more. At the end of this practice period, the apprentice could request formal acceptance to the profession. Student teachers would be served well by a substantial amount of teaching experience and observation during their teaching college experience. Our society could save money spent on training teachers in college. Under current training procedures, a large number of teachers leave teaching within the first few years of teaching. Schools who hired teachers with more student teaching practice would gain in being able to retain longer well-trained, confident teachers.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study relied on, to determine the progress that the teacher made in DAP over the course of the project, observations of her practice and enumeration of what appeared to be developmentally appropriate and developmentally inappropriate observation points recorded during those observations. Although the observers were all familiar with the DAP guidelines, this approach was subject to observer error and subjective interpretation of what was observed. I have not discovered an observation instrument, designed and validated for rating observed 3- to 5-year-old preschool classroom practice, that is based strictly on the concepts of developmentally appropriate and developmentally inappropriate practice based on the 1997 NAEYC guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice with early childhood programs (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). There was a 3- to 5-year-old classroom observation instrument that was based on the 1987 DAP guidelines that was developed as a part of the LSU studies (Charlesworth, Hart, Burts, & Hernandez, 1991). However, it has not been updated to the 1997 DAP guidelines and validated for use in studies such as this one. Such an instrument would have been helpful in the current study.

The teacher who was the subject of this study raised some seemingly valid issues regarding teacher preparation at the undergraduate level. Jones, Burts, & Buchanan, (2000) also discussed these issues. The high attrition rate of beginning teachers is a problem. Universities and teacher’s colleges are beginning to address this problem by including more hands-on practice in their preparation of future teachers. A longitudinal study that compared the attrition rates and the teaching experiences of beginning teachers who graduated from traditional teacher preparation programs with those who graduated from programs that include more practicum and observation hours could provide interesting information to teacher preparation programs that are considering this issue for the purposes of determining curriculum requirements.
Conclusion

Looking back on the study as a whole and looking in depth at Gigi’s experience, it seems that there are three ultimate lessons to be taken from this study. First, the study shows that teachers who leave the practice in frustration with their early teaching experiences can return successfully to teaching as if they receive sufficient support to allow them to overcome the barriers to teaching that caused them to leave in the first place. Second, the study shows that teachers can move from developmentally inappropriate practice towards developmentally appropriate practice, even if their prior training and experience has provided them with a developmentally inappropriate worldview of the role of a teacher in educating young children. Third, the study displays the role of the mentor, whether it is a college professor, a supervisor, or a knowledgeable friend who fills that role, as one of the most important supports to growth in developmentally appropriate practice for beginning teachers. Ultimately, it seems that becoming proficient in developmentally appropriate practice is not easy; it takes time and effort for a teacher to become effective and confident in DAP. However, this study shows that with substantial support from the professional ECE community, and with substantial commitment by the teacher herself, an early childhood teacher can ultimately conquer that difficult task and bring the benefits of developmentally appropriate practice to the children she serves.

Epilogue

On September 17, 2004, after I had concluded my data collection and analysis, and was in the process of completing the writing of this report, I had the opportunity to observe Gigi with her 3-year-old students in her classroom at the university child care center. I observed her in the morning including center time, music time, outside play time, bathroom and hand-washing, walking to the lunchroom, lunch, walking back to the room after lunch, quiet reading before nap, and nap. When I arrived, the class was engaged in free play in centers. She had, at the time of my visit, six to seven students. Some of the children present that day had speech or developmental delays. There was a student worker present who was not a student of ECE.

The first thing I noticed when I entered the room was the children’s level of active engagement in their play in their various centers. Even though this was a 3-year-old class, the room was nearly quiet, with a “low buzz” of the children quietly talking among themselves as they constructed with tinker toys, “read” to each other in the library soft area, painted with Gigi in the art area, and explored the science center with the student worker. I observed the level of enhancement and extension of their learning that Gigi practiced with her students. When a child who had a speech delay talked to her or asked her a question, without undue interruption of the child’s communication, she was careful to repeat her understanding of the child’s words back to the child to model correct pronunciation and confirm her understanding of the child.

The children seemed to be typical 3-year-olds as they played. I observed that they worked together and cooperated, with seemingly genuine concern for each other’s feelings and for being helpful when appropriate. As is normal for this age, several times disputes arose between children over toy parts or space to work. Gigi’s response was to
gently coach them in skills to negotiate and settle their own disputes among themselves in the ways that seemed best to them. She did not at any time that I observed step in to solve their problems for them or to pre-empt their attempts at solving their own problems. She never compelled an apology. Instead, I heard her discuss hurt feelings and ask them about ways that restitution might be achieved. She then allowed the children involved in the dispute to work out reconciliation amongst them.

When it was time to end center time and transition to cleanup, Gigi gave the children several warnings of the impending transition. Then she modeled cleaning up while encouraging their active participation without undue or harsh correction. She allowed the children to transition a few at a time to the library soft area for music time and “read” a book while they waited for their friends to finish cleaning up. When cleanup was completed, she said, “Great! That looks so nice! Now our room is so neat! Now we can all find what we need when we come back to center time later.”

When she conducted music time in the soft area at the library, I was amazed at the way she shared with these 3-year-olds a track of instrumental music from “Peter and the Wolf” that had no words to accompany it. She asked the children to act out what they heard in the music, using scarves as props. During each passage of the music, she asked the children to use their imaginations to picture what might be happening. She asked the children to relate the music they were hearing to the recorded story that they had been hearing over the last several days. The children engaged in the activity with enthusiasm and seemed to comprehend the story and the implications of the instrumental accompaniment. When the group became a bit disengaged, Gigi allowed the group to vote on another tape to which they could listen. One little girl was upset when the group chose “The Three Little Pigs,” but Gigi just comforted her by promising her she would play “Peter and the Wolf” at naptime, and acted on the group’s choice. She then played a jazzy version of “The Three Little Pigs” that the children and she acted out with great enthusiasm and enjoyment.

When it was time go to the playground, just out the door from the classroom, she simply said, “Did you all enjoy the music time? Me, too! Now let’s go outside.” No line formation was required; she simply allowed the children to cluster at the door until she could open it. I was impressed on the playground how prepared she was to enhance their play there too. On the playground she actively engaged in their play, even though it was sunny, hot, and humid. The children appeared to love her interactions with them and to actively seek her out to share their discovery and play. She accepted their messy play in the dirt and the water fountains and was prepared for cleaning them up before they went in to wash hands to go to lunch.

When it was time to head down the hall to lunch, she asked the children what animal they wanted to pretend to be as they went down the hall. They chose puppy-dogs, so a group of yipping “puppies” walked down the hall, past the school offices and through the reception area to the lunchroom. I had seldom seen children allowed, even encouraged, to make noise while transitioning to another activity through a center hallway! They had such fun!

As the children ate their lunch, Gigi served and assisted them, but was not able to sit with them to eat. After lunch, while Gigi swept the room, the children engaged in chatting among themselves and in acting out a “taking a train to ____” activity with me. When she finished cleaning up after lunch, she reminded them that “The babies are
sleeping just down the hall and we need to be quiet now.” A very quiet but not entirely silent group walked back to the room without further coaching. They seemed very familiar with the routine and ready to cooperate with reasonable restrictions.

Back at the room, she gathered the children cuddled closely around her in the soft area and read a book for a few minutes. Each child could see and touch Gigi and the book. Then the children gathered their sleep necessities, went to the bathroom, and transitioned to their cots. Gigi put the spoken version of “Peter and the Wolf” back on the tape player for them to listen to as they fell asleep, as she had promised the little girl who was upset earlier.

I told Gigi that day how proud I was of her and of the progress she had made as a developmentally appropriate teacher of preschool children. I stopped by the center office to talk to the director before I left and told her how effective Gigi had been with her children, and how much I thought she had learned over the past year.
REFERENCES


Dunn, L., & Kontos, S. (1997). What have we learned about developmentally appropriate practice? *Young Children, 53* (2), 4-12.


Hyson, M. C., van Trieste, K., & Rauch, V. (1989). What is the relationship between developmentally appropriate practices and preschool and kindergarten children’s attitudes toward school? Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Atlanta, GA.


LSU INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

IRB APPLICATION: APPROVAL OF PROJECTS WHICH USE HUMAN SUBJECTS

When this application is submitted to the IRB please include:
• Two copies of this completed form.
• A Brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects)
• Copies of all instruments to be used. If this proposal is a part of a grant application, include a copy of the grant proposal, the investigative brochure (if one exists) and any recruitment materials including advertisements intended to be seen or heard by potential subjects.
• The consent form that you will be using.

=======================================================================
(IRB Use: IRB# _______ Review Type: Expedited ____  Full ___)
=======================================================================

Part 1: General Information

1. Principal Investigator: Dr. Diane Burts  Rank: Professor
   (PI Must be an LSU Faculty member)
   Dept.: School of Human Ecology Ph: (225) 578-2404
   E-mail: dburt1@lsu.edu

   Co-investigators*:  Judi Martin McCaslin
   *Student? Y/N  Y  Thesis/dissertation/class project? Y/N  Y  Thesis
   Dept.: School of Human Ecology Ph: (931) 363-7465 (work)
   (931) 363-7153 (home)
   E-mail: judimccaslin@igiles.net

2. Project Title: Developmentally Appropriate Practice: A Case Study of Mentoring for Teacher Change

3. Proposed duration (months): 12  Start date: June 5, 2003

4. Funding sought from: Not applicable

5. LSU Proposal #: ______  6. Number of subjects requested: 1

A. ASSURANCE: PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (named above)
   I accept personal responsibility for the conduct of this study (including ensuring compliance of co-investigators/co-workers in accordance with the documents submitted herewith and the following guidelines for human subject protection: The Belmont Report, LSU’s Assurance with OPRR, and 45 CFR 46 (Available from OSP or at http://www.fas.lsu.edu/osp/irb/)

   Signature of PI ________________________ Date _____________

B. ASSURANCE OF STUDENT/PROJECT COORDINATOR named above
   I agree to adhere to the terms of this document and am familiar with the documents referenced above.

   Signature ______________________________ Date ______________

Part 2: Project Abstract - provide a brief abstract of the project.

This study is a qualitative case study of the beliefs and practice of a certified elementary teacher, who is currently teaching in a private Pre-K classroom, while working toward Pre-K and Kindergarten certification. The mentoring may include such
activities as observations, modeling, and support by the researcher as desired by the teacher, in addition to recording reflections by the teacher on the college courses the teacher takes as she works toward attaining early childhood education certification.

From the gathered research data, the researcher will attempt to determine what factors seemed to lend support to the growth and change in practice of the subject teacher; what factors hampered that growth and change; and the response of the subject teacher and her principal to the process of mentoring, journaling, and reflection on her practice.

Part 3: Research Protocol

A: Describe study procedures

Describe study procedures with emphasis on those procedures affecting subjects and safety measure. Also provide script for telephone surveys.

In the initial phase of the case study the researcher will interview the teacher to determine her teaching history and motivation to change; current teaching beliefs and practices; observe the teacher in her classroom during class; discuss with her various aspects of her practice including class schedule, room arrangement, materials used in the classroom, and curriculum. Data collected will include a baseline assessment of the level of developmental appropriateness of her current practice conducted by the State of Louisiana at the beginnings and ends of the 2002-2003 school year and the 2003-2004 school year. This data will be used to triangulate and compare to the observations of the researcher. The assessment instrument will be that developed by the State of Louisiana Department of Education, "Nonpublic Schools Early Childhood Development Program - Monitor’s On-site Assessment Score Sheet For Program Compliance" (see attached instrument). The researcher will obtain written informed consent from the teacher and her principal to conduct the research. The informed consent forms will guarantee the anonymity of the study site and subject, and will give consent for the study to be used for research and educational purposes only. The informed consent form for both the teacher and the school principal will guarantee the anonymity of the children in the classroom, using pseudonyms to identify the subject school, teacher, and the children throughout the study and in all subsequent publications and presentations thereof.

During the second phase, the researcher will engage in mentoring and support activities; will model appropriate classroom practices; and will provide release time to allow the subject teacher to visit specific developmentally appropriate centers to be selected by the overseeing professor of early childhood education. During the entire project, both the subject teacher and the researcher will maintain journals recording day to day impressions of the ongoing activities and interactions of the teacher and the researcher. The researcher will conduct periodic interviews with the teacher and her principal, tape recording these interviews for later use. The researcher will photograph the classroom both with and without children present at the beginning of the research project and periodically
throughout the study. She will tape record classroom activities to accompany the photographic record of the class when appropriate. The children will not be the focus of photographs and recordings, but rather how they interact in the environment the teacher has provided for them. At the end of this phase, the researcher will again conduct an assessment of the level of developmental appropriateness of the subject teacher’s practice using the above referenced instrument. The researcher will obtain informed consent from the parents of all children in the classroom to use photography and tape recordings produced during the study for research and educational purposes only. The parental informed consent form will guarantee the anonymity of the children in the classroom, using pseudonyms to identify the subject school, teacher, and the children throughout the study and all subsequent publications and presentations thereof. During the third and final phase of the study, in addition to the ongoing analysis of data required of a qualitative study during the earlier phases, the researcher will conduct a final analysis the data, including tape recorded interviews, photographs, and journals of both the teacher and the researcher, looking for themes and trends of change in the teaching beliefs and practice of the subject teacher. The researcher will agree to keep the master file identifying the subject and her school separate from the body of the study at all times. The files containing the study will be kept in a secure location. Only the researcher and her major professor will have access to the files containing the study data.

B: Answer each of the following questions.

1. Why is the use of human subjects necessary? (v.s. animals/in vitro)

   Human teachers of young children must be studied directly in order to determine how best to train, support, and mentor teachers for change and growth.

2. Specify sites of data collection.

   A non-public school in Baton Rouge, Louisiana

3. If surgical or invasive procedures are used, give name, address, and telephone number of supervising physician and the qualifications of the person(s) performing the procedures. Comparable information when qualified participation or supervision is required or appropriate.

   Not applicable

4. Provide the names, dosage, and actions of any drugs or other materials administered to the subjects and the qualifications of the person(s) administering the drugs.

   Not applicable

5. Detail all the physical, psychological, and social risks to which the subjects may be exposed.
Should the identity of the subject teacher be associated with contents of the study, she may be exposed to personal embarrassment, social impacts, or impacts on her employment as a result.

6. What steps will be taken to minimize risks to subjects?

The identities of the participating school and teacher will be kept anonymous by use of pseudonyms for the school and teacher to conceal their identities. The master identity file will be kept separate from the body of the study and only be accessed by the researcher and her major professor.

7. Describe the recruitment pool (community, institution, or group) and the criteria used to select and exclude subjects.

The subject teacher enrolled in an independent study with the researcher’s major professor and was amenable to participating in the current study.

8. List any vulnerable population whose members are included in this project (e.g., children under the age of 18; mentally impaired persons; pregnant women; prisoners; the aged.)

The researcher will be observing the practices of the teacher in the classroom. The research does not involve direct observation of the children themselves or recording of any information about specific children. Information gathered will be in accordance with the parental informed consent form, and information will be kept anonymous by the use of pseudonyms to identify school, teacher and children.

9. Describe the process through which informed consent will be obtained. (Informed consent usually requires an oral explanation, discussion, and opportunity for questions before seeking consent form signature.)

The researcher will contact the subject teacher by phone to solicit her participation in the study. She will schedule a meeting in person. The researcher will answer the teacher’s questions. She will then seek informed consent signature.

Any children, who are referenced in the study or shown in exhibits, will be kept anonymous by use of pseudonyms for the school, teacher and children to conceal their identities.

10.A) Is this study anonymous or confidential? (Anonymous means that the identity of the subjects is never linked to the data, directly, or indirectly through a code system.)

This study will be confidential.
B) If a confidential study, detail how the privacy of the subjects and security of their data will be protected.

The identities of the participating school and teacher, and that of any children, who are referenced in the study or shown in exhibits, will be kept anonymous by use of pseudonyms for the school, teacher and children to conceal their identities. The master code sheet will be kept separate from the body of the study and only be accessed by the researcher and her major professor.

Part 4: Consent Form (including Assent Form and Parental Permission Form if minors are involved)

See attached Consent Forms

Attachments:

1. Attach copies of All Instruments and questionnaires used.

2. Attach documentation of application to IRB of collaborating institutions: (Documentation of approval by IRB of collaborating institution is required by LSU IRB before work begins on the study.) Send original and 2 copies of application form & all attachments to IRB Office at 203 B-1 David Boyd Hall, (225) 578-8692, FAX 578-6792.
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORMS
Consent Form – For School Principal

1. Study Title: Developmentally Appropriate Practice: A Case Study of Mentoring for Teacher Change

2. Performance Site:

   School

   Address of School

   City State Zip Code

   Owner or administrator of School

   School Principal’s work phone

   Participating teacher

   Home address of participating teacher

   Teacher’s home phone

3. Investigators:

   The following investigators are available for questions about this study, M-F, 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

   Judi Martin McCaslin, researcher
   (931) 363-7465

   Dr. Diane Burts, Thesis Committee Chair
   (225) 578-2404

4. Purpose of this Study:

   This study is a qualitative case study of the changes and beliefs and practice of a certified elementary teacher in a private school, who is currently teaching in a private Pre-K classroom, while working toward Pre-K to Kindergarten certification. The mentoring may include such activities as observation, modeling and support by the researcher as desired by the teacher, in addition to recording
reflections by the teacher on the college courses the teacher takes as she works toward attaining the early childhood education certification.

5. **Subject inclusion:** 1 teacher in one school

6. **Number of Subjects:** 1

7. **Study Procedures:** The study will be conducted in three phases. In the first phase of the study, the researcher will interview the teacher to determine her teaching history and motivation to change; current teaching beliefs and practices; observe the teacher in her classroom during class; discuss with her various aspects of her practice including class schedule, room arrangement, materials used in the classroom, and curriculum.

   The researcher will obtain written informed consent from the teacher and her principal to conduct the research. The informed consent forms will guarantee the anonymity of the study site and subject, and will give consent for the study to be used for research and educational purposes only. The subject and facility management informed consent form will guarantee the anonymity of the children in the classroom, using pseudonyms to identify the subject school, teacher, and the children throughout the study and in all subsequent publications and presentations thereof.

   During the second phase, the researcher will engage in mentoring and support activities; will model appropriate classroom practices; and will provide release time to allow the subject teacher to visit specific developmentally appropriate centers to be selected by the overseeing professor of early childhood education. During the entire project, both the subject teacher and the researcher will maintain journals recording day to day impressions of the ongoing activities and interactions of the teacher and the researcher. The researcher will conduct periodic interviews with the teacher and her principal, tape recording these interviews for later use. The researcher will photograph the classroom both with and without children present at the beginning of the research project and periodically throughout the study. The children will not be the
focus of the photographs, but rather how they interact in the environment the teacher has provided for them. Photographs with children present will have the faces obscured to conceal the children’s identities. At the end of this phase, the researcher will again conduct an assessment of the level of developmental appropriateness of the subject teacher’s practice using the above referenced instrument.

During the third and final phase of the study, in addition to the ongoing analysis of data during earlier phases required of a qualitative study, the researcher will conduct a final analysis of the data, including tape recorded interviews and classroom activities, photographs, and journals of both the teacher and the researcher, looking for themes and trends of change in the teaching beliefs and practice of the subject teacher. The researcher will agree to keep the master file identifying the subject and her school separate from the body of the study at all times. The files containing the study will be kept in a secure location. Only the researcher and her major professor will have access to the files containing the study data.

8. Benefits: It is anticipated that the subject teacher and the school for which she works will benefit from the support and mentoring of an experienced early childhood teacher and director as she works towards her Pre-K to K add-on certification. The researcher will provide the teacher with copies of relevant articles and internet research which will help her in understanding early childhood education and child development. The researcher will provide a substitute for the teacher for release time at no cost to the school.

9. Risks: Subject school and subject teacher will be identified only by pseudonyms in order to preserve confidentiality. The master file will be kept in a secure location separate from the body of the study. All files will be kept in a secure cabinet to which only the investigator has access.

10. Right to Refuse: Subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without
penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.

11. Privacy: Results of the study may be published or publicly presented for educational purposes, and no identifying information will be included in the publications. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

12. Signatures:

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects’ rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Institutional Review Board, Louisiana State University, (225) 578-8692. I agree to all the teacher to participate in the study described above, and to allow myself to be interviewed at times convenient to me, and to allow those interviews to be tape recorded and used as a part of this study, and acknowledge the investigator’s obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

________________________________________________________________________
Signature of study site school principal                         Date
Consent Form – For Teacher

1. Study Title: Developmentally Appropriate Practice: A Case Study of Mentoring for Teacher Change

2. Performance Site: __________________________________________
   School
   __________________________________________
   Address of School
   __________________________________________
   City State Zip Code
   __________________________________________
   Owner or administrator of School
   __________________________________________
   School Principal’s work phone
   __________________________________________
   Participating teacher
   __________________________________________
   Home address of participating teacher
   __________________________________________
   Teacher’s home phone

3. Investigators: The following investigators are available for questions about this study, M-F, 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
   Judi Martin McCaslin, researcher
   (931) 363-7465
   Dr. Diane Burts, Thesis Committee Chair
   (225) 578-2404

4. Purpose of this Study: This study is a qualitative case study of the changes and beliefs and practice of a certified elementary teacher in a private school, who is currently teaching in a private Pre-K classroom, while working toward Pre-K to Kindergarten certification. The mentoring such activities as observations, modeling, and support by the researcher as desired by the teacher, in addition to recording reflections
by the teacher on the college courses the subject
teacher takes as she works toward attaining the
eyearly childhood education certification.

5. Subject inclusion: 1 teacher in one school

6. Number of Subjects: 1

7. Study Procedures: The study will be conducted in three phases. In the first phase of the study, the researcher will interview the teacher to determine her teaching history and motivation to change; current teaching beliefs and practices; observe the teacher in her classroom during class; discuss with her various aspects of her practice including class schedule, room arrangement, materials used in the classroom and curriculum. The researcher will obtain written informed consent from the teacher and her principal to conduct the research. The informed consent forms will guarantee the anonymity of the study site and subject, and will give consent for the study to be used for research and educational purposes only. The informed consent form for both the teacher and the school principal will guarantee the anonymity of the children in the classroom, using pseudonyms to identify the subject school, teacher, and the children throughout the study and in all subsequent publications and presentations thereof.

During the second phase, the researcher will engage in mentoring and support activities; will model appropriate classroom practices; and will provide release time to allow the subject teacher to visit specific developmentally appropriate centers to be selected by the overseeing professor of early childhood education. During the entire project, both the subject teacher and the researcher will maintain journals recording day to day impressions of the ongoing activities and interactions of the teacher and the researcher. The researcher will conduct periodic interviews with the teacher and her principal, tape recording these interviews for later use. The researcher will photograph the classroom both with and without children present at the beginning of the research project and periodically throughout the study. The children will not be the focus of photographs and but rather how they
interact in the environment the teacher has provided for them. Photographs with children present will have the faces obscured to conceal the children’s identities. At the end of this phase, the researcher will again conduct an assessment of the level of developmental appropriateness of the subject teacher’s practice using the above referenced instrument.

During the third and final phase of the study, in addition to the ongoing analysis during the earlier phases required of a qualitative study, the researcher will conduct a final analysis of the data, including tape recorded interviews and classroom activities, photographs, and journals of both the teacher and the researcher, looking for themes and trends of change in the teaching beliefs and practice of the subject teacher. The researcher will agree to keep the master file identifying the subject and her school separate from the body of the study at all times.

The files containing the study will be kept in a secure location. Only the researcher and her major professor will have access to the files containing the study data.

8. Benefits: It is anticipated that the subject teacher will benefit from the support and mentoring of an experienced early childhood teacher and director as she works towards her Pre-K to K add-on certification. The researcher will provide the teacher with copies of relevant articles and internet research which will help her in understanding early childhood education and child development.

9. Risks: Subject school and subject teacher will be identified only by pseudonym in order to preserve confidentiality. The master file will be kept in a secure location separate from the body of the study. All files will be kept in a secure cabinet to which only the investigator and her major professor has access.

10. Right to Refuse: Subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.
11. Privacy: Results of the study may be published or publicly presented for educational purposes, and no identifying information will be included in the publications. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

12. Signatures: The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects’ rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Institutional Review Board, Louisiana State University, (225) 578-8692. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator’s obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

________________________________________________________________________

Signature of teacher                      Date
VITA

Judi Martin McCaslin was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, December 27, 1949. She graduated in 1967 from Broadmoor High School. She attended Louisiana State University as a freshman from summer 1967 through May 1968 before leaving college to begin work at the Louisiana State Department of Highways in the Road Design Section.

Ms. McCaslin worked in the civil engineering, development and construction fields in Louisiana, New York, California, North Carolina, and Tennessee. While she was working in California she returned to college part-time and graduated from the University of Phoenix in Southern California in 1989 with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. Thereafter, she continued to work as a manager in the construction and development fields until 1995.

In 1995, her church called upon her to bring her management experience to the directorship of the church’s Growing Tree Nursery School, a school with 90 children and 20 staff and teachers. She served as Director of the school from September 1995 through April 2004.

In 2001, while she was employed as Nursery School Director for her church, her family called upon her to spend summers with her elderly parents in Baton Rouge to give her sister who was primary care-giver a chance for a holiday. That year she applied to Louisiana State University School of Human Ecology for acceptance as a part-time student, to work on a Master of Science in Human Ecology with an emphasis on Child Development. She attended summer sessions in 2001 through 2004, and attended some classes over the internet during fall 2001 and spring 2002. Ms. McCaslin left the Nursery School in April 2004 to devote full-time completing her research and thesis for presentation to Louisiana State University in fall 2004. She graduated in December 2004.

She is married to James Melvin McCaslin and lives on a horse farm in Pulaski, Tennessee. They have Tennessee Walking Horses, which Ms. McCaslin enjoys showing around the middle Tennessee area. They have no children “except those with four feet.”