Portraits of Teachers: The Professional and Personal Characteristics of Twelve Primary Teachers.

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PORTRAITS OF TEACHERS: THE PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL
CHARACTERISTICS OF TWELVE
PRIMARY TEACHERS

A Dissertation

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
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction

by

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May, 1999

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family.

To my husband and best friend,
    John

to our terrific children,
    Joan
    Rachel
    Jordan
    &
    David

and to my parents,
Monroe and Teen Wicke.

And, in remembrance
“to the wind beneath my wings”
    Josie White.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the personal and professional characteristics of six teachers who reported high developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices and six teachers who reported low developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices. The sample was identified using teachers' scores on a self-reported survey measure of developmentally appropriate practice based on the 1987 guidelines by NAEYC. Qualitative data were collected through interviews with open-ended questions. By providing an in-depth description as a literary portrait of each teacher, this study provides insight into the beliefs and practical knowledge that inform the teaching practices of 12 primary grade teachers. A cross-case analysis within each group revealed common themes of teacher autonomy, teacher efficacy, and teaching strategies. Personal and professional characteristics are differentiated between the groups and are considered to influence teacher beliefs and practice.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background and Justification of Study

Teacher attitudes and beliefs are important concepts in understanding teachers' thought processes, classroom practices, change, and continued learning and development. Although teacher attitudes received considerable attention in teaching and teacher education research between the early 1950's and the early 1970's, teacher beliefs only recently gained prominence in the literature. Summaries of the research suggest that both attitudes and beliefs drive classroom actions and encourage teacher development (Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992). In the field of early childhood education, an examination of teacher beliefs as related to developmentally appropriate practice has been the impetus of considerable attention and research (i.e., Charlesworth, Hart, Burts, & Hernandez, 1991; Charlesworth, Hart, Burts, Thomasson, Mosley, & Fleege, 1993; Hyson-Pasek, & Rescorla, 1990; Smith & Shepard, 1988; Stipek, Daniels, Galluzzo, & Milburn, 1992).

In 1996, this researcher was a member of an initial study that continued research in the area of teacher beliefs and practices within the framework of developmentally appropriate practice in the primary grades, and examined supports and barriers reported by primary teachers in their daily practice. The study identified participating teachers in the first, second, and third grades along

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a continuum of developmental appropriateness. These teachers were identified by self-report on the Primary Teachers’ Beliefs and Practice Survey (Buchanan, Burts, Bidner, White, & Charlesworth, 1998). A sampling of teachers from each grade level was interviewed by this researcher and other members of the research team to determine what supports and barriers to teaching in the primary grades were reported by teachers using more or less developmentally appropriate practices (Bidner, 1998). The necessary permission forms are included in Appendix A.

The results of these studies contributed to our understanding of developmentally appropriate practices in the primary grades and to our comprehension of the supports and barriers teachers identified as part of their daily practice. However, questions surrounding the characteristics, experiences, and beliefs of these teachers remain. Therefore, this study was undertaken to inform our research further by presenting a literary portrait of the twelve teachers to examine their professional and personal characteristics.

In the early childhood classroom, it is frequently assumed that developmentally appropriate practice is contingent on teachers’ beliefs; however, this assumption may be too simplistic (Dunn & Kontos, 1997). According to Hyson (1991) practices are a reflection of teacher beliefs, parental expectations, administrative pressures, and “broad social imperatives.” (p.27) Research guides us to an understanding of the relationship between teacher beliefs and practice.
that indicate the stronger the teacher’s belief in developmentally appropriate practices, the more likely that teacher is to implement those practices in the classrooms (Charlesworth et al. 1993; Hyson, Hirsh-Pasek, & Rescorla 1990). However, teacher practice is complex and sometimes contrary to teacher beliefs (Hatch & Freeman, 1988).

Wien (1995) reported in her research that some teachers negotiate between two contradictory frameworks, namely developmentally appropriate practice and teacher dominion:

Teacher educators tend to regard the frameworks as incompatible because they are theoretically and mutually exclusive. As individuals, we favor one over the other as a consequence of our own rich and complex personal history. However, in the work of teachers, these two contrasting frameworks for practice are often intertwined with unconscious intimacy in the day-to-day processes of individual teachers. Practice is a struggle to prioritize cherished values, and it may be rare to find in one individual a set of ideals closely matching a single framework for practice, for lived life is more dynamic, conflicted, and muddied. (p. 1)

The teachers in Wien’s study report the struggles and successes of their practice, their experiences and their relationships. While each case (teacher) is specific and unique to its particular place and time, when examined together, some commonalities and differences emerged.

**Statement of the Problem**

Within the world of teachers’ classrooms, many circumstances come to bear on teacher practice. A closer examination of the circumstances and experiences of the teachers of young children may provide yet another avenue for
consideration in the search for a better understanding of the complexity of the teaching profession and to the dilemmas primary teachers confront as decision makers in implementing best practice.

While allowing for emerging themes and the possibilities of descriptive and reflective knowledge to impact the direction of the study, the researcher was guided by the following questions:

1. What personal and professional characteristics and experiences are expressed by teachers who report high developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices?

2. What personal and professional characteristics and experiences are expressed by teachers who report low developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices?

3. What similarities or differences emerge in a comparison of the two groups of teachers?

**Purpose of the Study**

This study was designed to contribute to the growing body of knowledge concerning developmentally appropriate practice in the primary grades. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to investigate further the beliefs, characteristics, and experiences of primary grade teachers who report practice to be more developmentally appropriate as well as those teachers who report beliefs and practices to be less developmentally appropriate. This examination of
teachers who report to be more to less developmentally appropriate in their practice may illuminate the attributes some teachers possess that allow them to implement more developmentally appropriate practices.

An examination of teacher practice along a continuum of developmental appropriateness was considered as the starting point for a more in-depth examination of a teacher’s framework for practice and how personal and professional characteristics support that framework. This study involved the documentation of teacher voices expressing beliefs and attitudes, as well as their view of children, parents, and community. Such expressions are referred to in the literature as ideology (Apple, 1979) or discourse (Lubeck, 1994) but in this study, the term framework for practice (Doll, 1994; Wien, 1995) was used to refer to a teachers’ beliefs and practice in combination with theory. The term framework combines theory and practice, and for teachers they are inseparable (Clandinin, 1986).

Teachers of young children make innumerable decisions each day. Various circumstances and experiences influence the decisions they make, consciously or unconsciously. A teacher's framework for practice is not based upon a single contingency or possibility. Whether a teachers’ framework for practice involves teacher dominion or developmentally appropriate practice (Wien, 1995), teachers make decisions based on what they believe to be best practice for the circumstances involved.
Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is in the potential contribution it can make to a more in-depth understanding of the complexity of classroom life in the primary grades. The study also extended a sense awareness of the influence of teacher personality, experiences, attitudes and beliefs as contributors to teacher practice.

Definitions of Terms

Terms used in this study are defined as follows:

Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) is a framework for instruction. As defined in the 1987 publication by the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the concept of DAP has two dimensions: age appropriateness and individual appropriateness (Bredekamp, 1987). Examples of guidelines that set the standard for application in early childhood programs are that curriculum is designed as an interactive process that is integrated and balanced, and that teachers provide for a wide range of interests and abilities as they strive to meet the needs of each child. For teacher identification and selection in this study, developmentally appropriate practice was measured by the Primary Teachers’ Beliefs and Practices Survey (Buchanan et al., 1998).

A continuum of developmental appropriateness is a range representing the highest score for DAP on one end and the lowest score for DAP on the other end.
For this study, developmental appropriateness was measured through teacher self-report on the Primary Teacher’ Beliefs and Practices Survey (Buchanan et al., 1998). This survey used statements describing beliefs or activities based on the 1987 NAEYC publication guidelines (Bredekamp, 1987). Responses on a 5-point Likert scale indicated relative importance or frequency. Six dependent variables were created from the survey scores. Global scores for DAP and for DIP were created by summing the scores for all beliefs and practices items representing DAP and DIP, respectively. Scores for each of the developmental beliefs and practices were created by summing the items that loaded on that factor.

High developmentally appropriate practice (High DAP), for this study was determined to be teachers with global DAP score at least one standard deviation above the mean.

Low developmentally appropriate practice (Low DAP), for this study, was determined to be teachers with a global DAP score at least one standard deviation below the mean.

Framework for practice combines theory with practice: an outline or coherent structure for teacher-held beliefs.

Primary grades include grades one, two, and three.

Teacher autonomy as defined in this study refers to a strong sense or trust of self, which contributes to growing independence and empowerment.
Teacher efficacy is defined as teachers' beliefs about their ability to teach effectively and about the ability of their students to learn (Ashton & Webb, 1986).

Teacher practical knowledge is knowledge constructed through teachers' own experiences about what works with students in classrooms.

Summary

Connelly and Clandinin (1986) remind us we do not understand practice by beginning with theory but by studying practitioners and classrooms as they are. Teachers have views of teaching and learning that are implicit to their practice, but most teachers rarely articulate their views. Their beliefs, practice, education, status in the community, and acceptance by colleagues are among the many factors that may influence their choice to communicate with others about what they do and why they do it. According to Kagan (1990), this lack of articulation results in part from a belief that their story would be marginalized. This is especially true for teachers who are considered traditional, ordinary, or compliant.

This study offered teachers an opportunity to comment about their teaching and experiences. Their voices are a welcome addition to the chorus of teacher voices in the expanding research and writing on teachers' experience.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Teaching is a complex activity. Although abundant research has been conducted to examine the nature of teaching, it is still far from being fully understood. The mystery of what really happens in the classroom, and why and how it happens, continues to challenge us. Teaching is a uniquely personal and intuitive activity that requires us to focus on its qualitative nature if we are to increase our understanding of it. This study focuses on the personal and practical knowledge of teachers.

The questions presented in the study are: what personal and professional characteristics and experiences are expressed by teachers who report high developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices in the primary grades; what personal and professional characteristics and experiences are expressed by teachers who report low developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices? Further, what similarities and differences emerge in a comparison of the two groups of teachers? The review of literature for the present study focused on these areas: (a) developmentally appropriate practice, (b) developmentally appropriate practice in primary grades, and (c) the influence of teacher beliefs on practice, and (d) the practical knowledge of teachers and teacher-held beliefs.

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Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Background

Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) is a framework for instruction promoted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Bredekamp 1987; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). This organization (NAEYC) is the nation’s largest professional organization for early childhood educators. It has a current membership of approximately 100,000 and is committed to promoting good programs for children and professional development for teachers through its many services. NAEYC’s publications provide a forum for discussion of major issues and ideas in the field of early childhood education.

In 1986 and 1987 (Bredekamp, 1987) NAEYC published position statements on developmentally appropriate practice. The documents were developed in response to specific, identified needs within a historical context. Two major issues were addressed by the guidelines. The first was to offer guidance for program personnel to meet the criteria set for accreditation by NAEYC. The second issue addressed by the guidelines was a response to a trend toward more academic, formal, skills-based instruction in programs for young children (Shepard & Smith, 1988). The 1987 guidelines (Bredekamp, 1987) described best practice as no previous publication had before. It marked the first
generally agreed upon set of professional standards detailing appropriate and inappropriate practices in programs for children from birth through age eight.

The 1987 edition stated that developmental appropriateness had two dimensions: age appropriateness, and individual appropriateness. Age appropriateness was described by the predictability and universality of human development. This implied a sequence of ages and stages of growth and change for all children from birth through age eight. This typical development helps teachers plan appropriate environments and experiences for their students. Individual appropriateness described the uniqueness of each child. Knowledge of a child’s growth patterns, interests, learning styles, and family background all combine to assist teachers in planning appropriate curriculums (Bredekamp, 1987).

The guidelines provided examples of appropriate and inappropriate practices for each age group. The following is an example from the teaching strategies for primary grades:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appropriate Practice</th>
<th>Inappropriate Practice</th>
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<td>Learning materials and activities are concrete, real, and relevant to children’s lives. Objects for manipulation are readily accessible. Tables are used for children to work alone or in small groups. A variety of work places and spaces is provided and flexibly used.</td>
<td>Materials are limited primarily to books, workbooks, and pencils. Children are assigned permanent desks and desks are rarely moved. Children work in large groups and no playful activity is allowed until all work is complete.</td>
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(Bredekkamp, 1987, p. 69).
In 1997, NAEYC published a revised edition of the developmentally appropriate guidelines to ensure currency, accuracy, and to further expand and clarify fundamental principles (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). While the format is similar, the content of the guidelines reflects current understanding and knowledge, a more in-depth view of cultural appropriateness, along with attention to age and individual appropriateness (Charlesworth, 1998). The study presented in this dissertation was conducted before the 1997 guidelines were available.

Both editions of the guidelines contain descriptions and illustrations of developmentally appropriate practice for children in the primary grades. Topics include teaching strategies, integrated curriculum, guidance of social and emotional development, motivation, parent-teacher relations, and evaluation, grouping, and staffing. The major difference in examples of DAP for younger children and examples for primary age children is the emphasis on integrated curriculum. As children progress into the primary grades, the emphasis on content increases (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). A more developmentally appropriate primary practice would integrate content or subject areas together, often utilizing themes and project activities.

The significance of DAP can be expressed as: (1) matching what we know about how children develop and learn to content and strategies; (2) treating children as individuals; and (3) treating children with respect (Koestelnik, 1992).
While the NAEYC position statement and guidelines reflect knowledge derived from theory, research, and practice (Bredekamp, 1987), these concepts are sometimes challenged by experts in the field (see, e.g., Goffin, 1996; Katz, 1996; Lubeck, 1996). Even though Stott and Bowman (1996) consider the changing nature of child development theory and research a “slippery base” (p. 169) for practice, it is still a major influence in early childhood teacher education. They propose that with an acknowledgement that child development theory and research can only approximate the reality of the socio-culture of children, the early childhood educator is challenged to supplement this theoretical knowledge with reflective practice and an examination of personal beliefs. “This task is not merely one of learning, but one of reflection and integration of multiple perspectives in such a way that will come to inform practice” (p. 175).

The NAEYC (1996) standards for early childhood teacher certification reflect current theoretical perspectives on how children learn, emphasizing that children construct knowledge through play and active manipulation of physical objects and interaction with other people (Piaget, 1970). They also stress the importance of the process of social construction of knowledge whereby children develop understanding through social interactions with peers and adults (Vygotsky, 1978,1992). Operating from this theoretical perspective, the standards call for teachers to develop, plan, and implement curriculum that promotes children’s active construction of knowledge.
Some of the major criteria set forth in the guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice (Bredekamp, 1987) include an emphasis on the whole child (physical, social, emotional, and cognitive), planning with consideration of each individual student, learning as an interactive process, and concrete activities relevant to the student's life.

Research

Most of the research on DAP in early childhood education has been conducted at the preschool and kindergarten levels. Although all findings are not completely supportive of DAP, the majority of evidence suggests the effectiveness of the approach in teaching young children. A review of the literature in this area includes an impressive collection of research referred to as The LSU Studies (Charlesworth, Harts, Burts, & DeWolf, 1993). The researchers studied different samples of kindergarten and pre-school children (total=204) from a large school system in 12 classrooms.

As measured by The Classroom Child Stress Behavior Instrument, Burts, Hart, Charlesworth, & Kirk (1990), found that children in less developmentally appropriate kindergarten classrooms exhibited about twice the level of stress behaviors than those in more developmentally appropriate programs. They reported that children demonstrated such stress behaviors as fingernail biting, ear pulling, rocking, stuttering, pencil tapping, and destruction of work sheets. Stress was highest when children were organized into large groups and when they were
working on workbooks or worksheets (Burts, Hart, Charlesworth, Fleege, Mosley, & Thommason, 1992). There were no differences in observed stress behaviors with regard to age of entry into kindergarten (Crom, 1992).

Abshire (1990) reported more variety and less structured activity with more participation in whole group activities in DAP classrooms. Weems-Moon found that regardless of classroom type, high or low developmentally appropriate learning environments, African American and low socioeconomic kindergarten children exhibited high levels of overall stress behaviors. However, low SES African American children progressed rapidly in acquiring literacy skills when taught using developmentally appropriate whole language methods; simultaneously their stress behaviors decreased in frequency.

Post-kindergarten follow-up studies of students were conducted by the LSU researchers. Children in first and second grade, with approximately 75% of the original sample of students, found attendance in more developmentally appropriate kindergarten programs to be linked with overall benefits in terms of achievement and behavioral outcomes in elementary school for children from varying backgrounds (Burts, Hart, Charlesworth, DeWolf, Ray, & Manuel, 1993).

While this is not a complete rendering of The LSU Studies related to kindergarten and pre-school children, it is an indication of the positive effects of developmentally appropriate practice on the development of young children.
Findings from The LSU Studies regarding teachers’ beliefs and practices are reported later in this chapter.

Other researchers in the field of early childhood examined achievement of children in more or less developmentally appropriate classrooms. More positive outcomes were found for children who attended more developmentally appropriate preschools and kindergartens than for children who attended less developmentally appropriate classrooms. The following studies are examples of such research.

Frede and Barnett (1992) evaluated the effects of developmentally appropriate public school kindergartens on economically disadvantaged children’s later achievement. They found implementation of DAP in kindergartens in a statewide system, ranging from high to low. Children from the low classes were removed for final analysis. The study found DAP implemented at high to moderate levels in kindergarten contributed to increased academic achievement at first grade.

Stipek, Daniels, Galluzzo, & Milburn (1992) conducted a study of 62 preschool and kindergarten programs enrolling children from poor and middle income families. Their findings demonstrated that in practice, more emphasis on academic instruction tends to be related to less emphasis on positive, social relationships between children and teacher. The researchers found that the higher
the levels of teacher-direction in the classroom, the lower the positive social context.

A study conducted by Hirsh-Pasek, Hyson, and Rescorla (1990) and Hirsh-Pasek (1991) compared children in preschools and kindergartens that scored high and low on an observation measure they developed that assesses how well programs meet NAEYC guidelines. Children in the two types of programs performed the same on the basic skills and problem solving measures and children in the less developmentally appropriate program emphasizing academic skills, did not score lower on a test of creativity and did not have lower perceptions of academic competence. These results suggest that skill-oriented programs do not necessarily produce students with higher levels of problem solving abilities, nor do they have a negative effect on student creativity.

**Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Primary Grades**

Most primary classrooms are situated within elementary schools. This geographical location places six, seven, and eight year old children and their teachers in an environment that has a distinctively different history, tradition, perspective, expectation, practice, values, and school culture than an early childhood education setting (Bloch, 1987).

The body of research on developmentally appropriate practice in primary grades is considerably less than the literature available for preschool and kindergarten. This may be attributed to what Wien (1995) refers to as the
"teacher dominion" framework for practice (p.5). This is the teaching method where teacher is in charge, chooses goals, plans and implements activities, and evaluates outcomes.

Implementation of developmentally appropriate practices in the primary grades can be difficult without support. Bidner (1998) identified the supports and barriers to teaching as reported by ten primary grade teachers. In this study, teachers reported a variety of sources and types of supports and barriers. The following sources of supports were mentioned by all teachers in the study: parents, principals, co-workers, family, self, technology, and other (e.g., students, workshops). The only sources of barriers reported by all teachers were parents and issues related to scheduling and time. Few differences were found between grade levels, but differences were noted between High DAP and Low DAP teachers.

In a related study, Buchanan, Burts, Bidner, White, and Charlesworth (1998) focused their research on the predictors of DAP in the primary grades. This study identified classroom characteristics and teacher characteristics that are related to the self-reported beliefs and practices of first, second, and third grade teachers. From a sample of 277 primary teachers (77% of available sample size), the teacher variable that most strongly predicted the dependent variables was the amount of influence teachers believed they had on the way they plan and implement curriculum. Once again, the importance of "gaining additional insight
"into teachers’ worlds" is suggested as a means to better support and encourage teachers in implementing developmentally appropriate practices in the primary grades. (p.480)

Curriculum standards should not be perceived as barriers to developmentally appropriate practices. In mathematics instruction in the primary grades, (Fennema, Franke, Carpenter, & Carey, 1993) teachers were trained to interact with children while solving relevant and meaningful mathematics problems in small groups. The children’s progress in mathematics understanding not only surprised the teachers, but also they exceeded the curriculum standards of the National Council of Teacher of Mathematics. The results showed significant increases in math scores by encouraging children to talk and reflect about concepts traditionally taught with paper and pencil. This study is an example of the principles advocated in the guidelines for primary grades to encourage interaction and exploration ( Appendix C).

Marcon (1992) studied kindergarten classes in the District of Columbia public schools. Most of the children were African Americans and from low-income families. In a comparison of child-centered or teacher-directed classroom, the students in the child-centered classes performed significantly better on mastery of basic skills than did those children in the teacher directed classrooms. The researcher followed the children into first grade where the child
centered approach continued to have the most positive effect both socially and academically

**Teacher Beliefs and Practices**

Several researchers of developmentally appropriate practice have found that teachers’ practices are associated with their beliefs. (Charlesworth, Hart, Burts, & Hernandez, 1991; Charlesworth, Hart, Burts, Thomasson, Mosley, & Fleege, 1993; Smith and Shepard, 1988; Stipek, Daniels, Galluzzo, & Milburn, 1992). In each of these studies, teacher beliefs were found to directly influence teaching practice.

Charlesworth et al., (1993) assessed principals’ and kindergarten teacher practices and found that the more important teachers believed appropriate practices to be, the more likely they were to use them. Beliefs and use of less appropriate practices were even more strongly related.

Smith and Shepard, (1988) studied the relationship between kindergarten teachers’ beliefs about and practice concerning kindergarten readiness and retention in grade levels. The teachers’ beliefs and practices differed predominantly between those who saw biological maturation as an explanation for children’s learning and ability in school and those who saw children’s readiness and retention as outcomes of environmental influences such as parents.

In contrast, Hatch and Freeman (1988) interviewed 36 kindergarten teachers and found that more than half held conflicting beliefs between their
personal philosophy of how children learn best and their classroom practices which were skill oriented. The results from the investigations described indicate that unless teachers are educated to teach with a strong theoretical framework attached to specific classroom practices, it is very likely that teacher beliefs will not be congruent with practice.

Research has indicated that teachers are influenced not only by explicit theories learned but also by implicit theories and beliefs. Beliefs function as a filter through which new information, programs, theories, or experiences in a teacher's daily practice flow through. As a filter, beliefs can facilitate or impede teacher growth (Pajares, 1992; Prawat, 1992). As teachers respond to the complexity of classroom life, they adapt their practice in many ways (Prawat, 1992).

Understandably, teachers develop theories of teaching from personal experiences and practical knowledge (Spodek, 1988). Teachers may persist in holding many of these implicit beliefs without analysis despite contradictions caused by reason, time, schooling, or experience (Pajares, 1992). Lortie (1975) reported that the thousands of hours teachers spend as students far outweigh the explicit theories taught later in their educational career. Students bring these early formed beliefs with them to teacher education, and then teachers take them into schools and classrooms. Prawat (1992) suggests that the tenets and understandings that teachers have constructed through experience, through
teaching in schools, and through their interactions with children may act as barriers to the usage of knowledge offered by academic views of child development.

**Teacher Practical Knowledge**

Spodek, (1988) examined the sources of teachers' professional thinking. Assuming a direct connection between teachers' beliefs about classroom practice and enactment of classroom practice, Spodek reviewed a collection of studies done in England and the United States for teacher beliefs, actions, and personal constructs (derived from life experiences and previous educational preparation). His findings strongly suggest that child development theory alone cannot be seen as the sole source of teachers' knowledge. He found teacher values, knowledge of traditions of practice and teaching environment also contribute to teachers' professional thinking.

Research on teacher thinking assumes three things: 1) practice is largely influenced by teacher thinking; 2) teaching is guided by thoughts, decisions, and judgments; and 3) teaching is a higher-level decision-making process (Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986; Holmes Group, 1986). These assumptions portray teachers as active, engaging, and rational professionals who make both conscious and intuitive decisions in school contexts. They also suggest that the thinking of teachers constitutes a large part of the psychological
context of teaching and that practice is influenced and even perhaps determined by teachers' underlying belief system.

The beliefs teachers maintain and the practice they implement influence their personal characteristics (McNergney & Carrier, 1981). Teacher characteristics such as attitudes, expectations, and concerns or anxieties are powerful affective traits which influence teacher knowledge about the internalization of developmentally appropriate beliefs and the generation of developmentally appropriate practices (Shreck, 1998).

Attention to the beliefs of teachers can inform educational practice in ways formal education or current research agendas cannot (Kagan, 1992). While considered a “messy construct,” Pajares (1992) claims it is worth the struggle to better understand the complexity of the teacher and the learning environment.

Teachers' beliefs about their ability to teach effectively and about the ability of their students to learn affect the outcome of teaching. Teachers who believe in themselves and their abilities as teachers and who believe their students can learn generally have students who achieve well (Ashton & Webb, 1986). This dimension of teaching is called teaching efficacy.

Research suggests that teachers who are high in a sense of efficacy are more confident and at ease within their classrooms. They are more positive and less negative in interactions with their students, and more successful in managing their classrooms as efficient learning environments. Teachers with a high sense
of efficacy are less defensive, more accepting of student disagreement and challenges, and more effective in stimulating achievement gains (Good & Brophy, 1994).

Furthermore, effective teachers are more committed to teaching (Coladarci, 1992) and more likely to use effective motivational strategies with exceptional students (Soodak & Podel, 1993). Teacher efficacy stems from teacher beliefs and attitudes, but it is also influenced by the conditions of the community, school, and classroom. Environments where teachers work have a great influence on their efficacy (Webb & Ashton, 1987).

Summary

It has become an accepted idea that teachers’ ways of thinking and understanding are vital components of their practice. As a teacher’s experience in classrooms grows, her professional knowledge grows richer, more coherent, and more complex. This is the foundation of a belief system that constrains the teacher’s perception, judgement, behavior and teaching practice. Rokeach (1968), cautions that understanding beliefs requires making inferences. He contends beliefs cannot be directly observed or measured but must be inferred from what people say, intend, and do.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This qualitative study was designed to identify the personal and professional characteristics and experiences expressed by teachers who report high and low developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices in the primary grades. These teachers were selected from a larger sample by their scores on a survey measure of developmentally appropriate practice. Procedures for the present study are presented in this chapter and follow an abbreviated review of the initial study, which informs this research study.

Introduction to the Initial Study

This study was part of an initial study conducted by this researcher and other members of a research team. Without a detailed accounting of the initial study’s particulars, the following log of events should prove helpful. An examination of the project can be viewed in phases. Phase one: The researchers gained entry into the school system, produced and distributed the survey instruments, collected the completed surveys, entered and analyzed data, and prepared a report of outcomes. This phase of the research project was also used to identify a sampling of teachers from each grade level to participate in phase two. The second phase of the project was qualitative in nature and involved scheduled open-ended interviews with teachers. Data from this phase were
analyzed for information to gain a more in-depth understanding of the research questions concerning the supports and barriers to implementing developmentally appropriate practice in the primary grades. Phase three is represented by this study. It is a re-examination of the qualitative data through a different lens. It is a final look at the teachers of the study in their particularities and commonalities.

Initial Study

This study was part of a larger research project which was conducted in a single school district located in and around a southern city, population 75,000. The research team obtained permission to conduct the Primary Teachers’ Beliefs and Practices Study through the distribution of questionnaires to the primary teachers in the elementary schools of the district. The 36 participating elementary schools were culturally diverse and represented both rural and urban settings. School populations consisted of African American and European American children representing all SES backgrounds as determined by participation status in the school lunch program. Questionnaires were distributed to every first (n=124), second (n=118), and third (n=111) grade teacher in the district.

The distribution of the questionnaire packets was done by members of the research team. Each school was visited in the spring of 1996. Contact was made with principals and/or school secretaries regarding the content of the packets and their importance. In addition to the Primary Teachers’ Beliefs and Practices
Survey (Buchanan et al., 1998) placed in each mailbox of first, second, and third grade teachers, the packet also contained a letter of authorization from the local school board, a letter of instruction from the research team indicating time and collection information, a sealed collection box, reminder notes to be placed in participants mailboxes one week prior to collection date, and two large reminder signs posted by the research team in the collection box area. Teachers were asked to complete the surveys within two weeks and return their sealed envelopes to the large confidential envelope or sealed box in the school office or mail area. Boxes and envelopes were clearly marked as property of the research team. The number of surveys distributed was 352; 277 surveys were returned for a usable response rate of 77% (grades: 1, n=100; 2, n=92; 3, n=85).

Selection of Participants

Based on the scores from the survey, a list of teachers was generated for each grade along a continuum from high to low levels of developmentally appropriateness. For the purpose of this study, four teachers at each grade level were identified. These twelve teachers comprised a stratified purposeful sampling of subjects based on the results of their survey ranging from high DAP to low DAP, and an agreement to participate further in the study by scheduling an interview with a member of the research team. According to Patton (1990), this stratified purposeful sampling was designated to facilitate comparisons when particular characteristics of subgroups are of interest to the study.
Pseudonyms were assigned for each teacher. For first grade, Tina and Joan were High DAP; Helen and Linda were Low DAP. For second grade, Kayla and Monique were labeled High DAP, and Carol and Lucy were Low DAP. For third grade, Cynthia and Debbie were High DAP; Mary and Sally were Low DAP.

The average number of years teaching experience for the teachers in the study was about 14 years. Most of the teachers received their degrees from the same regional university where the school system was located. One of the subjects was a graduate from the state’s largest university. All the teachers except one had a Bachelor of Arts in either Elementary or Early Childhood Education. One participant received a Masters of Education, and two were working towards a Master’s degree.

The twelve subjects of the study were from ten different schools. Two teachers, Linda (1st Low DAP) and Monique (2nd High DAP) were from the same school. In addition, two other teachers, Lucy (2nd Low DAP) and Cynthia (3rd High DAP) were also from the same school. All interviews were conducted at the school sites.

Interviews

An invitation to participate further in this study was issued to teachers from each grade level whose survey data indicated High DAP scores and Low DAP scores. Interviews were scheduled by phone at the convenience of the
participant. Each appointment was scheduled for one hour. The participants were told that the purpose of the interview was to gather more information and personal insights into their teaching practice that usually are not conveyed on survey questionnaires. Interview questions were open-ended and directed toward discussion of supports and barriers to teaching and suggestions to inform teacher preparation programs. The individual’s privacy was protected at all times. A copy of the interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

The interviews took place in the spring of 1996 and were conducted by two early childhood graduate students and an early childhood education faculty member. All interviews were audiotaped, and field notes were taken. The interviews were transcribed by the early childhood graduate students. Copies of transcripts were mailed to the participants for review.

Research Design

Stakes (1981) defines a collective case study as an examination of a number of cases in order to learn more about a phenomenon, population, or general condition. Individual cases in the collection may be similar or dissimilar, with redundancy and variety each having voice. In a collective case study, the cases are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding about a still larger collection of cases.

For this study, the six portraits of the teachers who report high developmentally appropriate beliefs and practice are represented in one collective
case study. The same type of grouping is made for the six teachers who report low developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices.

**Data Analysis**

This is a qualitative study, and data were analyzed using the constant comparative method to discover themes and patterns that emerge from the data. Data were reported using a multiple-case study design consisting of two major cases. One of these cases consists of six individual portraits of teachers who are reported to be High DAP while the other case study consists of individual portraits of the six teachers who report to be Low DAP.

Once the data for each case was reported, a cross-case analysis was conducted to determine what personal and professional characteristics and experiences were common to teachers reporting to implement high levels of developmentally appropriate practice or High DAP.

The same procedure was followed with the data from the six teachers who reported to be Low DAP. Once the data for each individual portrait was reported, a cross-case analysis was conducted to determine what circumstances and experiences and/or what personal and professional characteristics contribute to the development of teachers who report to implement low levels of developmentally appropriate practice or Low DAP.
Trustworthiness

Though studies employing qualitative methodology do not use the same methods for establishing validity and reliability of their data collection methods and final conclusion as do quantitative studies, these elements are no less critical in qualitative research (Rowe, 1986). The researcher must persuade his or her audience that the findings are legitimate and dependable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), triangulation, the use of member checking, peer debriefing, and auditing heighten the probability that the findings of the qualitative research are credible. These features have been built into this study in the following ways.

Triangulation

Triangulation of methods was achieved by collecting data through a number of techniques. This compensated for any limitations of one method and strengthened the research by the use of the other methods. Data were collected through survey questionnaires, recorded interviews, and field notes, which included telephone clarification for some participants.

Member checkers

The teachers served as member checkers. A written transcript was sent to each teacher interviewed for correction or clarification. Once the interviews were returned, they replaced the original transcriptions as data. Member checking assured that transcribed interviews were recognizable representations of teachers'
oral conversation and dialogue. Permission slips were signed by the participants and on every occasion that contact was made, the participants were orally informed of their rights to suspend participation in the study at any point without question.

**Peer debriefer**

The use of a peer debriefer as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) insured the accuracy of the information presented in this research. Throughout the entire process, the peer debriefer read field notes, discussed and debated the possibilities of the research, probed for biases, helped define coding categories, and served as a knowledgeable person to discuss questions and concerns. The peer debriefer had a master's degree in early childhood education and was a member of the initial research team.

**External auditor**

An external auditor (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was used to analyze data and provide dependability and confirmability. The auditor examined data after field notes were examined and carefully verified both the process and product of the research. By examining the process of the inquiry, the external auditor determined that the process was acceptable and dependable. The auditor also examined the product (data and findings) to show that the conclusions were reasonable and logical representations of the data. The external auditor had a doctorate in education and was a full professor at a university in a southern state.
Confidentiality

The participants in the study were assigned number codes during phase one of the initial study. Each questionnaire was numbered and recorded on a master list. The master list was kept only to help identify those subjects who would later participate in the interview process. As mentioned earlier, participants signed permission forms and were always told of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Pseudonyms were used for all participants and all information concerning identity and school placement was confidential.

Generalizability

Determinations of the generalizability of these research findings must be left to those researchers who desire to apply these findings to other settings. Stakes (1981) states that the purpose of case study is not to represent the world, but to represent the case. The utility of case research to practitioners and policy makers is its extension of experience. The present study offered this type of extension by providing an analysis of the personal and professional characteristics, experiences, beliefs, and attitudes of teachers who daily confront issues involving practice, policy, and student needs.

Summary

The present study provided a detailed literary portrait of twelve teachers primarily from qualitative data derived from interviews. This study presented another look at data collected from an initial study that examined the supports
and barriers reported by teachers in their daily practice (Bidner, 1998). The challenging task of transcribing audio-taped interviews or raw data into printed data ready for analysis was performed by the initial research team. The three questions posed by this study required additional steps.

First, multiple readings of the data to categorize and code responses as personal characteristics and experiences or professional characteristics and experiences were done. Second, utilizing the constant comparative method, these broad categories were compared and collapsed or divided into smaller categories. Lincoln and Guba (1985) referred to this as inductive category coding. This step was repeated throughout the analysis. This process resulted in a refinement of the categories. Third, analysis was conducted for relationship and patterns across categories for each of the teachers to determine commonalities and differences.

The researcher found it beneficial to display data in a large open area in order to create a visual map of the categories and trends that emerged through the analysis. When categories were constructed and collapsed, peer reviewers were used to cross-check the data. Whenever possible, no assertions were constructed without verification by a second analysis. The researcher was careful to use the exact words of the teachers whenever possible as it related to the emerging themes of the study. This procedure was performed for each group of teachers and in the comparison and contrast of the two groups.
CHAPTER 4

PORTRAITS OF SIX HIGH DAP TEACHERS

This chapter contains six individualized portraits of primary teachers who report high developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices based upon data gathered from surveys and interviews. Initial identification for participation in this study was based upon survey responses from the Primary Teachers’ Beliefs and Practice Survey (Buchanan et al., 1998). These descriptive portraits were developed to discover what personal and professional characteristics and experiences these teachers expressed in relation to their teaching practice. The literature review (Chapter 2) contains a discussion of DAP characteristics. A listing of relevant principles of DAP for the primary grades from the NAEYC position statement of Developmentally Appropriate Practice In Early Childhood Programs (Bredekamp, 1987) is referenced as Appendix C.

The teachers are Tina and Joan (first grade), Monique and Kayla (second grade), and Cynthia and Debbie (third grade). Each portrait begins with a description of the school setting and a brief description of the classroom. This is followed by information reported by each teacher during the interview process. To determine emerging themes and commonalties of professional and personal characteristics and experiences, the chapter concludes with a cross-case analysis of the collection of portraits of teachers who report high developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices.
Portrait One: Tina, First Grade

School setting

Tina teaches in a low socio-economic, predominantly African American neighborhood school. The neighborhood that surrounds the school is an older neighborhood and includes a large low-income housing project. This school meets the federal requirements of a Title I facility. The school is well maintained and was recently renovated to include additional classrooms and computer labs. The interior of the school has a cheery appearance with student work displayed throughout the halls and on each classroom door. This is in stark contrast to the outside entrance of the school. The exterior of the school is decorated only with a nameplate.

This first grade classroom has a mixture of large tables and small desk-type tables and chairs arranged in clusters of threes and fours. One end of the room is dedicated to storage with large ceiling to floor cabinets. Each door is labeled for content. The classroom has a small carpeted area and a reading-library area with 2 beanbag chairs and a selection of books. Most of the blackboard area has been converted to a display area for children's work and art. A small area remains open for use in the front of the room. The room is equipped with a computer, TV-VCR, overhead projector, listening stations, and record player.
Personal characteristics and experiences

Tina has a degree in Early Childhood Education and has taught for five years. She has been a first grade teacher for four years. She is young, energetic, and committed to helping young children learn. Her reason for choosing teaching for a profession was quite simple: "I've always loved children and I've always wanted to help them." This idea of "helping" is important to Tina. Teaching was not her first career choice. As a junior nursing student, Tina realized that caring for sick children was not what she wanted to do. "I still wanted to help children, so I thought I could try to help children learn." Before that time, she had never thought of teaching as a helping profession. Tina often stated that she has never regretted the change from nursing to education.

Her commitment to helping children is a very personal one. The decision to become a teacher and her present teaching style are a reflection of that personal commitment.

As a child, I was neglected and abused, and there were teachers along the way that changed my life. There were teachers that brushed my hair when I got to school. Teachers that fed me crackers for breakfast and told me that I could do it. I remember them and one of these kids is going to remember me or what I do. That’s where my motivation comes from. I think one person can make a difference. It worked for me.

The knowledge that she can make a difference is a personal characteristic that touches all she does and how she thinks in the classroom. "I'm very
enthusiastic...I love the teaching-learning process, and I am very excited to be here. I love what I am doing."

She often refers to her childhood in reference to her teaching, but she is also quick to point to the supportive family life she now enjoys. Her husband acknowledges her career as important and worthwhile, and he enthusiastically helps her with after-hours projects such as building things for the classroom or simply helping carve the pumpkin. "He likes my job and knows what I do is important."

**Professional characteristics and experiences**

In the workplace, her childhood experiences have had both a positive and negative effect. She admits to worrying too much about what other teachers think of her and how she teaches. She believes that other teachers think she is "playing" in her classroom instead of "really teaching."

Because I'm not doing it (teaching) exactly the way they are, some teachers have made comments to me about how they couldn't run their class like mine. I respond that I couldn't run my class with my kids sitting in a desk like a soldier. So, we are just different. But, it does get to me at times. It takes me 12 hours on weekends to write my lesson plans! I can't believe they think I'm playing.

Tina is supported by other members of the faculty who often compliment her teaching style and the effort she makes to teach and reach the children in her classroom. She sees her students going to second grade with the ability to read and feels that she has "gotten the job done." Her principal is also very supportive
of what she does in the classroom. He is happy to see that she does not use a lot of "ditto work". He encourages her efforts to make learning meaningful and is quick to show his appreciation for her hard work. She related the following example as an incident which involved "getting the job done" without the use of "ditto work."

At the conclusion of a reading cluster, the children read a book called The 13th Clue. Tina and her students re-enacted scenes from the book and looked for clues throughout the school. The children had to read the clues which were written in chalk, toothpicks, paint, jump ropes, and shells. Each clue lead to the next. As she and the children were reading and discovering a clue, the principal walked by, gave her the "okay sign," and continued on his way. The clues led the students back to their classroom where cake, punch, balloons, and streamers awaited the clue-reading troop. The principal later told her that he can see excitement and learning in her students' faces. "My principal told me that my students have it so good because of the things I do."

References to students

Tina approaches her students with respect and care. When working with the students in whole group situations, she is careful not to call attention to a child who may need special instruction or help with certain skills. She utilizes a tutor who works with the students individually and in whole group situations. Her tutor works with students and is an "extra set of hands and eyes" during
activities. Tina was adamant about how the tutor was not sent to her room to do paperwork or run errands.

She recalls the pajama party that was scheduled at the end of the reading unit as an example of how helpful an extra adult in the room can be. The students brought pajamas, sleeping bags and pillows and enjoyed a video of "Ira Sleeps Over."

At this school, these kids...they don't have the kind of childhood experiences a kid should have. So, it's real important to me, that at least for the time I have them, they can be a kid. For a little while, they don't have to worry about those big problems they have at home. They can just color, paint, draw, and do things that kids should do.

Together, Tina and Miss Billy (tutor) work on a variety of activities and projects. She finds it easy to teach the required reading series without using workbook pages. "There are lots of ways to write sixty-four phonograms...I'll give them foil and bright markers, black construction paper and chalk, colored salt sprinkled on their desk top." She keeps an idea book on her desk and writes down anything she has thought of, heard of, or seen. She never sees a piece of "junk" without thinking of some way she can use it her classroom.

Teaching style

While Tina describes herself as a "hands-on" teacher, she defends her methods as so much more than play:

I see interactive learning, not passive learning. Passive learning is sitting in a desk and listening to a teacher talk. Interactive learning is listening, doing, talking, and exploring. I've taught with people who teach the
geometry unit on 3-D shapes on a sheet of paper. Hello! I don't do that. I give each group a tray with a cone shaped ice-cream cone, sugar cubes, gum balls, cylinder shaped bubble gum...and then, I let them explore.

After giving the students time to manipulate the objects, she gets their attention and reports that they are ready to listen. Questioning and exploration lead the students to an understanding of the different attributes of the objects and the importance of the different shapes. She confesses that she often spends about $200 to $300 a year on supplies for her students. "I don't look back...it's worth it...it's an investment that I get many returns on."

Tina's definition of discipline is "being able to get my students' attention when it is needed or wanted." It does not necessarily mean that everyone needs to be seated in rows with their heads facing the front of the classroom. Her students work at their desks, at centers, at tables, and on the floor.

Tina follows the required testing schedule of the school system, but with some modifications. She tests orally and uses checklists, manipulatives, and learning games.

I try to assess as much as I can without paperwork. I don't like to waste my time giving grades. I would rather use my time giving knowledge. I would rather use that time for teaching. We don't do a lot of the workbook pages because they are meaningless.

Grades are sent home every six-weeks. A standardized achievement test is administered at the end of the year but she does not use it as part of her evaluation for the year.
Professional concerns

For the most part, the parents of her students are not involved in their child's education. She invites parents to visit, schedules conferences, telephones, and sends notes. She reports that she has not seen 90% of them. They do not come to school.

I believe that their (parents’) priorities are wrong. They spend their time and their money on the wrong things. I have meetings at school and give out free packets of materials for parents to work with their child, and one parent will come. I am very compassionate, and I don’t fault the child for the wrong of the parent.

Portrait Two: Joan, First Grade

School setting

Joan teaches in a large elementary school (K-5) that is considered to be the flagship school for this school system. It is located in an area of skyrocketing growth and development. The population of the school is predominantly European American. The school consistently scores as a top-rated school on student achievement measures within the school system. New construction of homes in this area continues to add to the population of the school and to the economic growth of the area. The school has been renovated to accommodate growth, but still lags behind in sufficient space. Many innovative programs are offered including a French Immersion program that extends into the middle school setting.
Joan's classroom is located in the new wing of the building. The room is large and equipped with four computer stations and a variety of audio-visual equipment. There is sufficient storage space for students and teacher. A large circular table occupied most of the space at one end of the classroom. The rest of the room had student desks arranged in short rows across the room. A large dry erase marker board is mounted on the front wall.

**Personal characteristics and experiences**

Joan has a degree in elementary education and is completing her course work on a master's degree in educational technology. She has taught for fifteen years and has been a first grade teacher for eight years. Joan was friendly and soft-spoken with a pleasant, easy-going manner. Her decision to become a teacher was made early in her childhood. "I had a terrific model in my aunt...everything about her fascinated me, her job, her outlook, everything she did!" When Joan entered college, she decided to pursue her childhood desire and now, she was sure she made the right choice.

Joan describes herself as a person who avoids conflict. "I like everybody to be happy." She attributes her strength and motivation to be her best in the classroom to her students:

I just love children. They are important to me, and I want them to feel good about themselves. I get such good results in my class because my students believe in themselves. I want parents to feel good about their children too. Children are not little birds that I stuff their mouths full and

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then send them home...they are little human beings. They are important. What they say is important.

Joan stated that the longer she teaches, the more important it becomes for her to focus on the individuals in the classroom. She believes she should apologize to her first class for focusing so much on herself. However, she is quick to add that she still makes teaching “...good for me too!” She views good teaching as good for the child and for the teacher.

Joan’s husband and son are very supportive of her career. They understand the extra hours after school and on the weekends that it takes to be successful. This support has “freed me of the guilt” and allowed her to feel good about her “fulfilling role” as a first grade teacher.

**Professional characteristics and experiences**

Joan’s present teaching assignment places her in an environment unlike any other in her career. Her students come to school ready to learn and with lots of previous experiences.

It is such an easy job to teach here because the children have so many experiences that you can enrich academically. Our children are just ready when they get in our classroom. The challenge is to give them more. Some schools have to work so hard just to maintain an average academic level. We take that for granted.

In this teaching environment, Joan admits to feeling “a lot of pressure.” The key to her handling this kind of pressure has been the support of her family and the support of her principal. Joan appreciates the vision and the leadership her
principal has demonstrated in the school. By offering the faculty "tools for the future," Joan feels supported, appreciated, and challenged:

She (the principal) is always ready to listen to my ideas. I appreciate that ear. She sees the whole picture and sometimes I see one little part. She has high expectations but she will support my ideas, my methods to do more in the classroom. I really feel she believes that a child's classroom is not that 20x20 room, it is farther than that...it is the world, and it includes more people than just one teacher.

This philosophy of teaching has inspired Joan to learn more and do more in her classroom to involve her students. She no longer believes "I can do it all." She was open to using all types of resources in her classroom. Her resources are no longer limited to self and textbooks.

References to parent involvement

Joan often feels pressure from the parents of her students. She states that parents have their own "agenda" for their child's progress and success:

Parents are very aware of what they want for their child. They are very aggressive. They question, comment, and react to almost everything in the classroom. I never saw anything like this in the other schools I have taught in. I am very aware of these parents.

She continued to state that she finds herself questioning what she does in the classroom in light of how the parents might perceive it. Joan annoyingly stated she does not like this situation, but has learned to tolerate it. Because of her personality, she tries very hard to please her parents within reason. She commented further, "I always try to be five steps ahead of them, not one."
Joan is aware of how parents talk and compare teachers. This is one of the reasons that all the first grade teachers try to work together and present a united front to parents. For her teaching situation, parental involvement comes with a price.

Reference to co-workers

Joan reports an amicable relationship with the other first grade teachers. They meet occasionally as a unit for school projects. She states that “my co-workers and I are not on the same wagon.” This in reference to the use of technology in the classroom and in “doing anything differently.” She has even spoken with her principal about this concern. With principal support, she does not let their attitudes “get her down or interfere with what she does.” Joan remains committed to developing new ideas for teaching and reaching her students.

Teaching style

Joan uses the technology in her classroom as a tool. She has software for all subjects and skill levels. The students use the computers to do creative writing and for subject reports. She told the story of a student who had been struggling in a certain subject for weeks. One afternoon, she was returning papers and noticed significant improvement. She took his picture with the digital camera, and the student wrote a note on the computer to Mom about his work and
achievement. The picture and the note were printed and sent home. This incident turned into a motivator for the entire class.

Her comments about assessment leads one to infer that while she does use some traditional methods of documentation for parents, she is always looking for alternative ways of assessing progress in her classroom. She uses student interviews in reading and math. Interviews offered her an opportunity to interact with the student and ask questions at higher levels of thinking.

I'd say 99% of the parents still like formal, graded assessment. But, some parents appreciate the extra effort of a conference to talk about how far a child has progressed, even though the grades are C's. To me that's learning, if he is progressing, and I'm happy with that.

The California Achievement Test was administered at all grade levels in the school. She reported that students usually do very well. Joan administered the test to her students and placed the scores in each child's folder.

**Professional concerns**

Joan commented often about the element of time. She complained of "just not enough time in the day" for the things she would like to do. "If I had the power to change one thing about our educational system, I would give teachers more time...more planning time. In this school, money is not the problem...time is."

Joan has come to a point in her career where she thought some things would be easier, "more automatic." She has discovered instead:
There is never one class that is the same as another. I always have to teach a little differently. I always seem to need to do a little more research or change my goals a little. I always thought that at some point I would have a folder for every occasion. That I would reach my goal by having whatever I needed in my files and all I would have to do is pick it up and teach. But, I realize now teaching is not like that, and I don’t think it will ever be like that. I don’t think it is ever going to happen.

**Portrait Three: Monique, Second Grade**

**School setting**

Monique teaches in a neighborhood school that is located in an university area. The neighborhood is comprised, for the most part, of working, middle class families. The school population is predominantly European American, and the school does not receive Title I funds. The school is well kept and features a large sign in front with messages or reminders of important dates or events featured at the school.

Monique has a room in the older part of the building. It is large and has windows and shelving that run across the outside wall. Her desk faces the wall in one corner of the room. The children work at large rectangular tables and keep their supplies in plastic tubs under their chairs. The room has areas for children to work in groups, and there was evidence of on-going projects (i.e., opened books with pages marked, large pieces of chart paper, markers, pencil colors). All decorations in the classroom were student-made. The only teacher-made or
purchased visuals were a short list of rules by the door and a handwriting guide above the front chalkboard.

**Personal characteristics and experiences**

Monique is a veteran teacher with eighteen years of experience. Her teaching experiences include teaching in private and public schools with various teaching assignments in first grade through fifth grade. She is presently teaching second grade after fourteen years in first grade. Change has been the constant in her life. She has made the move from school to school and city to city in the past few years in order to meet the needs of her young family. This recently divorced mother of four views her teaching career and her continuing education as the most stable parts of her life. "My move to second grade at this time in my life is a very good thing...it's not quite as stressful as first grade."

Problems with her own children, ex-husband, and financial matters are handled in much the same way as she handles matters in the classroom. "I don't like conflict; I don't do well with conflict." This brief explanation has served her well in her personal life and in her classroom. She relates that she has little control over these personal stressors, so her recent grade level change was welcomed. "I think a classroom follows a teacher's personality. I don't like hollering and screaming. So, we go over the rules and consequences. Everybody knows what is expected. This has worked for me all these years."
Monique's reason for choosing education as a career was as practical and straightforward as her manner and disposition:

When I was in first grade, I had a wonderful, wonderful teacher. She was incredible. That stuck with me a good deal. The other thing was when I graduated from high school, no one in my family had ever been to college. Thirty years ago, you became either a teacher or a nurse, unless you had some kind of other outside influence. I didn't want to be a nurse.

She has never regretted her choice and now views education as a very important part of her life. She is motivated to do her best in the classroom and to continue her own education by attending night classes and summer school. "The education of my own children is very important to me and with the support of my extended family and principal, I am motivated to do more."

**Professional characteristics and experiences**

Monique states that in her years of teaching she has seen many subtle changes in education. Length of the school day, grading and assessment, and teaching styles are related to what she considers the biggest change she views in education as "structure."

When I started teaching, everything was very skill-oriented, very structured, children in their desks, teacher giving directions, students following directions, just your basic reading, writing, and arithmetic. But now, especially since we work so hard for school accreditation, it's more of the thinking skills rather than the basic skills. The idea is to let the children have more input, more thought, about and with their education. That's one of the biggest differences I see.

Monique credits the support and encouragement of her family and her principal as crucial to her teaching. Her relationship with her principal is
professional and trusting. "She (principal) makes me feel as though she trusts my judgment and my ability to do things." Monique tells of the request she made of her principal for money to buy multiple copies of books for her classroom. With a smile, but without hesitation, she stated that she thought she could find the money. The principal has also supported Monique in her quest to move the student desk out of her room and to replace them with large tables and chairs:

I really don't like having desks in my room. I really like tables. My principal said she couldn't go out and buy me tables, but if I could scrounge up some from around the school, she could probably find some chairs. They don't all match, but I got them.

The large tables work well in Monique's classroom. Her students work in large and small groups. The working space of the tables is very helpful.

Monique confidently handles most of the challenges she encounters each day with a dedicated commitment to do what is best for the students in her charge. Her relationship with her students is one of genuine care and concern for their well being. She shared a concern that she has encountered in the past and how she approached the situation:

Occasionally, you get a child who does not fit into any of the molds, and that can cause a real problem... a child who just doesn't fit in with the teaching and learning that goes on in your classroom. That is when I have to set up a very open and large line of communication between the parents and myself. I think that's essential. Sometimes, that is not enough. Then, I have to let the child know that I love and care about him but that I am responsible for the other children also. And of course, that takes time. It is real hard working with children like that. You use all the resources you have. So far, I've been very fortunate in helping provide for those children.
Relationship with parents

On a day to day basis, Monique remains very accessible to the parents of the children in her classroom. She distinguishes active parent involvement from supportive parent involvement when she speaks of parental involvement. This distinction comes in part from the reality that she is a single working parent and is a supportive parent in her own right.

Active parental involvement means they are here. They come to school and they help me do things. Supportive means that whatever we are doing in the classroom, they support it by going over their child's work, seeing to it that homework is done, they see that books are read, they reinforce what is going on in the classroom. If we are doing a special project, even though their bodies may not be here, they might send information or pictures or anything they might have. That is supportive to me, and that is so much more important than actually being active.

She communicates to her parents through notes or phone calls. At the beginning of each school year, parents are told if they have a problem or a question or just feel uncomfortable about something that may be going on at school, that “they are free to call me any time at home or at school.” It is important to her that parents feel that they can communicate with her at all times.

References to technology and assessment

At the time of this interview, Monique's school had been vandalized and many computers, TV-VCR's, and laser disk components were stolen. She uses the equipment she has and wishes for more. Replacement of equipment has been slow.
Monique's primary way of evaluating the students in her classroom is through teacher observation. She looks for evidence of students interacting with one another, academically and socially. She often has the students read with a partner and challenge one another to "flash card" games. With a flexible schedule of large and small group activities, she is able to observe and make suggestions for student activity. There is no ability grouping.

She literally frowns at the mention of more formal assessments. She controls the types of tests she gives her students since she has no control on the number required by the school system. On average, of the ten grades required per subject, probably half are from written tests.

A review of the comments Monique made about teaching were mostly positive. The interviewer made this comment to her and she simply replied, "That's because I like doing what I do."

Portrait Four: Kayla, Second Grade

School setting

Kayla teaches second grade at a middle school campus, which services students from pre-kindergarten to grade eight. The school has a population of 1150 students from the small community and surrounding farmland. The students are predominantly European American. The low socio-economic status of the school enrollment qualifies the school for Title I funding. The school campus is
a renovated high school site. As a result, the buildings are arranged in clusters and some of the buildings are connected by covered walkways.

Kayla occupies a temporary building. Her classroom is small with very little natural light. She has no storage and few options for room arrangement. Space is a problem. Steps leading to the building make it very difficult to bring in equipment, and her distance from her co-workers makes sharing equipment or even ideas difficult.

**Personal characteristics and experiences**

Kayla has six years of teaching experience. She has taught second grade for five years. She re-entered the teaching profession two years ago after taking ten years off for family care. Her decision to become a teacher was rooted in her childhood play. When she entered college in the late 70's, she changed majors six times before entering the college of education. "Once I got into education, I knew I was where I should be." She reported no regrets.

Kayla feels fortunate that teaching is the kind of profession that makes re-entry after ten years possible. While she admits that the classes that she took to renew her certification were minimal requirements, what she learned at home with her children was rich and meaningful.

I think being a Mom helps me to do things better here at school. I know what it is like to have a child come home with stories about school. Now I understand what they are doing, and where they are coming from. I am more patient with my students, and I understand parents better too. I understand when parents don't figure out things automatically. I realize
they may never have received any of my notes. As a parent, sometimes I would get notes home and wonder what the teacher was talking about!

She is also more aware of how sensitive children can be. Watching her own children has helped her to know that children experience strong feelings, "that they take little things very hard."

Kayla is very comfortable with children and with herself as a teacher and a Mom. She admits that she is not a "bubbly star" and even she finds herself boring sometimes. When she feels that things are a little dull, she makes use of her musical talents and starts to sing to the children. That always seems to "pep it up" and the children enjoy music and singing.

Kayla comes from a family of educators. Her husband, mother and father in-law, sister, and sisters in-law are teachers. She is able to use them as resources in the classroom and help with child-care. Their ideas and their support are important to her.

Professional characteristics and experiences

Kayla's present teaching environment offers challenges on a daily basis. The teachers from the other five sections of second grade meet with her weekly. The meetings are held primarily to discuss their participation in school-wide projects like fundraisers or school projects. The meetings are not for curriculum planning or to share ideas about their teaching practice. She is separated from the other second grade classrooms and unable to share equipment because of distance.
and outside steps. On the other hand, she states that the advantages of lower noise levels, and very few interruptions are nice.

Time is a important factor in Kayla's daily practice. She refers to time in many different ways. First, because of the thirty to forty minute commute to school from her home, she complains of spending too much time on the road. In the mornings she feels that time is taken away from her classroom preparations, and in the evening, she loses time at home. Secondly, she feels that she does not have sufficient planning time. "I spend a great deal of my planning time walking my class to and from P.E. or music or the library." The time she has left is spent gathering materials, answering request from the office, and taking a bathroom break. Thirdly, she points to the problem of time in the classroom to manage centers, and meet the school system requirements on the number of grades needed in each subject per grading period. She finds it difficult to individualize instruction when the required texts must be followed.

Besides the problem of time, Kayla also experienced some conflict with the administration. As mentioned before, due to the size of the school campus, the school principal services pre-kindergarten to eighth grade. An assistant principal has been assigned to the school and has been placed over pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, first, and second grades.

It is difficult to know who to go to sometimes. I am required to answer to both people. It is complicated and sometimes they do not agree. They often have different opinions, and the teacher just has to wait for a
decision. He (principal) is very intimidating. I usually talk to the assistant. She is the one who observes my teaching and she also handles any discipline problems.

Kayla recalled the days she taught for "just one boss" as being much easier. As she gains more experience in her present situation she has become more sure of which "boss" to approach for any given situation.

Parent involvement is minimal. Kayla reports that most of her parents work so she communicates with them through notes or memos. She is always conscious of how parents react to school issues. It is important to her that her students be excited about what goes on at school and that they share that with their parents.

I want kids to go home and tell their parents about the good things we have done. That goes back to what I like to hear from my own kids when I get home. When I hear parents say that their child was excited about something we have done in class, I really feel encouraged.

References to teaching style

Kayla uses whole group instruction for most subject areas. She finds it most difficult to teach reading in whole groups. "It is very hard to keep them all on the same skill, or even to keep their attention." She follows the “teaching ideas” of the adopted reading series for the school system.

Even though space is a real problem, she does have centers set up around the room. She has two computer stations, a writing center, math center, and a science center. "Centers reflect the instruction that is taking place in various
subjects." She uses centers to enrich and to challenge her students to learn more about what is being studied in class. Because space is a problem, the students often take what they need from the center and return to their desk to complete the task or read the information.

Kayla also finds it difficult to provide her students with the kind of equipment and items needed to do experiments or hands-on-activities. She reports borrowing the items or buying them is a real problem. Her use of the TV-VCR is also limited by the difficulty of getting it into her building and the need to share this piece of equipment with the other second grade classes. She does have access to an overhead projector. The students use it to practice writing and in problem solving.

Assessment is done formally with unit and chapter tests. She admits to hating tests and would like use other types of assessment. She believes it is difficult to get "the true picture" of a students progress with a standardized test like the California Achievement Test.

Professional concerns

The biggest change Kayla has noticed in education since her return has been a change in attitude. She finds that the attitude of students and parents has changed in regards to teachers and the importance of education.

Most parents no longer support teachers. The attitude they have towards the school is not as good. You have kids who don't think as highly of school and they get by with a lot of things they shouldn't. The behavior is
really, really different. Kids are louder and more disrespectful. They are just more rambunctious.

Portrait Five: Cynthia, Third Grade

School setting

Cynthia teaches in a neighborhood school that is located in a racially mixed area. The school is predominantly African American and receives Title I funds. The school was built in the late sixties and reflects the architecture of the time. It has an open design, with large glass doors and windows at the covered entrance. A visitor to the school must walk through a large indoor courtyard area to reach any of the classrooms. This open area is furnished with couches and stuffed chairs. It is used as a waiting area or simply a place to visit.

Cynthia's room is located in the courtyard area. Every inch of her room is used for student activity. She has centers set up with games or activities that are related to various subject areas. A computer station is used as a center area. Each day a different group of children have unlimited access to the computer. There is a choice of games related to reading or math ready for their use. The reading center is a replication of the Little House on the Prairie and contains some reading material, but students usually bring their own material into the setting. The students are assigned desks but are free to move about the room to complete assignments when appropriate. The room is organized and ordered.
Personal characteristics and experiences

Cynthia has been a teacher for twenty-eight years. She has taught third grade for eighteen years. Her boisterous and energetic manner is highlighted by her keen sense of humor. She does not believe she was "called" to be a teacher, rather it was her husband that insisted that she find a job. She received her degree in elementary education and has been working hard at her profession ever since that time.

After some reflection, she relates a great deal of what she now does in the classroom, back to her childhood and her experiences in elementary school.

My father was a disciplinarian. He never let us have any fun. I believe that is why I think that learning should be fun. My father did not think much of me or my siblings. But, in third grade I had a teacher that liked me. She asked me to spend the night at her house. Even though my daddy did not let me go, she made me feel like I was the most important person in that class. That's what I do with my children. I try to have them feel important.

Cynthia sees these early experiences as important influences in her daily life both in and out of the classroom. With the support of her husband and her daughter, she has worked to create a safe and secure environment for children to learn and have fun. Her personal philosophy about teaching is a reflection of these experiences:

I am a person who believes that every child can be reached and I'm going to try to reach every child in my classroom in every way. If a child is not passing tests, that child is not a failure. I am the failure. So, I am going to try some other way to reach that child. I believe that learning should be fun. I have a sense of humor. Children know that they can come to me
with their problems. If I have said something that I’m sorry for, I always apologize to the child. But, I try to think before I speak and consider their feelings. A person’s personality has a lot to do with what they get out of children and my children seem to enjoy my humor and my concern for them.

**Professional characteristics and experiences**

The biggest changes Cynthia has experienced in education has been in the areas of technology and in teaching styles. She reports that she used the TV or computer more than the blackboard and she no longer teaches in small groups. While she no longer groups her students, she expressed concerns about gaining and maintaining student attention and her own inability to observe her students as closely as she would like. She expressed her dissatisfaction with this example of top-down policy as one of the factors that have a negative impact on her practice.

No one ever asked the classroom teachers about this. Our system adopted a new reading series and now we do not group. Classroom teachers should be consulted on everything that will affect them or the children. I think that all teachers should be able to vote on things that are going to affect them, their job, and the children. That is where I believe every school system could improve.

Another negative aspect of teaching is a lack of parental involvement. Cynthia has worked hard throughout her teaching career to communicate with the parents of the children in her classroom.

I feel that children could do 100% better if the parents would show more interest. I always send home daily papers with an attached sheet that shows them exactly what the child needs to work on or complete. The parents that heed this communication and do something about it, have children that always begin to improve. It think that if more parents would
get involved in their child's education, every child could be a success story.

Cynthia is quick to add that she knows that many parents have good excuses for their lack of involvement. When she meets with them or talks to them she confronts them with the reality of the situation for their child: "You're not doing your Mama job." In order for things to get better for the student, Cynthia knows that the home has to be a part of the solution. She offers ideas and suggestions to parents on how to help their child and hopes that they will follow through.

A lack of parental involvement has not hampered Cynthia's efforts to teach or her commitment to help her students succeed academically. "Children are children and I don't care where they come from...it's what you do with them at school that makes a difference." With the support of her principal and her co-workers, she has seen many examples of success through the years.

Our principal disciplines with an iron hand, but the children know they can go talk to him. He knows every single child, their personality, and what will work best with them. He is in the classroom and on the playground. He doesn't stay in his office. He is always ready to support good teaching, and he walks around this school expecting to see it.

Cynthia often refers to her co-workers as family. They share ideas and they share the workload. It is very common for them to meet outside of the school setting for socializing and fun. She reports that when a new teacher is hired, the grade level teachers help her "to fit in" in any way they can.
References to students

While it seems that a lot of testing goes on in the third grade, Cynthia admits that the tests only represent the minimum standards as set by the state. She is constantly encouraging her students to move beyond those standards.

Our students do very well on the state tests. We (faculty) know what is required, and we prepare the students for the tests. We have some children who make perfect scores, and that is very rewarding. But, I tell them and I tell their parents that is not enough. The state tests for multiplication facts from zero to five, I ask my students to learn the facts to ten. I want my children to know they can go on and reach for higher levels, set higher goals. That is what all the teachers here do.

Former students often return to Cynthia's door to share their report card or to have her look at their papers. In addition, she gets graduation invitations every year from former students. This year a former student who now resides out of state sent invitations and pictures to four different teachers in the school. She is very proud of the impact she and her co-workers have had in their students' lives.

I am a part of my children's lives. I go to my children's football games, baseball games, basketball games, and to little girl's dancing recital. I feel that that is important too. It is important to me that the children feel that their teacher cares enough to go to these things. It also helps to build a great rapport in your classroom.

Assessment and technology

Cynthia uses the prescribed tests for reading and math that are recommended by the school system. Her daily grades come from a variety of activities. Some of the activities and games that Cynthia uses in her classroom are related to what she calls “old fashioned drilling.” Cynthia believes that
"drilling" children for math facts is "one thing that should not go out of style in education."

If you can't add and can't subtract without using your fingers, then one day you will run out of fingers. We play games. I place strips on the board with facts and different teams of children complete them. They earn points with the math games, and I give daily check-ups. As soon as a student has mastered a set of facts, then he moves on. Everybody works at their own pace, but they all work. I believe that drill cannot be stopped.

Cynthia uses technology in much the same fashion as she uses the various teacher-made games in her room...to make learning fun. "You can't teach kids with workbooks anymore." She continued to comment that the use of technology is a wonderful way to provide a "well rounded program."

**Portrait Six: Debbie, Third Grade**

**School setting**

Debbie is a third grade teacher in a small community outside the city that is the center of this local school system. She met me in the parking lot simply because it was much like a maze to find her classroom. She pointed out the various corridors that led to classrooms at each grade level. They were uncluttered, with no bulletin boards on the walls, uniform in color, and were only marked by room numbers by the doors. The school had recently been painted and nothing was to be placed on the walls or doors. The school population is predominantly European American with a low socio-economic status and a Title
I classification. It is located near local industries and retained a steady enrollment during the last few years.

Debbie's classroom is large, and the student desks are arranged in a horseshoe shape around the room. There are areas in the front and in the back of the room with tables and chairs. Students have access to two computer stations, their own calculators and language spelling masters and listening stations. A TV-VCR is also available for videos that accompany the reading and science series. Her storage area is hidden by colorful curtains. There are large paper vines and drawings and computer generated stories covering the back wall which represents a project on the rain forest that the class is completing.

**Personal characteristics and experiences**

Debbie is a teacher with 11 years of experience. She taught first grade for seven years and third grade the last 4 years. Her degree is in elementary education with certification in kindergarten. She spoke about her teaching experiences with excitement and dedication. While she does not live in the community in which the school is located, she enjoys the people and the “spirit” of the area.

Her move from first to third grade was by her request. When she began teaching, she never imagined that she would ever want to teach any grade other than first. It was her memory of her first grade teacher that inspired her to become a teacher.
My first grade teacher was just super, super! I remember it just like it was yesterday. I remember things she taught about reading. I remember standing up in front of the class. I remember doing spelling bees, and just reading and retelling stories and her laughing and drawing, and playing with us. I remember thinking, “I’m going to do this.” I didn’t just want to be a teacher, I wanted to be a first grade teacher. So, when I got an offer for a first grade position, I was so happy.

Debbie remembers staying after school with some of her classmates to "practice teaching." Her teacher would work with them and they would read and write with one another. At school the next day, Debbie’s first grade teacher would send a group of children to work with Debbie. She recalls the events vividly and laughs to realize that her "old first grade teacher" was using "peer tutoring" back then.

Debbie speaks with pride about her two children and her husband. They have been an important part of her life and staunch supporters of her teaching.

Her family is always available to help with school projects.

My husband and I had fun doing a set of homework videos. I made them after hearing complaints about not understanding certain assignments. The kids and the parents just loved them. It gave the kids the opportunity to see a lesson taught again and it gave parents a better idea of how I teach. I don't need to use them every year. Some classes need them more than others.

Debbie also credits her family for their understanding of her "moods." She admits to not being able to leave school problems at school. Her family listens and makes suggestions.
Debbie admits, "I give a lot." Her husband says she gives "over and above" on everything she does. It is not unusual for her to work until two or three in the morning on costumes for plays or special assignments for her class. "I like teaching. It is the best thing in the world to do. I tell everybody and I mean it."

**Professional characteristics and experiences**

Debbie experienced "teacher burn-out" while teaching first grade. She began to feel she needed a change and that she "wasn't good for the students." She welcomed the change to third grade in the same school. "When I got to third, I appreciated first grade teachers even more." With a renewed spirit she set about becoming a competent third grade teacher.

Debbie spoke often about one particular class prior to this school year. Even though she referred to it as "a bad year," she never missed a day of school. She reports that it "frightened her" to think of a substitute with that particular class of students.

I tried everything with that group. There are students in that group who have potential. It's there! I see it! But, the home life was not there. I would call parents and beg them to help out. I would have them sign contracts to sit and read or listen to their child read for ten minutes a day. I was so naive that I thought everything would be fine. But, I never gave up trying to find something that would work. I have to believe I reached some of the students and some of the parents.
Debbie admits that her "moodiness" sometimes is misinterpreted by her co-workers. She confessed that she may seem to be uncooperative, when in fact she just needs more time to consider new ideas.

I think sometimes they (co-workers) are afraid of me. I try to explain to new teachers that I'm just moody. Teachers who know me, understand me. When I don't meet with them at the beginning of the year, it is only because I like to meet my class before I make my plans. I like to do things my way. They do understand that. I can't walk into my classroom and teach things like another teacher. Teachers have their own personalities. But, there is nothing wrong with sharing ideas and making them fit you and your class. That is what I do.

Debbie shares further that she believes that there are many different ways to teach the same thing. She searches for the ways that will "get across" to her students. She likes to joke and have fun with her teaching and the students have fun with her.

I try to bring in interesting things...things that are relevant to what we are learning. This catches their attention. I know that my teaching may not be like their teaching. I can teach math in my social studies lesson. This is how I like to teach.

Reference to parents

Parents do not affect the way Debbie teaches. She does not ignore them but she is the teacher. She respects them and often ask their help in evaluating books and videos for appropriateness. She has found them to be supportive with the exception of the "bad year."
Assessment, technology and closing remarks

Debbie considers state tests and standardized tests as instruments that inform her about her teaching. Her own grades come in the form of the usual chapter tests, graded work, and chapter reviews. She also depends on alternate forms of assessment. Her students are required to give oral reports, retell stories, and create new story endings for familiar stories. She also gets grades from the many group projects that her students choose to do.

Debbie reported that the computer lab has dramatically changed her students' attitude about math. Computer Core Curriculum (CCC Lab) is a program funded by Title I. Her students visit the CCC Lab for twenty minutes each day for math or reading instruction. Debbie insisted that she needs to be involved with her students at the computers. She perceives her role as that of "motivator." She cheers them on, and they have responded with much success. She reported that even the slower students have made great progress.

Debbie excitedly added these thoughts as our interview was nearing completion. She referred to her kids as wonderful...they live to read...they are excited about learning. "You know, I talk a lot. I can be a bit overwhelming. But, I'm here for the kids."

Conclusion: Analysis of High DAP Teachers

The primary source of data utilized in this study was the responses, comments, and conversations of the teachers from the interviews. However,
survey responses from each teacher were also available to confirm or clarify reported data. The Primary Teachers' Beliefs and Practice Survey (Buchanan et al., 1998) contained a section assessing teachers' perception of rank order influence on personal classroom instruction. A ranking of 1 through 6 (1=most influence; 6=least influence) on the influence parents, school system policy, principal, self, state regulations, and other teachers was completed by all but one of the High DAP teachers.

The five teachers who completed this section of the survey all marked “self” as the number one influence. This sense of self as important, influential, and competent was a major theme that emerged from the data of the teachers who reported high developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices.

Teacher autonomy

Teacher autonomy as defined in this study refers to a strong sense or trust of self, which contributes to growing independence and empowerment. Tina and Joan (first grade), Monique and Kayla (second grade), and Debbie and Cynthia (third grade) expressed varying degrees of autonomy. These teachers were cognizant of school system mandates and principal and parent expectations, but they did not perceive themselves as controlled by them. Their commitment was to their students.

This group of teachers viewed students as active learners and equal partners in the classroom. Debbie and Cynthia challenged their third graders to
“reach higher” than the minimal competencies required by state tests. Monique (second grade) speaks with confidence about her success in reaching students, but is troubled by the “occasional student” whose needs place him at odds with the routine of the classroom. Kayla’s (second grade) sensitivity to her students’ “feelings” contributes to her patience as a teacher. Tina and Joan speak of their first grade students with concern for their educational success as well as their self-worth. These examples illustrate their concern for the children in their classes as students and as human beings.

Each teacher speaks of the importance of having a positive relationship with others in the workplace as important. However, their relationship with others (co-workers, principal) does not interfere with what they believe to be best practice. For each teacher, building and maintaining positive relationships have been different. But, with or without the support of colleagues and administrators, they remain outspoken and focused on their students.

Tina (first grade) sometimes worries what her co-workers think about her teaching. But, she remains steadfast in her convictions to promote active learning. Joan continues to integrate her first grade curriculum with cutting-edge technology while her grade level colleagues continue with a more traditional approach. Monique (second grade) boldly removes student desks from her classroom, never expecting her co-workers to follow or to understand. Kayla
(second grade) struggles with building a positive relationship with her administrator as she grows in experience and confidence. Debbie and Cynthia (third grade) strongly object to the “top-down” decisions, especially in regard to the teaching of reading, that involve teachers and teaching “without asking the teachers!” The actions of these teachers are in response to student needs and to what they believe to be important in their practice. Debbie (third grade) commented, “I may not teach the way some others teach, but I’m going to teach the way it is going to get across to my kids.” Each of these teachers voiced similar views.

**Teacher efficacy**

Teacher efficacy is defined as teachers’ beliefs about their ability to teach effectively and about the ability of their students to learn (Ashton & Webb, 1986). Five of the six teachers shared strong beliefs about their ability to have a positive effect on student learning. These teachers report a strong sense of teaching efficacy. They believe that what they do in the classroom can make a difference regardless of student circumstances. This belief was also evident in their comments related to the importance of teaching and to the satisfaction they find in their chosen profession.

Tina (first grade) shared about her childhood and the teachers who made a difference in her life. These early memories have supported her in her career and in her strong belief that she can make a difference. "I think one person can make
a difference. I don’t think I can change every life in the room…but if I only help one, that would be worth it to me.” Tina speaks of her students and tells them that education is their “way out”. She acknowledges their circumstances, and offers them a chance to have a better life.

Joan (first grade) viewed her teaching practice as “a job that you continue to grow in.” In her teaching environment, she no longer sees herself as the only source of knowledge for her students. She challenges her students with new technology and exposes them to different ways of teaching and learning. “I prepare them for the future…not for knowing the sounds that the letter C makes.”

Cynthia (third grade) remarked, “I never believe that any child is lost. There is always something the teacher can do to help.” These emphatic statements are representative of Cynthia’s beliefs about her ability to make a difference in her students’ educational lives. She uses her sense of humor and positive attitude to make learning fun for her students. “I think a person’s personality has a lot to do with what they get out of children.” Cynthia uses her personality to cajole success from her students.

Debbie (third grade) was eager to share her experience with one class that was a particular challenge. She shared her excitement and frustration openly. She recalled that throughout the year she thought that there were students in that class “with real potential.” She always believed she could make a difference, and she never stopped trying.
Monique’s classroom space was different from the others in this study. It was a reflection of Monique’s teaching style and beliefs. Ownership of the room was shared among the students. As mentioned in the classroom description, the absence of teacher-made materials was noteworthy. The space, the tables, the books and resources were for the students. Her classroom was filled with evidence of student work in progress. She provided a variety of activities and projects for student interaction.

Kayla (second grade) was more reserved in her comments. Her teaching situation was different than the other teachers in the group of High DAP teachers. Her teaching position and her classroom space was temporary. She also faced issues of accountability with her principal and was separated from her co-workers outside the main school building. While her setting seemed isolated, her soft-spoken manner and calm personality allowed her to view her circumstances as temporary and her focus was doing the best she could with the students in her class.

Teacher viewpoints

Technology. All the teachers use the technology that is available to them to enhance instruction and as a motivational tool. It appeared that the computers were used mostly as a “scaffolding” tool (Vygotsky, 1978). This was demonstrated in the Computer Core Curriculum (CCC Lab) where the computer took on the role of the capable adult or peer as the program moved the students
on to more challenging levels. Debbie (third grade) was delighted with her students' progress but was quick to comment on her role. “I’m in there. I’m monitoring. I’m walking around. And I’m pushing. I’m motivating.”

With her training and equipment, Joan (first grade) was able to challenge her students and satisfy her parents’ and principal’s request to “expose” students to technology across the curriculum. “How can children be happy with my words when they are exposed to so much in the world? That’s what technology does. It opens all avenues for learning.”

Assessment. The school system policy for grades and assessment for the elementary grades in this study included requirements for the number of grades per subject area (ten) and the reporting of grades every six weeks of the school year. While each of the six teachers admit to following school policy on the number of grades, each reported modifications of testing standards to meet the needs of students. Tina (first grade) commented, “There are many different ways to get grades without a paper and a pencil.” Monique (second grade) frowned at the use of formal assessments. Joan (first grade) spoke of her grading system:

For the grade book, I do some of the old traditional ways of testing and looking at scores. Then, I do a lot of student interviews. I like to take everything one step further...if they have the skill, I’ll look for application. That is not easy in first grade. I play store with them...have them count back change, and add the number of items I’ve bought.
Debbie (third grade) reported that she gets grades from class projects and from teacher observations as well as written tests. She believes in assessing her students in a variety of ways.

Changes in education. In the interviews, some of the High DAP teachers responded to an inquiry concerning changes in education that they have experienced in their careers. Monique (second grade) used the term "structure" in reference to the changes she has experienced in her teaching career. She recalled that when she began her teaching career, "everything was very skill-oriented, very structured." She commented further that she has seen a change from "basic skills to thinking skills." Monique perceived this change as a move to "let the children have more input into their education." She considered this to be "a good thing."

Cynthia (third grade) reported the major change she has experienced has been in technology and in grouping practices. Throughout most of her years as a teacher, she "grouped children by ability" for every subject. Today, she often finds it difficult to teach, keep children on task, and provide help for some students while working in large groups.

Kayla (second grade) pointed to a change in attitude about education from students and parents. "Behavior is really different. Students are louder and more disrespectful." Kayla was the only teacher in this group to comment on student behavior in a negative manner.
Summary

What personal and professional characteristics and experiences are expressed by teachers who report high developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices? First, as a collective, these teachers expressed a strong sense of self as being competent, capable, and professional. Second, their autonomous characteristics enable them to focus on the needs of their students above all else. Third, their positive references to students and to their teaching ability to affect their students indicates a strong sense of teaching efficacy. Fourth, these teachers perceive certain issues in their profession as challenging and problematic without being hopeless. They are personally motivated by their faith that all children can learn.
CHAPTER 5

PORTRAITS OF SIX LOW DAP TEACHERS

This chapter contains six individualized portraits of teachers who report low developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices based upon data gathered from surveys and interviews. Initial identification for participation in this study was based upon survey responses from the Primary Teachers’ Belief and Practices Survey (Buchanan et al., 1998). The review of literature (Chapter 2) contains a discussion of DAP and a listing of relevant principles for the primary grades from the NAEYC position statement of Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs (Bredekamp, 1987) is referenced as Appendix C. These descriptive portraits were developed to discover what personal and professional characteristics and experiences these teachers expressed in relation to their teaching practice.

The teachers are Helen and Linda (first grade), Carol and Lucy (second grade), and Sally and Mary (third grade). Each portrait begins with a description of the school setting and a brief description of the classroom. This is followed by information reported by each teacher during the interview process. To determine emerging themes and commonalities of professional and personal characteristics and experiences, the chapter concludes with a cross-case analysis of the data from the collection of portraits of teachers who report low developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices.
Portrait Seven: Helen, First Grade

School setting

Helen teaches at an inner-city school located in a predominantly African-American neighborhood. As a Title I school, Helen’s students are serviced by classroom tutors for reading and math instruction. The school is well maintained, and the hallways have numerous displays promoting student pride and achievement.

Helen’s classroom was bright, cheerful, and orderly. There was a computer station in one corner of the room. The student desks were arranged in rows facing the writing board. Helen’s desk was located near the door.

Personal characteristics and experience

Helen is a certified elementary teacher with eleven years of experience. She has taught first grade for eight years. She is married with no children. Helen has always taught in the same school but under the leadership of three different principals. She was brief in her comments but pleasant.

Professional characteristics and experiences

Helen stated that the greatest change she has experienced in education during her teaching career has been in the area of reading. “It’s gone from phonics to literature based programs…whole language.” She also noted a change in discipline. She stated that discipline problems were her “greatest hindrance.”

Parents don’t back me on discipline. If you call and tell them that their child is distracting the class or whatever, the child comes back the next day with no improvement or anything. It is a problem getting parents to...
help me with discipline. Continuing with her comments about parents, Helen views their lack of support as a lack of interest. She believes that the students in her class “get more attention at school than at home.”

Helen’s experiences with her present principal have been positive. She relates that the principal has made a number of changes during her first two years as an administrator. Helen pleasantly refers to the principal as “whipping things into shape.”

The last two principals we had were pretty lenient. Our new principal has high expectations. She wants us to raise test scores. We are expected to really work hard on that testing. Tutors work with us in the classroom so that we might provide more one-on-one instruction. We have weekly grade-level meetings to check our pacing, share ideas, and plan teaching units. These meetings are documented and reported to the principal.

While Helen finds the changes challenging, she admits that they were necessary and even helpful to her teaching practice. “She shook things up, but we needed it.” She admits that the whole staff was “getting lazy.” Everyone has gotten the message that “we have to work harder.”

**References to assessment**

Helen’s primary source for grades is through testing. She also evaluates their reading ability through “worksheets, oral reading, and their interest in things.” Graded papers are sent home weekly. Report cards are sent home every six-weeks.

**Technology**

Helen has one computer, a TV-VCR, an overhead projector, and listening stations in her room. Her comments on the use of this equipment follows:
The computer is used as a free choice activity. The TV-VCR are used to support your lesson plans. I also put games or activities on the computer that are related to what we are doing in the classroom. Since I have a printer for the computer, the children also use it to write and print stories. I use it a lot to make work sheets. I can type a worksheet, print it out, and go run it off. It is very handy to have it in the room.

References to students

Helen reported that she has been successful this year in placing some of her weaker students in special classes. She referred to herself as “the queen of referrals.” She had very few references to students in the interview. When questioned about student progress over the first grade year, she remarked that “having them read books at the end of the year” was her measure of progress.

Portrait Eight: Linda, First Grade

School setting

Linda teaches in the same school as Monique (High DAP, 2nd grade). Unlike Monique, her classroom was located in the new wing of the building. The room was large with ample storage space for students and teacher. Student desks were arranged in rows facing one of the chalkboards. A computer station was centrally located along one wall, and a TV-VCR was stationed along the opposite wall. The room was decorated with a variety of craft-type projects. Colorful coffee filter butterflies hung from the ceiling; vegetable prints trimmed the door, and art work hung drying by the window. There was a display of photographs from class trips at the entrance of the room. The room was very comfortable and inviting.
Personal characteristics and experiences

Linda has a degree in Early Childhood Education and has 13 years teaching experience in public and private schools. She recently changed schools and grade levels. Prior to teaching first grade at this school, Linda taught at the same school as Tina (High DAP). Linda is married and the mother of two children. Her love for children was an important part of her decision to become a teacher.

I have always loved kids. I’ve always felt comfortable around kids. While I was in college, I couldn’t decide between nursing or teaching. So I did some volunteer work at the hospital and found I got too attached to the patients. I knew that I couldn’t do that type of work. I went into teaching and I really do love it.

Linda’s family is very supportive of her job and the extra hours she works at home. She is young, energetic, and happy with her recent move to first grade and to a different school.

I was mainly looking for kids that really wanted to work, to learn, and for parents that would be helpful. I did not have that where I was before. It really wears you down. You work so hard, and you don’t seem to go very high. You can’t. You just do the basics. You hope that they (students) would just get the basics. Whereas with these children, you are able to teach the basics and expand on their knowledge. I was ready for a change. I needed something that would expand my teaching, you know, not so confined to one thing.

Linda’s response to any inquiry about her personality was answered in relationship to her students. She often spoke of her affection for children and her desire to work with them. Linda describes herself as a “visual learner.” This too represents a connection she feels to the students she teaches. “I feel that if you’re
doing, you’re more apt to learn than just sitting and listening.” She explained how important it was to her to “be busy” and how she liked her students to be busy too. “I don’t like an idle child.”

**Professional characteristics and experiences**

After graduation from college, Linda felt that she was prepared to teach. Her experiences in the classroom during student teaching were the most valuable. Since that time, she admitted to seeing a lot of changes in education. She stated that the children and their parents have changed the most.

The children have changed quite a bit from being respectful to the teacher. Well, this is a very good school about respecting the teacher and adults. But, at the school I was at before, it was hard. Parent involvement at the other school was not there. They didn’t even know who you were when you called. You could never reach parents. And then, you come over here and the parents worry too much! But, I would rather have parents who are really interested in their child’s education. It is easier to teach.

Linda continues to explain that while she feels parents play an important role in the education of their children, she does not change what she does in the classroom to cater to parents. “If it is right for the children, I’m going to do it that way.” She feels that the curriculum is specific, and she follows it closely. Her past experiences in first grade have given her the confidence to relieve the concerns of parents about questions they may have about new reading programs or any changes in the curriculum. “Because of my experience, I know what skills are important, so I add or pull from other resources to supplement the text.”

Her relationship with her principal and her co-workers are a positive part of her working environment. At the request of her principal, the first grade
teachers “team teach”. She explains that this is one way children can experience
different teachers and teaching. Each of the teachers teach their own reading,
and the other subject areas are divided among the three teachers. She reports that
this type of teaching requires that she and her co-workers not only work closely,
but that they be consistent in their discipline and expectations.

Test scores are very important to her principal. Linda considers her
relationship with her as being very “up front.” She enjoys an honest and open
line of communication with the principal.

References to things least liked about teaching

Meetings after school were a major concern to Linda. She found them to
be “time taken away from my teaching preparations.” The element of “time”
was also brought up whenever she spoke of her efforts to provide “hands-on”
activities for her students. She was also very sensitive to her position as a
teacher in the community.

I think the community as a whole supports teachers. But, sometimes,
somebody takes something and twists it around where it sounds as though
you have said something you didn’t say or didn’t do…and then it gets into
the community and rumors start. That is a challenge.

Assessment

Observations and paperwork were the primary means Linda used to assess
student progress and achievement. Her observations were described as informal
and relaxed. “I just walk around the room, and ask questions, and check to see if
they are on task or need help.”
Her grades come from test scores, workbook pages, or worksheets. "I'll try to do a hands-on activity or game with them and then a worksheet for individual accountability.” Papers go home every day and report cards, every six weeks. She also sends home a mid-six-weeks report to inform parents on the status of their child’s grade. She admits that this does add up to a lot of paperwork.

**Technology**

Linda assesses her use of technology in the classroom as growing. She would like to build a software library that would be appropriate for her students. She has the use of one computer station in her classroom, and scheduled daily time in a computer lab. Linda recognizes the need to “expose” her students to more time with technology.

**Portrait Nine: Carol, Second Grade**

**School Setting**

Carol teaches second grade in an elementary school located in a rapidly growing area of town. The school services a population consisting of predominantly middle and upper class families. The students are predominantly European Americans. The school grounds are neatly landscaped, and the play area has a variety of outdoor equipment. Inside the building, bright and colorful locator flags are hung above the entrances of the office, library, and cafeteria. Student work is displayed on bulletin boards outside classroom doors.
Carol's room is at the end of a long hall. There are lots of windows and storage space. She has a computer station and a large horseshoe shaped table at one end of the room. The students have desks arranged in long rows facing the dry erase marker board. There are directions for the next day's morning work written on the board. Student-made mobiles hang from the ceiling. There are no bulletin boards inside the classroom. A TV-VCR, overhead projector, tape recorder, record player, and film projector are also in the classroom.

Personal characteristics and experiences

Carol has a degree in Early Childhood Education and has eight years of teaching experience in the public school system. She has taught second grade for seven years. She is an energetic mother of four-year old twin boys, an aerobic instructor, and an active member of a ballet company. Carol, her husband, and all members of her extended family are products of the private school system. She admits to a dilemma she and her husband are facing as to the kind of school they will select for their own sons.

Working in a public school has opened my eyes quite a bit. Although I see a lot of pluses in the public schools because of the amount of money spent in the classroom, I've noticed the difference in the children right away. I think the rules are much stricter in a private school, and there are just more regimented boundaries in a private school. In the public schools things are a little more free. I had a hard time with that at first. There is a lot more parent volunteering in private schools, so you have help in your classroom. I've gotten used to teaching here (public school) and I would never move from a public school to a private school to teach.

She feels that her boys would "get more than they would ever need" academically at a public school. Her reservations come from the time spent on
teaching “morals” in the two types of schools. “You can’t talk about it enough, so if we can afford the price, we’ll pay the price to send them to a private school.”

Teaching was Carol’s second career choice. Her early college days were spent in an advertising curriculum. She really enjoyed the art and design classes but was less enthusiastic about the business classes. Her family also supported her switch to education. “It’s a good mom-job, you know.”

Carol is a very determined and driven person. She is quick to speak and very honest. These traits have sustained her through her teaching career, motherhood, and dancing career. She considers teaching her day job and three nights a week for two hours she does aerobics or ballet.

I have drive, just drive to do what is right. I have energy. I’ve got to be mentally organized, mentally alert. It is a tough schedule. My husband’s got the boys and he knows that I do it for me. It’s not really a job (the aerobics). But, after the two hours, I feel better and it is very rewarding.

Carol admits to being a self-motivating person. Her classroom is not located near the other second grades. This has not been a problem for Carol.

“I’m happy by myself.” This year she has made more of an effort to communicate with the other second grade teachers. “I just get so into what I’m doing that I just close my door, stay busy, and I really don’t talk to anybody.”

The way she starts her school day and ends it is important to Carol.

Starting off your day wrong is the worst stress. Fighting with children before you even leave the house makes me rushed all day. I like to get to school early. If people come to my room to visit in the morning, it makes me ‘antsy.’ I want them to leave because I can’t get my work done. And,
I’m the same way in the afternoon. I’ve got stuff to do, so I’m not available. I do not want to bring things home with me. I don’t feel I’m paid for time after 3:30, so I don’t want to take it from my family. I just refuse to do it.

Professional characteristics and experiences

Carol reports changes in discipline and in parents as the major changes she has experienced since she started teaching. “I have to discipline a lot more than I did eight years ago.” She comments further that she sees the change in family structure as being part of the problem.

I think it goes back to both parents having to work long hours. I think the long hours are really taking a toll on the children. The other thing I think is too many extracurricular activities. One is fine, but some kids have three or four activities. That is too many outside activities. It all goes back to the family. That is the issue. Having a family, going to church, sitting down at a supper table, those are all important simple things to do. I think there is less and less of that now. Everyone is having to work so hard.

Carol believes this lack of family time translates into more responsibility for the teacher. Children seem to need more guidance and instruction with manners, and proper behavior. Carol has also seen an increase in the number of parents who come to her asking for help in controlling their children. “I can usually control them at school...it’s at home where there is a problem.”

Carol considers her relationship with her principal as professional and supportive. “I’m not a questioning faculty member.” She respects his authority and his ability to make difficult decisions.

Every situation I’ve brought to him, he has either fixed or at least given me some suggestions on how to handle it. I really am happy at this school. I can’t say anything negative about it except for the regular

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getting along with women. And, I’ve just recently experienced some of
that for the first time.

Parents do not influence Carol’s teaching. She communicates with them
about class activities and concerns through notes or phone calls. She schedules
at least two conferences a year. Report cards are sent home every six-weeks.
She no longer does mid-six week reports because she did not see any change.
“I felt it was a lot of work for nothing.”

Reference to Assessment

Carol follows the testing schedule prescribed by the reading, math, and
spelling series. She finds that a lack of time keeps her from doing more
subjective evaluations. Standardized tests are her primary source of evaluation.

I would prefer not to test subjectively. I don’t feel comfortable doing that.
I don’t feel comfortable looking at the progress of a child and labeling it
with a grade. I don’t feel I know the student well enough. I don’t have
the time to test them individually. So, I use standardized tests because
that pretty much sums everything up. I think that about 90% of the
children have test scores that reflect what they know. This is life. This is
the way school is. Children have to learn to take tests and do the best job
they can on them. The other 10% of the children have to learn that taking
a test is a skill they have to learn.

Technology and class environment

Carol has one computer station in her classroom. She admits to wishing
she could have ten. She finds it difficult to use the computer for instruction
because she does not have the capability of connecting it to her TV-VCR. The
computer is used mainly for learning games and drill and practice. “I feel
stagnant in using the computer right now. I don’t have enough time, and I don’t have enough stations to make it worthwhile.”

Carol no longer uses centers in her room. She found they offered “too much stimulus” to the students. Managing centers was not time well spent for Carol. “To manage a center with folders and games is too much trouble.” She commented that the children would lose the pieces to games, and so she quit using them.

Portrait Ten: Lucy, Second Grade

School setting

Lucy teaches second grade in the same school as Cynthia (High DAP, 3rd grade). Her room is located off the courtyard area, across from Cynthia. Lucy’s classroom is a reflection of the thirty years she has been teaching. There are board games, manipulatives, and stacks of labeled plastic containers covering a large section of one wall in her room.

There is a large table with chairs and the student desks are in rows across the room. Artwork hangs on a string line in front of the windows. She also has a variety of audiovisual equipment. Her TV is mounted to the wall.

Personal characteristics and experiences

Lucy is a second grade teacher with considerable experience. She has a Master’s Degree in Education and has taught for thirty-three years. Lucy has taught second grade for twenty years. Her experience includes teaching in a
number of different schools in two states. Lucy is one of those teachers who believes she was “called” to teach.

As a child, I loved school. I loved all my teachers. I loved being around all the people at school. I always thought that teaching was my calling. I always wanted to be a teacher. So, I set teaching as my goal and went after it. I have never regretted it.

Lucy has experienced many changes in her life during her teaching career. She and her husband were married for ten years before they had their two children. She reports that “my love of children” was one of the reasons she chose teaching as a profession. When she was told that she would not have children of her own, that love for children kept her going. “I think that having children after believing you cannot, has done a lot for me.”

When asking Lucy to reflect on her life experiences and how they relate to her teaching career, one is struck by her genuine care and concern for the children she teaches and for the life that she now leads. “I am just as happy as can be.” This happiness comes at a time in her life that finds her “free to do as I please.” Her husband has retired and has taken over most of the household tasks; her children are grown, gone and successful; her health has returned after a “bout with cancer;” and she now has as much time as she wants to spend in her classroom doing what she loves.

I think that time is the biggest gift right now. I do have a lot of time and I’ve never had that before, except when I was first married and had no children. After I had the children, time was so interrupted. Now, I have so much time that I enjoy everything. I like having something to do. That is why I don’t know when I will retire. I can’t just stay home and do nothing! I have so much material at my disposal that teaching is just so
much easier for me. I enjoy sharing and learning from my new co-worker. She has given me some new ideas, and it is just wonderful to have such fresh ideas.

**Professional characteristics and experiences**

The changes Lucy has noted in the field of education are related to discipline and parental involvement. She comments that when she began teaching thirty-three years ago, she spent her time teaching. Today, she often finds that she disciplines more than she teaches.

The discipline has changed tremendously. When I try to teach a lesson today, I just have so many disruptions at times. It is harder to teach than it was thirty years ago. Parents were involved, and they worked with their children. Today, there seems to be very little parental involvement. Years ago there was a focus on the family. Families did everything together. Today is different. Families are getting younger, or maybe I’m getting older. Families seem to be getting younger, and the parents are children trying to raise children themselves. The family atmosphere is not there, and it definitely shows in the classroom.

Parents have not influenced Lucy in her practice. She reports that most parents “just let me do what I am supposed to do, and they are happy and satisfied.” In her experience, problems with parents are usually related to poor grades, discipline, or retention. This school year, a smaller class size has given her the opportunity to work out problems with her students.

Lucy also enjoys a special relationship with her co-workers. She teaches at the same school as Cynthia (2nd grade, High DAP) and reports much the same spirit of support and family-like atmosphere with the other teachers in the school. Likewise, she speaks positively of the relationship she has with her principal.
We have a wonderful principal. He is on top of everything. He plays a very big role in the discipline at this school. He is a good disciplinarian, and if there is a problem, he will take care of it. He calls us his ‘seasoned teachers,’ because he knows we know our job and will help the new teachers to do theirs.

In her present school and grade, Lucy points to dealing with discipline problems and scheduling problems as being the biggest challenges to her daily practice. She handles discipline with the support of her principal, but she still struggles with scheduling and interruptions in her day.

When I taught first grade, we were never interrupted in the morning. It was wonderful. Now, I am interrupted in the morning for library, PE, and other things. It is hard to get any teaching done sometimes. When I first started teaching we only had music. Today, we have music, PE, library, computer lab, reading lab, math lab, and Writing to Read, an IBM reading and writing program. There are just too many interruptions.

Assessment

Lucy assesses her students’ progress through graded work and test scores. Subjects such as math and reading are evaluated by the chapter test that accompany the text. Subjects, not given a letter grade, such as social living and science are evaluated through classroom observation and participation in discussions.

Technology

The CCC lab (Computer Core Curriculum) was one way Lucy uses technology in her daily practice. She reported that her students have made significant progress in reading and math skills throughout the school year with the help of this program. This program is supported by Title I funds. In her
classroom, Lucy has one computer station and a variety of audio-visual equipment. She commented that she wished she had as much time as she had technology!

**Closing remarks**

As the interview was coming to a close, Lucy felt compelled to stop and ask to make a final comment. "I just have one more comment to make and I just want to say that teaching is harder today than it was thirty years ago. I don't know what it is, but it is harder."

**Portrait Eleven: Sally, Third Grade**

**School setting**

Sally teaches in rural elementary school. There is no community setting for this school. It is located in the most northern section of the school system. It stands alone as a landmark in the area. The school services a large geographical area that is predominantly European American. This school does not qualify for Title I funding. The school is located just off a major highway, but cannot be seen from the road due to the thick trees that surround the campus. A large covered area with park benches leads to the entrance of the school. Once inside, the hallway floor has directions to the office.

Sally's room is large. Student desks are arranged in rows. There is one computer station and two listening stations. There is a large table with chairs. Mounted on the wall is a chart indicating choices for center activity. School will
be dismissed in two weeks, and there is much evidence that packing is in progress.

**Personal characteristics and experiences**

Even though Sally has eighteen years of teaching experience, her career began after her graduation in 1957. Sally entered and re-entered the teaching profession on a number of different occasions. Her longest absence from teaching was for twenty years, ending with her return in 1981. Since 1981, she has taught third grade for ten years. Her decision to become a teacher was really a "process of elimination."

Back in the fifties, we didn’t have as many things for women to do as we do today. You could be a teacher, or a secretary, or a nurse. I did not like typing, and I nearly fainted observing an operation on Career Day. So, I knew nursing was out. Teaching was left. I loved children. I am really glad now that I went into teaching.

Sally refers to herself as an “older teacher.” She now sees the children in her classroom as “someone’s grandchild” instead of someone’s child. This view of children is a welcomed influence in her career.

I would say that as I get older, I think that I affect the class in a more positive way than I did when I was younger. What is important is the child. I think I have my priorities in the right place as I get older. Some of my teacher friends have gotten bitter. I guess I am able to shrug off some of the stuff that makes you that way and say what matters is the children. But, I don’t think that I’m that unusual...I just picture my own grandchildren in this classroom and would I want the teacher saying this or doing this to my grandchild! That is it in a nutshell.

Sally also shares that “my faith supports me more than anything else.”

She often says a quiet prayer to herself when she becomes upset or concerned.
about something during the course of the day. "That seems to carry me through
better than anything else." She is an avid reader and very interested in books on
psychology and spirituality. This interest has helped her "understand and handle
classroom life by helping me have more of an insight into what is going on in the
kid's minds."

Professional characteristics and experiences

Sally commented that there have been major changes in the field of
education during her teaching career. The two that concerned her most were a
decline in respect for others and a decline in obedience toward authority. She
pinpoints "discipline matters" as her main objection to being a teacher.

After teaching in the late fifties, and then again in the early eighties,
students were already beginning to think that they did not have to do what
the teacher said to do. When my own children were in school, what the
teacher said was considered a rule. I taught them to obey the rules. My
children obeyed the rules, and their friends were taught to obey the rules.
I don't think parents take the time anymore to make children obey rules,
much less the teacher. I don't mean that they are terrible kids. You just
have to say everything several times to make them know you mean it.
And, that comes from the home. If you say it once, that should be
enough. I think they carry over to school what they are taught in the
home. It takes a good six weeks to train them...if I said this, I mean
this...I am not going to change my mind...so, you need to obey the rules.

Sally spends time with her students in setting down rules and
consequences. At the end of year, she reports "mixed feelings" at their leaving.
While "hating to see them go" she knows that it marks "the beginning of
something else."
References to parents

Parental involvement was not a problem in this school. Sally reports that each year she has had parents to volunteer for school parties and fundraising. She welcomes them in the classroom for tutoring or help with class art projects. Because the school is located in a mostly rural area, she finds that parents are eager to help at school.

Sally states a concern involving “parents who do not want you to correct their child at all.” She states that there have been times when she has corrected a child and then been confronted by a parent: “My kid couldn’t have done that.” She reports that the parent does not want to talk about the problems their child might have. “I think that people who are that way have the problem. I’m not going to let their problem become my problem. I don’t let it interfere with my teaching.”

References to co-workers and principal

Sally enjoys a positive relationship with her principal and co-workers. One of the supports she finds in this school is the optional daily prayer group that meets each school morning for ten minutes. “We talk for a few minutes, share any concerns, make prayer petitions, say a short prayer, and go.” This gathering is open to everyone on the faculty.

Sally describes her principal as “very easy to talk to.” Her principal has worked with the third grade teachers in the areas of curriculum and testing. The science and social living curriculum for the third grade was revised to better meet
the needs of the students with the principal’s guidance. In testing and assessment, the principal initiated some school-wide testing strategies to reduce stress and anxiety.

For end of the year standardized testing, we try to make the children as comfortable as we can. The students can bring cushions to school; have a sport bottle with water to sip on during testing; and, they can even chew gum. The gum was the most popular.

**Assessment**

Sally assesses student progress in her classroom by taking a daily grade every three weeks. This grade is a product of their daily participation, oral answers, and their interest and enthusiasm in class. She states that this grade is subjective and usually not shared with the student. On the objective side, she uses chapter tests and worksheets. She reports that no parent or administrator has ever questioned her grading method.

**Technology**

Sally has one computer and a variety of software for math and reading. She allows students to use the computer after they have completed their assigned work. There are no computer labs in this school for the third grade. She does have one listening station for “books on tape.”

**Portrait Twelve: Mary, Third Grade**

**School setting**

Mary teaches in a small neighborhood school located in a predominantly European American neighborhood. The school qualifies for Title I funding due to the low socio-economic status of the student population. During the school
year, school renovations and construction have been constant. This has caused Mary and her students to move classrooms two times.

Her present classroom was temporary so the perimeter of the room was stacked with boxes. A teacher desk and a large table were located at one end of the room with student desks arranged in rows facing the board area. There was no computer in the room. A TV-VCR was located in the front of the classroom.

**Personal characteristics and experiences**

Mary has twenty years of teaching experience. This is her first year in third grade. She has spent seven years as a math lab teacher, and the remainder of her experience was in the fifth and sixth grades. Mary has a Master’s Degree in Education.

Mary’s first teaching assignment reveals some of the personal traits that she has exhibited throughout her teaching career. She relates the story as an example of how she has changed through the years. A position became open the day before school was to start, and it was a forty-five minute commute from her home.

With no time for preparation, I accepted a combination fifth and sixth grade classroom. I took twelve books home every night and wrote lesson plans. I made it through the year with the support of my principal. But, when I first graduated, I thought I could do anything and everything. I think now, I could not do that. Then, I had no inhibitions about doing that job!

With the recent death of her husband, Mary’s ability to deal with challenges one day at a time has served her well. Mary and her students have also had to
content with school construction and two classroom moves during the school year. With her years of experience and with this particular year of challenges, Mary reveals that she still views teaching as an "awesome responsibility." She reports that she does not feel the "stress" of this responsibility as coming from the school system, but from outside the educational system.

The stress comes from the fact that we (teachers) are expected to be society’s cure for all. We are expected to take care of their health problems, all their mental problems, and all their social problems. I send one everyday when he gets here to wash his hands and face, and plaster down his hair. He gets out of bed and comes to school and that's it. We provide breakfast for them and we have lunch for them. It all falls on us. Society blames teachers for not doing their jobs. Somewhere, we have to have some accountability from parents... But, it all falls on us. It is the teacher's fault because the teacher did not teach them. It is the teacher's fault when the child gets involved in crime because he did not learn his basic skills and can't read or write. That is the frustrating part of teaching.

**Professional characteristics and experiences**

Mary states that during the past seventeen years that she has taught in the same school, she has been able to detect "changes in the culture and the students." She reports that students are less independent and less responsible. She finds students to be less creative and "unable to pretend." Many of her students do not have opportunities to leave the immediate area. It is interesting to note that all students live within one mile of the school, so no school busses service the student population.

Seventeen years ago, students could work independently. Today, my students would rather talk. I know they need attention. If I stop to help, they can do it. But if I leave them alone, they stop. They are not motivated. Somehow, we have to develop in them the ability to go on and do it on their own. Somewhere in their schooling, they have to mature
and realize they are writing... not just filling in the blanks. I'm working on that.

Mary prefers that her students have their own desks. She comments that this is because she is "older." While she finds it "interesting that there is a tendency to pair slower children with brighter ones," she still believes that children should be grouped by ability.

Every now and then, I like to put the slower children together, and watch for a leader to emerge. You give them guidelines for an assignment and someone has to do the writing and someone has to report to the class. That brings out the slower ones who would not have the opportunity to do that if you put them with a brighter student. It also helps the brighter students to be with someone who can think as they do.

Mary also views teaching today as having "so many requirements." She reports that when she first taught, classroom time was much more flexible. She remembers when she had the time for class plays and puppet shows. Today, she reports that "pacing charts" have to be followed, and each six weeks has more material to cover. This is particularly challenging in the elementary grades, "where teachers never have adequate planning time."

References to principal and co-workers

Teaching third grade for the first time has been a challenge for Mary. She has relied on her co-worker for guidance and direction. She reported that they work very well together. They are able to share ideas and some of the work.

I'm older and she is younger, but I think you can learn something from everybody. I've watched her and her grouping and the 'things she does' and I try to see if there might be something that I would feel comfortable doing. Some things I have and some things I have not. But, I believe that
you cannot make it through a day if you don’t have friendship with your cohorts.

Mary only mentioned her principal as being supportive and helpful. His concern is basically that students show gains at every grade level.

References to parents

Mary stated that parents of the students are involved in program planning for developing Title I programs. The school has an active PTO. There is also a group of parents who volunteer on a regular basis to help teachers in the classroom. In her class, parent communication is usually through visits to school or notes sent home. She does not report any negative situations with parents in her classroom.

In general, she does express concerns that parents are not providing an adequate home life for their children. This does effect her teaching, in that she considers it her responsibility to work with children in areas that some teachers believe to be “home problems.”

Most children do not sit around a table to eat. They have a sandwich and sit on the floor or on the sofa. They never eat with a fork or a knife. If they do not practice manners at home, they do not learn them. It is important that they learn them, and since we have them with us in the cafeteria, we need to take this opportunity to teach them. We need to take every opportunity we are given to teach...even if it is table manners...to instill these things in these students to make them productive and better citizens in life.

More references to students

I would really like for my students to grow from dependency to independent work. I would like to develop in them an awareness that they are responsible for their actions. They have a tendency to blame
everybody else. I want them to learn that stop means stop. No means no. I'd like to influence their life for the future and not just be content with whatever falls to them. Somehow they have to know that there is a better life. They have to strive for something better. Some of them tell me, "My dad is a shrimper, and I am going to be a shrimper. My family lives on welfare, and we have everything we want or need." I have to let them see that there is something beyond now.

Assessment and technology

Mary follows the school system policy of ten grades per subject for each six-week grading period. She obtains those grades from daily work and from chapter tests in each subject. Her students also attend the CCC Lab, but there are no grades involved. This year, her use of technology has been the occasional use of a tape recorder. The reading series provides a set of tapes that accompany the stories. She reports that the students enjoy listening to the story being read in a different voice and with different inflections.

Conclusion: Analysis of Low DAP Teachers

The primary source of data utilized in this study was the responses, comments, and conversations of the teachers from the interviews. However, survey responses from each teacher were available to confirm or clarify reported data. The Primary Teachers' Beliefs and Practice Survey (Buchanan et al., 1998) contained a section assessing teachers' perception of rank order influence on personal classroom instruction. A ranking of 1 through 6 (1=most influence; 6=least influence) on the influence parents, school system policy, principal, self, state regulations, and other teachers was completed by all but one of the Low DAP teachers.
Four teachers marked “school system policy” as the number one influence. One teacher marked “self” and one other teacher did not complete the section. As a group, the teachers who report low developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices had responses and comments that varied more within their group than the group of High DAP teachers. This analysis first considered areas of commonality and then examined other viewpoints of interest. The teachers in this collection are Helen and Linda (first grade), Carol and Lucy (second grade), and Mary and Sally (third grade).

Teacher autonomy

By their ranking, most of the teachers in this collection believed that the school system was the most powerful influence on the way they plan and implement instruction. These teachers tended to be controlled by other influences (school system policy or principals) rather than acting in accord with one’s self. The teachers expressed this control in a variety of ways. According to Deci (1995) “…to be autonomous means to act in accord with one’s self; to be controlled means to act because one is being pressured” (p.2). Most of these teachers reported pressures in their daily practice from a variety of sources.

Mary (third grade) commented on her loss of control in planning activities in her classroom. She no longer felt she had the time to be “flexible” in her teaching.

We have to cover this material. We have to report what page we are on in every subject at the end of each six-weeks period. We have a pacing schedule, and we are bound to keep it. This comes from the school board.
She justifies this policy with the comment, "I guess some teachers...were just playing the whole year instead of covering the curriculum." She continued with the justification by stating that teachers have to cover the basic curriculum in order to prepare their students for the next grade level. "I can see why this policy came about."

Carol (second grade) spoke of her principal with respect. But, she also admitted that she was "not a questioning faculty member." She commented further, "I don't buck him...even if I disagree." Throughout the interview, Carol shared numerous examples of how important "control" was to her. She seemed to function well in a more controlled environment.

Another example of control and pressure from school system mandates comes from Helen (first grade). She told of the changes in her practice as a result of a change in principals. With an emphasis on raising test scores, Helen reported required meetings with co-workers and documentation of time spent on instruction. However, Helen commented that the changes have been good because "we were getting lazy."

**Teacher efficacy**

While this study does not set out to measure teacher efficacy, a review of the literature in the area of efficacy does suggest some associations. An analysis of teacher responses related to their students, their teaching practice, and their profession in general provides a synthesis of beliefs in their ability to teach and
reach students. While their remarks varied considerably, most of these teachers professed a genuine concern for their students and for their lives outside of school.

Sally (third grade) referred to herself as an “older teacher.” She has eighteen years of teaching experience even though she began teaching in 1957. She believes that she “affects her students in more positive ways,” now that she is older. “I think that I have my priorities in the right place. What is important is the child.” Her concerns for students center around what she perceives as a “growing lack of respect for authority.” She reported that she spends a lot of her teaching time “training” her students to obey the rules of the classroom.

Helen (first grade) made three comments in reference to her students during the interview. She spoke of them in reference to the referral process, and again in reference to their ability to read at the end of the school year. Her other reference was related to a comment on parental involvement. “The children get more attention at school than at their homes.” She reported that the discipline problems she had at school are a result of “parents not backing me up.” While her comments were brief in all areas of inquiry, she stated clearly that she perceived discipline as a “hindrance” to her daily practice.

Linda (first grade) was the one teacher in this group that marked “self” as having the most influence on her daily practice. An analysis of her responses in other areas reflected that influence of “self.” While she may be considered a
teacher who successfully negotiates between High DAP and Low DAP beliefs and practices, her teaching environment may offer some explanation.

She referred to her prior teaching situation as difficult and demoralizing. “It really wore me down. It was four years of working hard without much results.” This was in the same school that Tina (first grade, High DAP) experienced such success. The assignment change for Linda seemed more appropriate in meeting her professional needs by placing her in an environment more complimentary to her personal teaching style.

Teacher viewpoints

Technology. Each of the teachers had at least one computer in the classroom. None of the teachers elaborated on the use of the classroom computer with the exception of Helen (first grade). She remarked that her students used it as a “free choice” activity and that she used it for her own use. “I use it a lot for making worksheets. I can type up a worksheet, print it up, and go run it off. It is handy to have one.”

Lucy (second grade) and Mary (third grade) reported that their students use the Computer Core Curriculum (CCC Lab) daily. The other teacher reported daily usage of a classroom or lab computer was related to the curriculum or for skill development games.

Assessment. The school system policy for grades and assessment for the elementary schools in this study have requirements for the number of grades per subject area (ten) and the reporting of grades every six weeks of the school year.
Most of the teachers reported following the testing schedule as prescribed by the school system. Linda (first grade) also reported the use of teacher observations. Carol (second grade) was the most outspoken on the subject of assessment. She relies on test results as her only source of evaluation.

I don’t have time to test children individually, so I use the standardized test that accompany the reading and math series. Children have to learn how to take those kinds of tests. This is life. This is school.

Changes in education. In the interviews, these six teachers responded to an inquiry concerning changes in education. Without exception, issues involving discipline and parental involvement were reported by each teacher. Linda, (first grade) reported that children have “less respect” for teachers. Lucy (second grade) commented that she spends more time on discipline today than she has in the past. “When I try to teach a lesson, I just have so many disruptions.”

Sally (third grade) commented that the changes she has seen in the field of education have been a decline of respect and obedience toward authority. She considers “discipline matters” as her main objection to being a teacher.

Summary

What personal and professional characteristics and experiences are expressed by teachers who report low developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices? First, most of the teachers in this group considered school system policy as the most influential force in their practice. The demands of the curriculum in addition to the demands of the school system resulted in a more teacher-controlled environment in the classroom. They were less autonomous
and believed they had to adhere to policy guidelines. Second, while most of the teachers shared comments of genuine concern for their students and for their education, most felt that even their best teaching efforts could not overcome some of the personal obstacles that their students faced. They perceived a lack of parental support contributed to their ineffectiveness in classroom situation. Third, they favored a more traditional and conservative approach to education with an emphasis on conformity, obedience, and traditional teaching methods. Fourth, without exception, these teachers perceive discipline problems in their classes to be a major issue in their professional practice.
CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study developed descriptive portraits of twelve primary grade teachers. These portraits were literary representations of each teacher's beliefs about her teaching practice. While each portrait (case) is specific and unique to its particular place and time, when viewed together, common sentiments emerge. Each portrait revealed the complexity of practice and the importance of teacher beliefs. Goodson (1992) stated that three forms of experience influence the developments of beliefs and knowledge about teaching. They are personal experience, experience with schooling and instruction, and experience with formal knowledge. The focus of this study was on the personal professional characteristics of teachers. When teachers revealed "the personal," the portraits and the descriptions of their practice were rich with information.

This study attempted to answer the following three questions:

1. What personal and professional characteristics and experiences are expressed by teachers who report high developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices?

2. What personal and professional characteristics and experiences are expressed by teachers who report low developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices?

3. What similarities or differences emerged in a comparison of the two groups of teachers?
Question One

This question considers the personal and professional characteristics and experiences of the six teachers who report high developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices (Tina, Joan, Kayla, Monique, Cynthia, and Debbie). The analysis of the Hi DAP teachers was presented at the conclusion of Chapter Four. The findings are reviewed in this chapter in conjunction with previous research that is related to the results.

Self and autonomy

Five of the six teachers in this collection regarded “self” as having the most influence on their practice. This means that each of these teachers considers herself an expert of what she knows and what she does in the classroom. She makes decisions based on this knowledge and creates a classroom environment that facilitates student interaction and learning.

This finding is consistent with findings from phase one and two of the initial study (Buchanan et al., 1998; Bidner, 1998) and with the research of Charlesworth and her colleagues (1991; 1993b). These different studies reported that teachers who claim to use more developmentally appropriate instructional practices believed they had more overall control in planning and implementing instruction in their classrooms.

A strong sense of self and teacher autonomy enabled these teachers to confidently share decision-making and planning with others (students, tutors, co-workers, and parents). Oakes and Caruso (1990) reported that teachers who
believed in sharing decision-making with their students and supporting their autonomy were more likely to use developmentally appropriate teaching strategies than teachers who believed in total control of classroom decisions.

Teachers' orientation toward autonomy and control are related to students' intrinsic motivation (DAP principle) and their approaches to solving classroom problems (Deci et al., 1981; Prawat & Anderson, 1988). Teachers who believe that classroom problems should be solved by encouraging student autonomy and responsibility tend to have students who are more intrinsically motivated and who solve problems more effectively.

**Personal teaching efficacy**

This group of teachers, who report high developmentally appropriate teaching beliefs and practices, also report to believe strongly in their ability to teach and in the ability of their students to learn. For this study, this belief is termed personal teaching efficacy.

Ashton and Webb (1986) and Gibson and Dembo (1984) reported a teacher's sense of self-efficacy has been positively related to a number of specific classroom behaviors, including the tendency to use praise rather than criticism; to persevere with low achievers; to be task oriented, enthusiastic, and accepting of student opinion; and to raise students' levels of achievement. The High DAP teachers in this study made numerous comments that supported this relationship.
Woofolk and Hoy (1990) link personal teaching efficacy to developmentally appropriate beliefs related to humanistic interaction with students and teachers' positive influences on student achievement. Good and Brophy (1994) report teachers who are high in a sense of efficacy are more confident and at ease in their classrooms and more successful in creating efficient learning environments. While most of the teachers in this study believed in the importance of building a positive relationship with their students, the teachers in the High DAP grouping made many more comments in that regard.

Teacher viewpoints

Comments and concerns about teacher dominion, teacher-directed, or skill-oriented instruction were limited. This may be that these teachers, who report high developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices in primary grades, are masters at negotiating between both styles of teaching and do not perceive them as an area of conflict. But, they do recognize and apparently understand that “best practice” is that which best meets the needs of the individuals in their classroom.

Stipek (1993) found that an emphasis on basic skills using teacher-directed instruction might have some advantages for reading-related skills but with a cost of undermining their motivation to be readers. Further, Hirsh-Pasek, Hyson, and Rescorla (1990) report findings that suggest that a combination of parental pressures and high academic programs may have negative effects on children. And, additional research reports significantly more stressful behaviors.
in children involved in standardized test taking, and when working on workbooks and worksheets (Burts et al., 1990). Teachers who identify with a more traditional approach of classroom management and instruction, were most often identified as teachers who reported less developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices.

These teachers view technology as an exciting addition to their resources and as a valuable tool for instruction and student motivation. Stuhlmann (1993) reported that teachers who integrate technology into their teaching practice valued the use of an interactive learning tool and recognized the potential for enhancing their instructional practice and increasing their student learning. Further, it is believed that the use of computers in the classroom facilitated small-group instruction and encouraged grouping students by interests. This teaching arrangement would change the role of teacher from lecturer to that of a facilitator or coach.

Summary

What personal and professional characteristics and experiences are expressed by teachers who report high developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices? These findings indicate that first, as a collective, these teachers expressed a strong sense of self as being competent, capable, and professional. Second, their autonomous characteristics enable them to focus on the needs of their student above all else. Third, their positive references to students and to their teaching ability to affect individual students indicates a strong sense of
personal teaching efficacy. Fourth, these teachers perceive certain issues in their profession as challenging and problematic without being hopeless. They are personally motivated by their faith that all children can learn.

Question Two

This question considers the personal and professional characteristics and experiences of the six teachers who report low developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices (Helen, Linda, Carol, Lucy, Sally, and Mary). The analysis of the Low DAP teachers was presented at the conclusion of Chapter Five. The findings are reviewed in this chapter in conjunction with previous research that is related to the results.

The personal and professional characteristics of this group of teachers were similar to one another. Three of the teachers were younger in age (25-40) and three were older. Three were grandmothers with no children living at home; two teachers had young families; and one teacher had no children. Three of the teachers were widowed or divorced. Most openly expressed “a love” for children but fewer expressed “a love” for teaching. Overall this group of teachers expressed more negative comments about their profession and fewer positive references to their students. For Helen (first grade) it was her lack of response that was most revealing.

School policy and autonomy

Most of the teachers viewed school-system policy as the most influential factor to their practice. This translates into a teaching practice that is controlled
by decisions made outside the teacher’s classroom. This control diminishes teacher autonomy. Holmes and Morrison (1994) reported teachers in their study often “succumb to pressures” of school-system policy and forfeit their own desires for developmentally appropriate practice. Sherman and Mueller (1996) reported only modest implementation of developmentally appropriate practice in the classroom of kindergarten, second, and third grade teachers who had been trained in such practices.

Teacher efficacy and parental support

While the teachers in this collection were concerned about their students and their achievement, their comments reflected a lower sense of teaching efficacy as compared to the Hi DAP teachers. Home-life, limited educational experiences, and a lack of parent support were all conditions that these teachers considered as obstacles to teaching and learning.

Research on teacher beliefs and their perception of parental involvement is sparse. However, in his study, Micklo (1993) identified problems involving parental support in academic matters and in dealing with behavior as ranking highest in a frequency scale of teacher reported work-related problems.

In regard to teacher efficacy, a link between pupil control and teacher efficacy was reported in a study by Woofold and Hoy (1990). They reported that pupil control has been conceptualized along a continuum from custodial to humanistic. Teachers with lower levels of teacher efficacy were reported to demonstrate characteristics related to the custodial model. The custodial model
is characterized by more traditional schooling practices, maintaining order, and a highly controlled setting. Research has shown that teachers who have more custodial characteristics are less progressive in their teaching practices.

**Discipline and other viewpoints**

Discipline appeared to be a major issue for this group of teachers. Each teacher struggled with discipline on a daily basis. This may have been a result of a lack of innovative teaching techniques or a more controlled learning environment. When students are engaged in meaningful work, discipline problems decrease. As Cuban (1993) explains, the traditional elementary school setting is characterized by conformity, uniformity, and accountability. Problems in the area of discipline may increase in classrooms where students are required to sit for long periods of time. Completing paper and pencil tasks without meaningful times of interaction and exploration.

**Summary**

What personal and professional characteristics and experiences are expressed by teachers who report low developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices? First, most of the teachers in this group considered school system policy as most influential in their practice. The demands of the curriculum in addition to the demands of the school system resulted in a more teacher-controlled environment. They were less autonomous and believed they had to adhere to policy guidelines. Second, while most of the teachers shared comments of genuine concern for their students and for their education, most felt
that even their best efforts could not overcome some of the personal obstacles that their students faced. They perceived a lack of parental support contributed to their ineffectiveness in classroom situations. Third, they favored a more traditional and conservative approach to education with an emphasis on conformity, obedience, and traditional teaching methods. Fourth, without exception, these teachers perceived discipline problems as an issue of concern in their professional practice.

Question Three

What similarities or differences emerged in a comparison of the two groups of teachers? This question considers the differences and/or the similarities of personal and professional characteristics and experiences of the twelve teachers portrayed in the study. The analysis of the High DAP teachers and the Low DAP teachers was presented at the conclusion of chapters four and five, respectively. The findings are reviewed in this chapter in conjunction with previous research that is related to the results.

Control vs autonomy

The issue of locus of control, who has it and how it manifests itself, appeared to be an underlying theme throughout the study. Based on the comments of the teachers in the High DAP group, they perceived themselves as in control of their teaching practice. However, because of their personal and professional traits of confidence and competency, they were able to share that control with their students in creating a classroom environment that was
conducive to interactive learning. Their autonomous natures motivated them to cultivate a sense of autonomy in their students.

However, it appears that the teachers in the Low DAP group perceived the locus of control to be in the hands of the school-system. Therefore, their teaching practices were ordered and dictated by the pressure they felt to raise test scores, remain on pace with curriculum standards, and maintain schedules and assessment requirements. As a group they were less autonomous and reported more issues about discipline and order.

**Efficacy**

The term teacher efficacy was never used in the interviews. The use of the term in the study is not related to any instrument of measurement for teacher efficacy. It is used to help categorize the strongest difference this researcher found in the number and the content of the references these two groups of teachers made about their students and their teaching ability.

High DAP teachers believe that what they do in the classroom can make a difference regardless of student circumstances. This belief was also evident in their comments related to the importance of teaching and to the satisfaction they find in their chosen profession.

While most of the Low DAP teachers shared comments of genuine concern for their students and for their education, most felt that even their best efforts could not overcome some of the personal obstacles that their students...
faced. They perceived a lack of parental support contributed to their ineffectiveness in classroom situations.

Technology and assessment

As reported in the analysis of each group of teachers, all twelve of the teachers reported grades according to the school-system policy, but the evaluation techniques used by the teachers varied. High DAP teachers reported more use of authentic assessment while Low DAP teachers reported predominant use of standardized measures.

Classroom computers or computer labs were used by all the teachers. High DAP teachers reported use of computers as a teaching tool, motivational tool, and as a scaffolding tool. Fewer comments were shared about specific usage by the Low DAP teachers. However, several teachers reported support for the exclusively skill-based CCC Lab program.

Limitations

With any research, there are limitations inherent in the methodology selected, whether one uses a qualitative or a quantitative approach. Researchers using either method continually work to insure validity and reliability as much as possible within the constraints of their studies. As a researcher, I recognize the limitations of case study research and attempted to delineate these limitations for the reader.

It was very important to tell the stories of these twelve teachers. Their portraits, which were derived from limited conversations with the research team,
provided insights into teacher beliefs and practices. The portraits also revealed personal and professional characteristics and experiences that emerged through careful and systematic analysis. These characteristics and experiences shared by the teachers in the study provided additional insights into the reality of the classroom.

However, the limitations of the study must be considered when viewing the overall findings. First, the qualitative nature of the study resulted in a small sample size. Second, the researcher relied totally on data collected from the teachers themselves in the form of self-reported surveys and one interview with minimal additional contact. Third, there was no possibility of classroom observations due to the time of year and the location of the school sites. Fourth, researcher biases must also be considered and reported in agreement with the principles and framework of developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices.

Implications for Further Study

Attention to the beliefs of teachers can inform educational practice in ways that prevailing research agendas have not (Pajares, 1992). With the growing concern that the total reliance on developmental theory does not adequately service the early childhood community (e.g., Lubeck, 1996; Stott & Bowman, 1996) the addition of teacher beliefs and teacher practical knowledge to future research should be continued. Teachers’ practical knowledge should not be disregarded because it is not formally generated and tested by research. It is derived from the experiences of teachers and can be validated within the
context of daily practice. It can be personally meaningful and rich with information.

For future research, a study involving teachers, their beliefs, and their practical knowledge would benefit from the addition of a classroom observation component. This would strengthen the trustworthiness of the study. It would also be helpful to the researcher to have information pertaining to the mandates of the local school system. This would be particularly helpful for research in the primary grades. Lastly, future research designs should consider the addition of a component that involves teacher reflection and response as well as possible interviews with parents, students, and school administrators. This would provide a more in-depth description of the learning environment from multiple sources.

Implications for Teachers and Teacher Educators

In schools, of course, the frontline workers are the teachers, the students, and their parents. Above all, it is the teacher who stands at the center of the classroom. The teacher creates or does not create an environment for learning. It is he or she who actually delivers educational services. The teacher either knows or does not know how to engage students in their own education.

Six teachers in this study recalled the influence a former teacher had on their lives and their careers. For them, it was not the curriculum that made a difference in the classroom, it was the person known as teacher. For teacher educators, it is imperative to empower future teachers with content knowledge,
tolerance, and an attitude of professionalism that demands constant reflection and personal and professional growth.

Summary

This study examined the personal and professional characteristics and experiences of twelve teachers who report high and low developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices. The findings from this study are important because they support the work of other researchers in this field. In addition, these findings contribute to the literature because the collection of individual portraits presents a cohesive and convincing picture of the very distinct differences which are represented by the teachers who report high or low developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices.

Although this study is admittedly small, the findings are provocative and should be useful to all those interested in developing teachers who exhibit high levels of developmentally appropriate practice.

Epilogue

Crosser (1996) offers a description of the developmentally appropriate classroom environment. It is one where children most often:

Lead...rather than follow.
Create...rather than duplicate.
Move...rather than wait.
Make the lines...rather than color in the lines.
Speak...rather than listen passively.
Initiate...rather than imitate.
Raise questions...rather than answer the teacher questions.
Solve their own problems...rather than the teachers' problems.
Make art...rather than do crafts.
Emphasize the process...rather than the product.
Use authentic skills...rather than drill and practice.
Make books...rather than fill in workbooks.
Decide...rather than submit.
Chose wisely...rather than being told.
Make a plan...rather than follow the teacher’s plan.
Try again...rather than fail.


APPENDIX A

RESEARCH PROCESS FORMS
**PROPOSAL SUMMARY FORM FOR HUMAN RESEARCH**

1. Principal Investigator:
   - Teresa K. Buchanan  
     Curriculum and Instruction  
     388-2444

   Co-investigator:
   - Diane C. Burns  
     Human Ecology  
     388-2404

   Students:
   - Faye White, Judy Bichner, Bridget Berry

2. Project title or course name & number:
   - Primary Teachers' Belief & Practice: Developmental Appropriateness and Child Achievement, Pilot

3. Proposed duration of project:
   - 1 year
   - Parish Elementary Schools

4. Site of data collection:
   - No funding will be sought for this pilot
   - See attached

5. Funding will be sought from:
   - Minimal to None
   - (Possible slight discomfort common to any self-evaluation)

6. Provide an abstract of the project:
   - Because the teachers will have the option to refuse to participate, the potential subjects have the opportunity to 'self-select' themselves out of the study. Care will be taken during the interview to ensure that questions are asked objectively and responses are not judged as 'good' or 'bad' by the interviewer.

7. Describe the risks, if any, to which the subjects will be exposed:
   - No, this is the least risky method.

8. What steps will be taken to minimize the risks:
   - None

9. Are design alternatives available which would eliminate or reduce risks?
   - Not applicable

10. Describe any surgical or invasive, non-surgical procedure:
    - Not applicable

11. For the procedures in the preceding item, provide the qualifications of the person performing such tasks:
    - Not applicable

12. If drugs are to be administered, state the drug name, actions and dosages:
    - Not applicable

13. State the qualifications of the person who will administer the drug(s):
    - Not applicable
14. Describe the process used to select subjects:

For the screening procedure, a survey will be sent to each primary teacher and full-inclusion teachers in the district (pre-K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade teachers). Subjects will volunteer.

Subjects whose beliefs and practices fall on the extreme ends of the continuum of appropriate practice will be selected for further study. Subjects will volunteer.

15. Describe the process through which informed consent was obtained:

For the screening procedure, subjects will sign an informed consent form attached to the survey.

Subjects will not be interviewed or observed until their consent form is signed and returned to the researchers.

16. How will the privacy of the subjects and the confidentiality of the data be maintained?

When the completed survey is returned, the subject's name checked off a master list, the teacher's name removed from the questionnaire, and an ID number assigned.

Questionnaires will be handled only by principal investigators and their research assistants. The rating scales will be handled in the same manner.

The interviews and observations for the in-depth study will be coded and subject names will not appear on any data forms.

17. If a physician is involved in your project, state their name, address, and telephone number.

Not applicable

18. Is a copy of your consent form attached to the protocol?

Yes. The screening consent is on the survey. The in-depth consent form is attached.

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR STATEMENT:**

I have read and agree to abide by the Louisiana State University policy on use of human subjects. The project will be conducted in accordance with OHRP guidelines for Human Protections. I will advise the University's Human Subject Committees in writing of any significant changes in the procedures detailed above.

Principal Investigator

Title/Rank

Date
Abstract of Proposed Study

Objective and significance of the project/course:

National guidelines for the education of children from birth to 9 years old call for a curriculum in which children perform activities and projects that integrate multiple subject areas, are student-focused rather than teacher-directed, and are relevant to children’s lives (i.e., developmentally appropriate). Little is known about the use of this type of instruction in the primary grades. Additionally, the gender and racial appropriateness of such activities has been questioned recently and needs to be addressed empirically. This cross-disciplinary, multi-site, multi-investigator longitudinal project is designed to address these questions. Its purpose is to identify current practices of teachers in pre-school and grades 1, 2 and 3 using survey, interview, and observation methodology. The data will be assessed to determine the barriers and facilitators to implementing that type of instruction in early primary grades.

Description of the procedures the subjects will undergo:

All preK and primary teachers in a school district will be asked to complete surveys (see attached) about their beliefs and practices. Those teachers who fall on the extreme ends of a curriculum continuum will be studied in-depth. After consent has been obtained from the selected group of teachers, trained observers blind to the teacher questionnaire responses, will complete an observational rating scale of each teacher’s classroom. Next, a trained and blind interviewer will conduct a semi-structured interview with the teachers. Finally, at the end of the year, child achievement data (grades, standardized test scores, and retention information) for the children in the selected classrooms will be collected by observers blind to teacher responses on questionnaires.
LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

CONSENT FORM

1. Study Title: Primary Teachers' Beliefs & Practices, Pilot

2. Performance Sites: Data will be collected in each teacher's classroom and school

3. Investigators: The following investigators are available for questions at the phone below:
   - Dr. Teresa Buchanan 388-2444
   - Dr. Diane C. Berts 388-2404
   - Curriculum and Instruction Human Ecology

4. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the pilot study is to obtain validity data on interview and observation instruments designed to measure teacher beliefs and practices in primary grades.

5. Subject Inclusion: Pre-K and Primary teachers who have clearly defined beliefs and practices

6. Subject Exclusion: Teachers who do not teach pre-K or primary grades or whose beliefs and practices are not easily identifiable

7. Description of Study: For the pilot, participants will enable researchers to develop valid and accurate measures of 1) the beliefs and practices of primary teachers and 2) the personal and institutional variables that influence those beliefs and practices by allowing researchers to pilot interview and observation instruments.

8. Benefits: Teachers may benefit from the opportunity to reflect on their teaching. The interest of the interviewers and researchers in the teacher's beliefs and practices may impact their job performance. Understanding of the important variables that influence teachers will help researchers answer questions about preservice training and preparation of teachers.

9. Risks: Minimal to None. It is possible that subjects will experience slight discomfort that is commonly associated with any type of self-evaluation.

10. Alternatives: Alternative methods are not appropriate for this study. A laboratory experiment would lose more in validity than it might gain in control.


12. Right to Refuse: Subjects may choose NOT to participate or withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty and will not jeopardize their treatment now or in the future.

13. Privacy: The results of the study may be published or presented at national conferences. The privacy of participants will be protected and their identities will not be revealed.
14. **Release of Information:** The information about subjects may be reviewed by other investigators, but the identity of subjects will be kept secret.

15. **Financial Information:** Subjects will not be charged and will not receive any money.

16. **Signatures:**

This study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I understand that additional questions regarding the study should be directed to the investigators listed above. I understand that if I have questions about my rights as a subject, or other concerns, I can contact the Vice Chancellor of the LSU Office of Research and Economic Development at 388-5833. I agree with the terms above and acknowledge I have been given a copy of the consent form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of the Teacher Volunteer</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<th>Witness</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<th>Investigator(s)</th>
<th>Date</th>
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</table>
January 18, 1996

Dr. Terry Buchanan
Department of Curriculum & Instruction
Louisiana State University
223 Peabody Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803-4728

Dear Dr. Buchanan:

Your application requesting permission to do a graduate study entitled "LSU Teacher Beliefs and Practices Study" in Parish has been approved.

Please consult with Director of Testing and Research, and direct copies of your proposal, progress reports, and the completed study to her. You may also wish to speak with Assistant Superintendent Elementary Schools and Administrative Director Middle Schools.

Best wishes for a successful study.

Sincerely,

Associate Superintendent
Curriculum and Instruction

GEC:shb
pc:

R E C E I V E D
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BLACKMAN
G & I

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February 6, 1996

Dear Elementary School Principal,

On January 18th permission was granted to us by the Parish School System to begin our research study "L.S.U. Teacher Beliefs and Practices Survey." This project will eventually involve numerous school districts in three states. We are delighted to have the opportunity to begin our work in Parish.

Your help and cooperation is crucial to the success of the first phase of our study. A teacher survey is enclosed for all first, second, and third grade regular education classroom teachers in your school. Would you have someone distribute them to the teachers? Also, we've enclosed some reminder notices. Could someone post them on Tuesday or Wednesday of next week?

We've asked the teachers to put their completed surveys in sealed envelopes and leave them in a box in your mail room labeled "L.S.U." A member of the research team will pick up the completed surveys from your school mail room on Friday, February 16th. If you could, please encourage your teachers to complete and return the surveys by that time. Thank you for your cooperation! We appreciate your help!

Sincerely,

Terry Buchanan, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor

Diane C. Burns, Ed.D.
Professor

Enclosures: Teacher Surveys
            Reminder Notice
            Approval letter from CPSP
Teacher Beliefs and Practices Survey © 1995

Dear Primary Teacher,

As teacher educators and researchers, we are very interested in discovering what you believe is important in first grade and what types of instructional activities you do in your classroom. Your responses to the questions will provide valuable information about primary teachers' beliefs and practices. Please take about 20 minutes to complete this survey, and mail it in the envelope provided, and return it to the L.S.U. box in your mail room. The envelopes containing your questionnaires will then be picked up by a researcher on Friday, February 16th.

Your answers will be confidential, and no one at your school will have access to your survey responses. Upon receipt of the completed questionnaire, your name will be checked off of our list of primary teachers. At that point, your name will be marked out on your questionnaire and an ID number assigned.

Based on the results of this survey, a subsample of primary teachers will be selected to participate in the follow-up phase of the study. We will contact the subsample of teachers for the follow-up study in the spring to ask if they would participate in the second phase.

Thank you for your help on this important project!

Dr. Diane C. Berts and Dr. Terry Buchanan
Louisiana State University
(504)388-2604

Dr. Rosalind Charlesworth
Weber State University

Dr. Pam Fleagle and Dr. Susan Madison
University of South Florida

Please sign below, signifying your agreement to complete this survey.

Your Signature __________________________

Modified version of the Teacher Questionnaire developed by Rosalind Charlesworth, Craig Hart, Diane C. Berts, Sue Hernandez, & Lisa Kerk at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Modified at Louisiana State University by Diane Berts and Terry Buchanan using suggestions from Rosalind Charlesworth, Donna Watkins, Pam Fleagle, other colleagues, and comments.

For information contact Dr. Diane C. Berts, School of Human Ecology, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803-4731, 504-388-2604; or Dr. Rosalind Charlesworth, Child & Family Studies, 1301 University Circle, Weber State University, Ogden, UT 84408-1301, 801-626-7368.
March 21, 1997

Dear Colleague,

We are sending you two things: a copy of the transcript of your interview and two copies of the LSU consent form. Please read over the consent form (it has the same information you were told before your interview) and return to us a signed copy, if you would. The other copy is for you to keep.

You were one of 14 teachers with well-defined beliefs and practices who provided us with some clues about why teachers hold the beliefs they do and use the practices they use (i.e., is it some personal experience they have had, their educational background, their relationships with colleagues, etc.). We hope that the interviews will be analyzed this summer. It took us a long time to transcribe the interviews! Would you mind taking a few minutes to read over the interview and insert (in ink) any modifications or clarifications you feel are needed to ensure that the transcript is accurate? Please return any pages with modifications to us by April 30th. If no changes are needed, simply return the form below. Please do not put your name anywhere on your the interview, to protect your anonymity.

We sure appreciate your cooperation! Please send us a signed copy of the Consent form, the form below, and any changes to the interview you would like to make. A self-addressed stamped envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

Thank you again!

Teresa K. Buchanan, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor

Faye White
Doctoral Candidate

March 1997

_____ The transcript received is accurate and no modifications are needed

_____ The transcript may be used with the modifications I have inserted

Signed: ___________  ________________  Date: ___________

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Project: Pilot
Date: May 15, 1996
Time: 8:00-9:30 am
Place: 2nd grade classroom
Interviewer: Judy Bidner

I: Tell me about yourself.
T: Ahh, well.
I: Are you native to this area?
T: I'm from New Orleans. I grew up in New Orleans and went off to
    and got married.
I: That was one of my other questions, where did you graduate from?
T: I did not graduate there. I went to
    so we moved around a good bit. And we came here thirty years
    ago. So, I decided to finish my college work at
    I graduated in
    This is my 26th year teaching. I graduated college the same week my oldest son
    graduated high school. So, I waited till they got into school before I married. I did all the room
    mother stuff. (pauses) I have two sons, both of them in education, one's a coach, and one's a band
    director. And they live here
    in three granddaughters, they're 1, 2, and 3 years old.
    (laugh)
I: Wonderful. So, you have the core family relatively close by?
T: Yes, my husband died in January.
I: This year?
T: Yes, so it's really a godsend that my children live here and I have the grandchildren.
I: Oh, my word. Oh, thank goodness.
T: In the midst of moving and all the chaos I have to contend with. (this teacher has had to
    move to a different classroom recently since the building is being partially torn down for
    renovation)
I: That's been a super big challenge.
T: Yes, yes.
I: I hate the thought of anyone having to deal with that and yet we all do at some point in
    time.
T: Yes, it's coming to all of us. We just have to be ready and know where we're going.
I: Goodness. I'm so glad those children are close by. I know you rely on them.

T: They're really my sunshine, that's right.

I: Well, how do you feel about the teaching? Does that help keep you going?

T: Well, I really wanted to retire this year. My husband was retired and you know, I thought well, we would retire together and have a lot of things to do together. But, I know that you don't make split decisions. So,

I: So, you try to keep that part of your life stable with all the other things?

T: Well, yeah. No, I'm not making that decision now. Everybody says you need something to do. And I say, But you know, I have plenty to do. (laugh) A lot of things to do. So, I'm thinking now, at least I'll teach two more years and cross the bridge year to year.

I: Excellent. You had mentioned that this was your first year to teach third grade. What has been some of your experiences?

T: Third-grade. Off. I have been for the previous 7 years, taught math in the math lab, remedial math program, with Chapter 1. And I taught second, third, fourth, and fifth grade. Before that I taught fifth grade, I taught one year that might be interesting for you. My very first year to teach, I taught fifth and sixth grade combination in one room. I had 15 fifth graders and 15 sixth graders. It was a 45 minute drive from my house. I brought books home every day to write lesson plans for the next day. At the beginning of school, because they only hired me the day before school started. I had no preparation. And

I: Oh, my word.

T: The lady that I was replacing had been there many, many years. And all the students had come up in that same atmosphere with two grades in a room. So, they were accustomed to one side of the room working while you taught the other side.

I: The children were used to that.

T: The children were used to this setup. So, that wasn't the problem. They worked very independently. I could teach the reading to one group and then put them in a workbook, while the other one was in a workbook, and then we'd go back and forth. And I really had to be very flexible. I learned right away, you have to adapt to the situation. But, the children didn't care for me at first. And it took me a while to find out why. It was because they liked their other teacher who was the coach's wife and they lived a stone's throw from here and they wanted her back. And when I finally realized that, I said well, that's good that they liked their teacher and it wasn't a bad thing. And we worked through that. The only way I made it through that year was with support from the principal.

I: I was going to say, how did you feel prepared to teach two levels at the same time?

T: Well, just like in one-semester and graduate, you think you can do anything and everything. I think now, I could not do that. But, when we graduate from college, we are
Teacher Interview Questions

I. Demographics: Note date, name, place, and time.

II. Check the recorder/microphone

III. Tell me about yourself:
   A. gender
   B. ethnic background
   C. native to the area
   D. How long have you lived in Louisiana?

IV. Tell me about your family:
   A. single, divorced, married, other...
   B. Do you have children? How many? Ages?

V. Tell me about your job at this school:
   A. What grade do you teach?
   B. How many children are in your class?
   C. How many of those children could be classified as special needs students?
   D. What is the ethnic composition of the class?

VI. Tell me about your teaching career:
   A. Why did you decide to become a teacher?
   B. How long have you been teaching?
   C. In how many schools have you taught?
   D. How have things changed in education during your career?
   E. What grades have you taught?

VII. For the rest of the questions, consider your current teaching position:
   A. What things in your life help or support you in your efforts to do your job?
      1. things in school
      2. things outside of school
      3. personal issues
   B. What things in your life hinder or interfere in your efforts to do your job?
      1. things in school
      2. things outside of school
      3. personal issues
   C. What are your principal’s expectations about a 1st, 2nd, or 3rd grade program?
      1. How do you know?
      2. Can you give me an example of that?
   D. How would you describe your relationship with your principal?
   E. Tell me about your co-workers:
      1. How do they influence your teaching style or practices?
      2. Examples
   F. How do parents influence your teaching style or practices?
   G. What things about yourself influence your teaching style or practices?
      1. individuality
      2. personality
      3. temperament
   H. How do your experiences, likes, dislikes influence what you do in the classroom?
I. Is there anything else that presents barriers to your teaching?
J. Is there anything else that supports your teaching?
K. How do you assess student progress and achievement?
L. How do you use that information?
M. Tell me about how you use technology in your classroom?
   1. What types of technology do you have access to?
   2. How do you use these in your classroom?
   3. Tell me more.
N. Tell me about the way parents are involved in your program.
O. Is there anything else you would like to share about your teaching?
P. Thank you!
APPENDIX C

RELEVANT PRINCIPLES OF DAP FOR PRIMARY GRADES
Relevant Principles from the NAEYC Position Statement (1987) on DAP in the Primary Grades

1. Teachers must be cognizant of the whole child.

2. Curriculum should be integrated (including based on children’s interests, and/or through choice of learning areas).

3. Children should be engaged in active rather than passive activities.

4. The curriculum provides many developmentally appropriate materials for children to explore and opportunities for interaction and communication with other children and adults. Curriculum content is relevant, engaging, and meaningful to the children.

5. Children should be provided opportunities to work in small groups on projects that provide rich content for conversation and that teachers facilitate discussion.

6. Teachers recognize the importance of positive peer group relationships and provide for cooperative small group projects that no only develop cognitive ability but promote peer interaction.

7. To develop a sense of competence, children need to acquire the knowledge and skills recognized by our culture as important, foremost among which are the abilities to read and write and to calculate numerically.

8. Each child is unique and has an individual pattern and timing of growth, as well as individual personality, learning style, and family background. Therefore a variety of teaching methods is used.

9. Parents are viewed as integral partners in the educational process.

10. Each child’s progress is assessed primarily through observation and recording. Grades are considered inadequate reflections on ongoing learning.
VITA

Veronica Faye Wicke White was born on June 5, 1951, in Lake Charles, Louisiana, to Monroe and Teen Wicke. She attended St. Margaret's Elementary and was a graduate of St. Charles Academy in Lake Charles. Faye received a degree of Bachelor of Arts in early childhood education from McNeese State University on December 15, 1972. The following day, she married John Patrick White. John and Faye are the parents of four children.

Faye White received a master's degree in early childhood education from McNeese State University in 1989. She received a second master's in elementary counseling and guidance from McNeese in 1995. Throughout this time period (1972-1995) Faye served as wife, mother, educator and continuing student. She was a classroom teacher in second, fourth, and kindergarten in various schools and areas of the state of Louisiana. For the past five years, she has worked as a graduate assistant for Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and as a Visiting Lecturer for McNeese State University. She has been responsible for the placement and supervision of early childhood students in public schools for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten certification for the last two years for McNeese State University.

Faye is currently completing the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction from Louisiana State University.
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Veronica Faye White

Major Field: Curriculum and Instruction

Title of Dissertation: Portraits of Teachers: The Professional and Personal Characteristics of Twelve Primary Teachers

Approved:

[Signatures]

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Date of Examination:
August 26, 1998