

UNITING THE STORIES OF NEW AND VETERAN EDUCATORS:
CASE STUDY NARRATIVES OF EXPECTATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

by

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(Under the Direction of Betty Shockley Bisplinghoff)

ABSTRACT

This is a descriptive qualitative study using narrative inquiry to build upon research on mentoring and support for practicing teachers to advance how we think about retention. Each participant offers a specific case for consideration. Guided by the conceptual framework of Dewey's focus on experiences, this study has the potential to shed light on new and veteran rural educators by listening to their combined voices. The significance resides in the viewing of their 'lived expectations' and 'lived experiences' through a constructivist's lens of what the participants expected teaching to be like, what they experienced and are experiencing, and what the opportunity to reflect together meant to their practice. By providing a space for individual voices to be heard and honored, the study focused on the research question: What do new and veteran teachers have to say to us about their expectations and experiences in teaching?

In a rural Georgia community, seven participants were purposely selected based on years of experience as teachers, new and veteran. Data collection included lists of expectations, individual open-ended interviews, focus groups, and reflections collected over an eight-month period. Throughout the inquiry process, narrative analysis was used in re-telling their storied educational experiences. The analysis and findings made visible the differences in these new and

veteran teachers' expectations and indicated similarities in the teachers' experiences regardless of age or experience level, while acknowledging the bond with their community. Two proposals were made: (1) the new and veteran teachers' expectations of being a teacher were different; (2) these rural teachers had a background with a rural community or an attachment to the rural community in which they taught; acknowledged the supportive and challenging characteristics of experiences with people in rural communities; and, talked about similar educational experiences. As a result, this study contributes to the knowledge base in teaching and mentoring.

The similar experiences in this study, despite the years of experience, require us to think more about 'teacher' as a role with very little variance. This study is a touchstone text for considerations regarding teacher preparation, retention, and how we think about mentoring.

INDEX WORDS: New teachers, Veteran teachers, Pyramids of intervention, Rural community, Story, Narrative, Judgment, Propositions

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mother, Sallye Nisewonger, and my father, Jim Nisewonger. I love you both so much. You encouraged me and believed that I could accomplish anything that I set my mind to, and without your confidence, I would not have even dreamed of being able to complete this journey, much less begin it. Thank you for your never-ending support and faith in me. I gained strength from you. Thank you for always standing with me throughout my life, arm-in-arm, and helping to make my dreams come true. I am so proud to be your daughter.

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May I always make each one of you proud.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



. . . view teaching and learning as a continuous process of reconstruction of experience.

John Dewey (1938)

Introduction and Background of the Study

As I considered a study that would include teachers in the beginning of their profession and teachers nearing the end of their profession, John Dewey offered me a plan of action, a framework to support my curiosity by emphasizing the “importance of the participation of the learner in the formation of the purposes which direct his activities in the learning process” (1938, p. 67). So, as this learning process or study began, I, as the learner, had interests based on my prior teaching experience that I wanted to know more about and wanted a chance to examine. I wanted to interview new and veteran teachers exploring their expectations and experiences as educators.

Dewey (1938) acknowledged the need for forming purposes. “A genuine purpose always starts with an impulse. . . A purpose is an end-view. That is, it involves foresight of the consequences which will result from acting upon impulse” (p. 67). Dewey continued, “impulse and desire produce consequences not by themselves alone but through their interaction or

cooperation with surrounding conditions” (p. 68). My impulse was to listen to what veteran teachers nearing retirement had to say about their experiences before leaving the profession. But, as I started reading the research about new teachers leaving the profession in the first three to five years and after reflecting on my own experience with a new teacher during my last year of teaching, my impulse widened to include teachers at both ends of the experience spectrum. I had a desire to talk to them and record their experiences and reflections; I wanted to interview the participants from one school system over a period of a school year. The school environment and the community became pivotal in this study emphasizing the importance in Dewey’s words ‘through their interaction or cooperation with surrounding conditions.’ Dewey described these desires as “. . . the ultimate springs of action” (p. 70).

Thus, in the fall of 2008 I sprang into action. Dewey added, “Exercise of observation is, then, one condition of transformation of impulse into a purpose. . . But observation alone is not enough. We have to understand the *significance* of what we see, hear, and touch” (1938, p. 68). With these thoughts in mind, my conceptual framework needed to start with my initial impulse to interview new and veteran teachers, but add opportunities to observe all the participants together, listening and documenting their experiences. Therefore, the study’s purpose developed into going through a year with new and veteran teachers, interviewing them at the beginning and end of the year and listening to them throughout the year as they interacted with each other in focus groups, ending with the desire (or expectation) of understanding the *significance* of what I saw, heard, and felt. Dewey stated, “But, in unfamiliar cases, we cannot tell just what the consequences of observed conditions will be unless we go over the past experiences in our mind, unless we reflect upon them and by seeing what is similar in them to those now present, go on to form a *judgment* of what may be expected in the present situation” (p. 69). Therefore, I set up an

opportunity in the interviews for the teachers to talk about their expectations, experiences, and past experiences by using a conversational open-ended interview format. Then, I brought all of these experiences forward with those ‘now present,’ new and veteran teachers, to ‘the present situation.’

These pieces led to analysis throughout the process and the final step, which involved *judgment*. This “formation of purpose is, then, a rather complex intellectual operation. It involves:

1. Observation of surrounding conditions;
2. Knowledge of what has happened in similar situations in the past, a knowledge obtained partly by recollection and partly from the information, advice, and warning of those who have had a wider experience;
3. Judgment which puts together what is observed and what is recalled to see what they signify” (Dewey, 1938, pp. 68-69).

In using this conceptual framework, my study would have been incomplete without the historical look at educational policy over the past fifty years. Making an “acquaintance with the past,” Dewey said is “a *means* of understanding the present” (p. 78). He stated,

. . . the achievements of the past provide the only means at command for understanding the present. Just as an individual has to draw in memory upon his own past to understand the conditions in which he individually finds himself, so the issues and problems of present *social* life are in such intimate and direct connection with the past that students cannot be prepared to understand either these problems or the best way of dealing with them without delving into the roots in the past (1938, p. 77).

In a search for “the ways humans experience the world” I listened to educators’ stories in an effort to study their past and present educational expectations and experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). I placed “emphasis on the stories people tell and how these stories were communicated” in order to learn more about new and veteran educators (Merriam, 1998, p. 157). Using narrative analysis, the words of the participants became the written text, or script, from the actors themselves placed over a backdrop of empirical research and educational policies setting the stage on which “we compose our lives” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 420). Bringing the past and present together through the recollections and narratives from these seven educators from different generations alongside a review of research associated with new and veteran teachers became the essence of this study.

Using the knowledge gained through reading about new and veteran teachers and the policies of the past leading to the present gives the foundation for the experiences shared with me by these educators. During this process or “method of intelligence manifested in the experimental method,” Dewey (1938) explained that there is a demand or need for “keeping track of ideas, activities, and observed consequences” through “reflective review and summarizing, in which there is both discrimination and record of the significant features of a developing experience” (p. 87). I followed this thought process as I wrote and reflected throughout the study. The participants, also, wrote their reflections after meeting together in focus groups. The fourteen audio taped interviews and four focus groups were transcribed thus making a written record of our experiences together. Dewey instructed educators to “view teaching and learning as a continuous process of reconstruction of experience” (p. 87). I reconstructed these shared experiences into seven individual cases and further into a narrative cross case analysis: The case of Ms. Jamison.

Research Purpose and Research Question

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that currently 3.2 million people teach in U.S. public schools, but an additional 2.8 million will need to be recruited over the next eight years due to the growing student enrollment, teacher turnovers, and the baby-boomers retiring (Wallis, 2008, p. 1). In the summer of 2008, when I began my research, there appeared to be a “revolving door” through which new teachers were entering and exiting “causing great concern in the educational community” due to the fact that “teacher experience is positively correlated with increased student achievement” (Weidhofer, 2008, p. 1). In fact, the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF) published a report that indicated that the real school-staffing problem was not in recruitment, but teacher retention. Specifically, the inability to support high-quality teaching in many schools was driven not by too few teachers entering but too many leaving. The report challenged the nation to assure that every child had “competent, caring qualified teachers in schools organized for success” (NCTAF, 2008, p. 1). Retaining and supporting a competent teaching force is a growing concern among the nation’s educators and policy makers. This concern was made law through the No Child Left Behind legislation requiring schools to be staffed with high quality teachers (p. 1).

Research suggests that the classroom teacher is the most important factor in improving education. Darling-Hammond (1999) concluded, “the strongest and most consistent predictor of a state’s average student achievement level is the proportion of well qualified teachers in the state” (p. 4). Wallis (2008) reported that it takes two years for new teachers to master the basics of classroom management skills and six years before a teacher is fully proficient (p. 3). Yet, we repeatedly expect brand-new, just-out-of-the-wrapper teachers to assume the same

responsibilities and duties as veteran teachers or our seasoned professionals (Renard, 2003, p. 63). Little time is available to move from new to expert.

According to Smylie (1989), teachers rate learning from other teachers as the second most valuable source of information about effective teaching over only their own teaching experiences. On April 7, 2009, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future recommended the concept of cross-generational learning teams in which veterans would work with new teachers providing instructional assistance that would help to improve student performance and reduce attrition rates for new teachers. A competent teaching force is every school's goal and merging the experiences of new and veteran teachers is the way of the future.

Glynn and Muth (2004) stated in a report on teacher education, "As Georgia moves forward with efforts to improve student achievement in schools, good teaching has become a key concern of state policymakers. Georgia needs competent teachers to meet the challenge of helping all students reach high academic standards" (p. 1). The need for competent, high-quality teachers is a national, state, and local concern.

New teachers bring fresh ideas and new strategies into schools and classrooms. They are ready with knowledge, energy, and a desire to make a difference in a child's education. However, with very little time to acclimate, much is expected of them. Black (2004) says teaching makes the same demands on novices as it does on experienced practitioners. "Schools often overwhelm new teachers by expecting them to juggle all the responsibilities and duties that veteran teachers do. Instead, we need to give them time to grow" (Renard, 2003, p. 62). New teachers need opportunities to adapt to their new role and the school environment.

Veteran teachers, therefore, are identified as pivotal to this mission. They become the mentors, coaches, and colleagues in the classrooms next door and across the hall. They, too,

came with expectations and now have years of experiences in education to share. According to Moir and Bloom (2003), veteran teachers play an important role in the development of new teachers,

When induction programs tap the experience and wisdom of veteran teachers to improve the experience of new teachers, they also open the door for the veteran teachers to emerge as school leaders with an unusual depth of experience in teacher development. Teacher development is the key to student success (p.60).

The purpose of this study was to provide a space for individual voices to be heard and expectations and experiences to be honored. This study offered new and veteran teachers the opportunity to share educational expectations and experiences. Through lists of expectations, individual open-ended interviews, focus groups, and reflections, this research united the past and present with a goal to inform educators of the future. This research was guided by the following exploratory questions:

1. What do new and veteran teachers have to say to us about their expectations and experiences in teaching?
 - 1.1 What does empirical research tell us about new teachers?
 - 1.2 What does empirical research tell us about veteran teachers?
 - 1.3 What do we understand about rural education?
 - 1.4 What educational policies have affected schools over the last 50 years?

The Research Process

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) stated that “qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive methods” in an effort to constantly seek better ways to make the studied “worlds of experience” more understandable (p. 12). The researcher approaches the

world with a set of ideas, a framework that specifies a set of questions that are then examined in specific ways (p. 11).

The theoretical framework that guided this study was constructivism. In an effort to adequately understand the individuals, their interactions, and the experiences present in an educational environment, I adopted a constructivist stance. Crotty referred to constructivism as “focusing exclusively on the meaning-making activity of the individual mind” (1998, p. 58). He pointed out, “Constructivism taken in this sense points up the unique experience of each of us. It suggests that each one’s way of making sense of the world is as valid and worthy of respect as any other. . .” (p. 58).

Schwandt (1994) suggested that researchers active in the research process should attempt to understand the “complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it” (p. 118). Schwandt (1994) described constructivist thinking by saying that “. . . we are all constructivists if we believe that the mind is active in the construction of knowledge. . . In this sense, constructivism means that human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as construct or make it” (p. 125).

Human beings construct knowledge in many ways; e.g., by being a part of a family and connected to a community. “Vygotsky’s views support the idea that to know a child, one must know the family. To know the family, one must know the community. To know the community, family, and child, one must have knowledge of the powerful societal forces affecting their lives” (Sanchez, 1999, p. 352). In this study, the teachers are an integral part of the community with personal and background knowledge of many of the students, their families, and certainly the culture and context in which they live. Sanchez stated, “According to Vygotsky, no human activity stands alone, unconnected, or independent of the social, historical, and cultural context”

(1999, p. 352). These circumstances aid in shaping an individual's view of the world and their role and purpose in the world (p. 352).

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), "The constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and subject create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures" (pp. 13-14). Following the constructivist paradigm, I used a variety of qualitative data collecting methods such as open-ended interviews, focus groups, and reflections to analyze the expectations and experiences of the seven new and veteran educators. My aim was to assume the role of both a participant and facilitator. In order to conduct the study in a natural setting, the interviews and focus groups were held in the schools and classrooms most familiar to the educators, thus allowing the researcher to be actively engaged in understanding each educator's 'lived experience' and adding to the trustworthiness of the inquiry and research analysis.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) described the multiple methodologies of qualitative research as a bricolage, or a compilation, and the researcher as a *bricoleur* (p. 2). A bricolage is defined as something that is made or put together with whatever materials happen to be available, and a *bricoleur*, according to Levi-Strass (1966) is a "kind of professional do-it-yourself person" (p. 17). Using these researchers' terms and views of qualitative research, the researcher, as the *bricoleur*, will produce a bricolage. This construction will go through "changes and take new forms as different tools, methods, and techniques are added to the puzzle" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). The *researcher-as-bricoleur* uses the methods, strategies, and resources at hand. The "use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question" (p. 2).

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) acknowledged that the product will be a pieced-together “collage-like creation” that represents the researcher’s understandings and interpretation of the experiences that were analyzed (p. 3). They refer to *bricoleurs* more as inventors recycling used fabric into beautiful quilts (p. 584). “The methods of qualitative research thereby become the ‘invention,’ the telling of the tales—the representation—becomes the art. . . We cobble together stories that we may tell each other, some to share our profoundest links with those whom we studied. . .” (p. 584).

Using this metaphor, I took the words of each participant and stitched a story of expectations and experiences. Each piece of fabric—a case—represented a particular person, place, and time; each piece of fabric necessary for the other; each joined together through art and science to qualitatively join the past and the future; a quilted study.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is in the potential to represent a hemline of teaching, pulling one end or the other has the potential to unravel the whole, i.e., a community of educators. The significance resides in the viewing of their ‘lived expectations’ and ‘lived experiences’ through a constructivist’s lens of what participants expected teaching to be like, what they experienced and are experiencing, and what the opportunity to reflect together meant to their practice. As *judgment* developed, the unique pieces of each educator formed a bricolage that was sewn together to form a quilt of a rural educator.

This study has the potential to shed light on the new and veteran rural educator as we listen to their combined voices. Few research articles reported opportunities for these two specific populations of teachers to engage and interact with the purpose of learning from their interaction while providing more insight into rural educators. Surveys, statistics, and

questionnaires cannot give us the personal individual answers that one-on-one interviews can when it comes to needing to know what teachers expect and experience. Cautions have been raised that teachers are not being prepared for what they find once they are in their profession, thus are not experiencing what they expected (Huberman, 1989; Kyriacou & Kunc, 2007; Leshem, 2008; McCann & Johannessen, 2004; Meister & Jenks, 2000;). We hear conflicting stories about support, changes in education, and what teachers are experiencing (Algozine, Gretes, Queen, Cowan-Hathcock, 2007; Fry, 2007; Kardos & Johnson, 2007; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). For these reasons, it is important to hear teachers' stories and. . . *view teaching and learning as a continuous process of reconstruction of experience (Dewey, 1938).*

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE



. . . an acquaintance with the past is a means of understanding the present.

John Dewey (1938)

The impulse to interview new and veteran teachers was linked directly to empirical research related to these two specific groups of educators. The research was reviewed and organized around two questions: What does empirical research tell us about new teachers? What does empirical research tell us about veteran teachers? An understanding of the history and characteristics of rural education, in particular, was also identified as significant for developing the study. Using the time frame of the life experiences of the participants, starting with *Sputnik* and ending with *No Child Left Behind*, this fabric of history and context will be spread across the table as the backing for the quilt.

Review of the Related Literature on New Teachers

What Does Empirical Research Tell Us About New Teachers?

As I researched the studies most pertinent to new teachers, the following four critical elements emerged: (1) new teachers' perceptions of their induction programs; (2) views on

mentoring; (3) concerns with survival; and (4) teacher identity. The first section of this review will be organized to highlight understandings related to each element.

New teachers' perceptions of their induction program. In response to the 2003 *No Dream Denied* report (NCTAF), induction programs have become a valued strategy to retain and support new teachers. Induction programs include some variation of the following components: a mentor or supportive, experienced teacher; opportunities to collaborate with other teachers and observe other teachers; opportunities to be observed and receive feedback; and professional staff development.

Cherubini (2007) examined the perceptions of 173 beginning teachers in Ontario participating in induction programs. Fry (2007) looked at the highs and lows of induction through the eyes of four 1st-year teachers using case study. Algozzine et al. (2007) targeted all the third-year teachers in 14 school systems in North Carolina to evaluate the perceptions of beginning teachers on the effectiveness of the induction activities made available to them. Smith and Ingersoll (2004) analyzed data from the 1999-2000 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), a national study that includes data from approximately 52,000 elementary and secondary teachers.

Cherubini (2007) reported four core categories emerged: their teacher induction exceeded their expectations, they appreciated the meaningful support they received, they recognized teacher leadership, and they felt a distinct disconnect between their in-service experiences and their practice. Fry (2007) found that the new teachers had varied and inadequate forms of support during their first year. Each beginning teacher had different needs and therefore induction needed to be individualized instead of using a “one size fits all” professional development program. For example, one participant was strong in classroom management and would have benefited instead

from a class on teaching guided reading groups (p. 232). The four participants perceptions of their induction programs were that they were ineffective.

One specific result that Algozine et al. (2007) found was that matching beginning teachers with mentors from the same subject area and providing common planning are likely to produce very positive outcomes related to staying in teaching. Smith and Ingersoll (2004) documented this same result when they examined whether induction programs had positive effects on teacher retention. Their study found that providing mentors from the same field, having the common planning, enjoying opportunities for collaboration with other teachers on instruction, and being a part of an external network of teachers were effective in reducing teacher turnover (p. 706). All of these components have a common strand, new teachers benefiting from the experiences they share with other teachers. Therefore, time spent in opportunities to share with other new and veteran teachers seems to have been valuable. The NCTAF (2003) indicated that mentoring support has been shown to reduce attrition rates by more than two-thirds. Mentoring is an essential component of induction for new teachers.

Views on mentoring. New teachers place great value on the support they receive in the form of mentors. Gilbert (2005) worked with six Georgia school districts in 2003 and 2004 that were partnered in the Georgia Systemic Teacher Education Program (GSTEP) and engaged in various teacher induction activities, including a survey given to new teachers. Andrews, Gilbert, and Martin (2006) used the same survey but expanded it by administering the survey in two areas of the state. This time the survey was given to new teachers to examine the strategies they most valued, and also given to administrators to compare what support administrators thought new teachers received. Andrews and Quinn (2005) initiated a 21-item questionnaire to all the first-year teachers in a school district serving almost 60,000 students. One hundred thirty-five

teachers completed the survey. Watson (2006) developed a study in 1996 that grew out of a group of dissatisfied novice science teachers in North Carolina. Gehrke and McCoy (2007) focused on the persons and activities that supplied five first-year special education teachers with much needed and valued support. Through surveys, questionnaires, and in-depth interviews the researchers found similarities in the value new teachers placed on mentors, collaboration, and support systems.

Gilbert (2005) found the following results from a survey generated by a focus group in which 140 teachers were asked what strategies new teachers valued the most:

1. Giving new teachers the opportunity to observe other teachers.
2. Assigning mentors to new teachers.
3. Providing new teachers with feedback based on classroom observations.
4. Providing new teachers with co-planning time with other teachers.
5. Assigning new teachers to smaller classes.

The same survey was administered in 2004, with 222 teachers responding and listing the same five strategies, but in a slightly different order (Gilbert, 2005). Andrews et al used the same survey and the results indicated that administrators thought more support was being offered and only 50% of new teachers were receiving the four most highly valued supports. Andrews and Quinn's questionnaire revealed that first-year teachers with a mentor assigned perceived they received significantly more support than first-year teachers with no assigned mentor. Just as in the previous studies, Gehrke and McCoy (2007) reported that the five teachers valued having an assigned mentor, meeting regularly with others experiencing the same difficulties, and having training opportunities. In Watson's study, the teachers discovered that they were all experiencing the same problems; therefore, they formed a support group and worked together on a solution.

Andrews et al. summarized that the strategies new teachers most value relate to opportunities to collaborate with other teachers. Watson found that the 3 science teachers were still teaching 7 years after the study. The determination of these new unsupported teachers that inspired this study allowed them to find each other. Therefore, this study concluded that by focusing on the needs of beginning teachers and creating a supportive environment, retention was possible. Gehrke and McCoy's research indicated that the teachers relied on their own resourcefulness and the community of teachers available to them, emphasizing that all the teachers in their "village" added to their success.

Concerns with survival. Research suggests that there is a discrepancy between what new teachers expect and their actual teaching experience. Meister and Jenks (2000) conducted 11 focus group interviews with 42 non-tenured teachers. Three quarters of the participants in the study referred to student neediness and behavior problems when asked how teaching differed from their expectations. In 2003, a follow up to the previous study occurred when two hundred seventy-three teachers from 41 states responded to Meister and Melnick's internet survey regarding the concerns of first and second-year teachers. The same results were found indicating that teacher preparation programs need more focus on handling disruptive students and students with special needs; also, 25% felt unprepared following their student teaching experience; and 84% reported they feel sometimes "overwhelmed by the workload" (p. 92).

These results were consistent with those found by Gilles, Cramer, and Hwang (2001) when they collected interview data from first year teachers over a five-year period. The most common concern and largest sub-category was personal and professional survival. The second largest concern was discipline and management. Leshem (2008) acknowledged that it had been a long time since she was a novice and that each beginner's experience was unique, so she studied

and compared thirty accounts of critical incidents written by 5 novice teachers during their first year of teaching. Costigan (2005) explored the effects of research collected through reading journals of 38 teachers, 21 interviews, and finally an intense study focused on 3 urban teachers. The teachers felt that by being asked to teach prescribed lessons they were not allowed to explore a more beneficial curriculum or have a more meaningful practice. Kyiacou and Kunc (2007) explored the expectations that beginning teachers held of teaching as a career by analyzing the results of questionnaires completed by over 300 student teachers at the beginning and end of the year. Additionally, a sample of 28 student teachers were communicated with through email during their first 2 years of teaching. It is clear that the ‘agenda of expectations’ for beginning teachers interacts with the expectations they held at the outset and influences their views of teaching (p. 1252).

Leshem (2008) reflected that a first year teacher goes through “a transition from the known to the unknown, the anticipated and the unanticipated, the familiar and the unfamiliar, the change from observers to active participants, are all descriptors of first steps into teaching” (p.206). In discussing the 5 students’ expectations, one student revealed that she wanted to make a positive impact; three looked forward to ownership and autonomy, and another was full of energy and good intentions (p.206). The new teachers did not anticipate how much time had to be devoted to administrative tasks, while also coping with cumulative teaching responsibilities and the emotional or physical consequences associated with ‘the day’s teaching’ (p. 210).

According to Meister and Jenks (2008), for many of the participants in their study, this was their first job and their first experience in the adult world. They were, also, beginning other new phases of their life. They had assumed that they would find a “close-knit community,” but found instead a culture of isolation and competition. Costigan’s study found that first year

teachers invested their own lives in the students and were not satisfied with simply teaching for high-stakes testing results. Therefore, the study concluded that lived experiences and personal thinking processes of new teachers should be considered during the first years of teaching.

Kyriacou and Kunc's findings highlighted the importance of four key factors:

- ⇒ the management of the school
- ⇒ having sufficient time
- ⇒ pupil behavior
- ⇒ having a private life (2007, p. 1252)

This study indicated that more research is needed to explore how expectations change during the first few years and to what extent such expectations impact their decision to remain in the profession (p. 1253).

In a search by school leaders to shape both the quality and quantity of beginning teacher success, a study was done by Gimbert and Fultz (2008) in which 24 participants, including elementary, middle, and high school teachers, determined that new teachers place emphasis on the principal giving support, expectations, navigating the school culture, defining roles, and managing and securing resources. These were ranked according to what principals did or could have done to assist the new teachers in having a successful school year. Support was given a much higher rating than any of the other components. The study concluded that “by combining support, resources, mentoring, and professional development while unlocking and shaping tacit knowledge of school culture, job roles, and perceptions, quality principals facilitate the development of quality teachers” (p.6).

Teacher identity. Research also suggests that new teachers' expectations come from their own educational experiences. New teachers have an image of themselves as a teacher. The

studies in this section explore the transition of how new teachers construct and reconstruct their identity. Through research based on previous studies, interviews, questionnaires, reports and surveys the next set of five studies highlighted in this review provide a look into the struggles and successes new teachers encounter on their way to becoming experts.

Kagan (1992) reviewed 40 learning-to-teach studies focusing on pre-service teachers transitioning to in-service teachers. Flores and Day (2006) examined the ways identities were shaped and reshaped in 14 new teachers during their first 2 years of teaching. Through interviews, questionnaires, teacher written reports, and pupil essays addressing the changes in their teachers, results suggest that new teachers have to form their “professional identity.” McCann and Johannessen (2004) interviewed 11 novice high school English teachers over a 2-year period. The interviews focused on significant frustrations that can influence a new teacher to leave the profession and the supports and resources that can influence new teachers to remain in the profession. Kardos and Johnson (2007) examined the experiences of a random sample of 486 teachers from four states in their first two years of teaching. Herbert and Worthy (2001) did a case study based on the successful first year experiences of a physical education teacher.

Kagan’s (1992) research found that pre-service teachers enter teacher education programs with images of good teachers, images of themselves as teachers, and memories of past educational experiences. Kagan stated, “For professional growth to occur, prior beliefs must be modified and reconstructed” (p. 142). Flores and Day (2006) reported when discussing their findings that the teachers continually referred to the gap between ‘ideals’ and the ‘real world’ of schools and classrooms, which could be viewed as new teachers’ expectations when entering the classroom and their actual experiences (p. 7). Their own school experiences and beliefs contribute to their identity of what it means to them to be a teacher. New teachers find

themselves conforming to the norms of the school, which could be in conflict with what they imagined it to be. McCann and Johannessen (2004) found that classroom management, a challenge to define themselves, and developing a “performing self” were the concerns of the new teachers in their study (p. 139). Also, a discrepancy was revealed between the new teachers’ expectations and the realization of the actual experience (p. 140). The actual experience greatly diverged from what they anticipated (p. 141). These feelings have been echoed throughout the research.

Kardos and Johnson (2007) examined responses from a mailed survey and found that “nearly half of the teachers in the four states (49 percent) report that they plan their lessons and teach their classes alone” (p. 2094). Not only do half of these new teachers work in isolation, but also they perceive that they are expected to be “expert and independent” and as effective as experienced teachers (p. 2096). Less than 50% report that extra assistance is available to them. Herbert and Worthy (2001) followed a teacher through her first year with the purpose of answering the question, “What is it like to be a first year teacher?” The researchers and the teacher explain this successful first year with the teacher’s perceived match between her expectations and the realities that she experienced in the workplace, and her personality. She was familiar with the school from her pre-service experience, she became a part of and involved in the culture of the school, and she did not experience problems with student behavior or class management. Also, her yearlong student teaching experience gave her confidence. These factors are certainly not always possible, but can certainly enhance the chances for success for new teachers.

Flores and Day’s (2006) results suggested that new teachers face a difficult challenge to define themselves. McCann and Johannessen’s (2004) teachers expressed concerns when the

actual experience as teachers diverged greatly from the experience they had anticipated (p. 141). Only one study gave us a positive example of a new teacher finding exactly what she expected. Because of this discrepancy, we must help pre-service teachers transition from not only their “student identity” to “teacher identity,” but also from their pre-conceived idea of what being a teacher will be like to what it really is or could be. Once the initial shock wears off, it is up to the new teacher and the support staff to give direction and encouragement. Maybe part of our work is to help new teachers avoid “the shock” on this journey to becoming a competent teacher.

Review of the Related Literature on Veteran Teachers

What Does Empirical Research Tell Us About Veteran Teachers?

The next section of this review of the literature focuses on veteran teachers. Four critical elements related to the professional work of veteran teachers are identified and presented:

(1) teachers’ professional life cycles; (2) job satisfaction; (3) honoring veteran teachers’ stories; and (4) bringing together the experiences of new and veteran teachers.

Teachers’ professional life cycles. The cycles, seasons, or stages of a teacher’s career does not easily fit into categories and divisions that have been created through research. However, just as in research that describes the characteristics of a first child, middle child, or last child, there do seem to be distinct similarities when studying the stages a teacher goes through when he or she continues in the teaching profession for an extended period of time. Everyone is unique. Not every teacher goes through all the stages or at the same period in their career. However, stage theories help us organize phases teachers may experience.

In an effort to better understand what teachers are going through, Huberman (1993) looked at a teacher’s entry into the field of education as phase 1: beginnings (p. 35). This is when teachers experience a period of “survival and discovery” (Huberman, 1989, p. 349). The new

teachers have a “reality shock” between what they expected teaching to be like and what they are actually experiencing (p. 349). Huberman (1993) discussed the external pressures of finishing teacher-related studies and responsibilities at home as adding to the stress of being a new teacher. The teachers in his study perceived themselves as “poorly serving two masters” and tried to achieve balance (p. 36). Phase 2: stabilization and commitment signified the following:

- ⇒ A permanent contract (formal appointment);
- ⇒ A psychological commitment – the resolution to adopt teaching as one’s career;
- ⇒ The consolidation of an instructional repertoire, often acquired painfully;
- ⇒ A feeling of autonomy: ‘I have *my* pupils; I can do pretty much as I please. No more “inspections.” I’m free’ (p.36).

This phase two stage of exploration accepts responsibility and is seen as making “the choice of professional identity” (Huberman, 1989, p. 349). Making use of “one’s newly-acquired sense of instructional mastery” and a “fear of stagnation” motivates teachers described as experiencing this cycle of their career (p. 352).

Phase 3 is the “stock-taking” phase. It correlates roughly with 12 to 20 years of experience or to 32-45 years of age. It is implied to be felt more strongly by male teachers, has been described as a “diversification” period, and even compared to a self-questioning stage or “mid-life” crisis (Huberman, 1989, p. 352). The serenity phase follows, which is a self-accepting, reflective time in a teacher’s career. The gap is reduced between one’s career goals and one’s achievements (p. 353). This fourth stage can also be viewed as the conservatism stage. Finally, the stage of disengagement, where there is a resistance to change and a withdrawal toward the end of one’s professional career (p. 353). The disengagement can be viewed as tranquil and calm or resentful and sour. The next few studies refer back to these stages in a

teacher's career, but it needs to be reiterated that every teacher is different and may not experience these cycles.

Job satisfaction. “Teacher job satisfaction has been shown to be a predictor of teacher retention, a determinant of teacher commitment, and, in turn, a contributor to school effectiveness” (Shann, 1998, p. 67). In this search to understand why veteran teachers stay in the profession, it was encouraging to find studies reporting most teachers are satisfied in their occupation of choice, most would choose it again, and the satisfaction came from working with students. Through surveys and interviews the studies revealed teachers found personal and professional satisfaction from working with children and the support they needed through other teachers.

Brunetti (2001) surveyed 169 high school teachers and interviewed 28 with 15+ years of experience to discover that they were highly satisfied with their jobs. They enjoyed working with young people and watching them learn and grow (p. 68). Their work with students was the “single most powerful motivator of their persistence” (p. 57). One male teacher on the verge of retirement commented, “I’ve looked forward to going to work every day. . .” and 57.1 percent said they would choose teaching again as a profession (p. 57). According to Huberman’s stages, the teachers had achieved serenity in their work, were confident in their ability to teach, and seemed to have reached Maslow’s top stage in his hierarchy of basic needs, self-actualization (p. 69).

The U.S. Dept. of Education’s National Center for Statistics surveyed teachers with ten years of experience in a longitudinal study and found:

- ⇒ 93% expressed overall satisfaction with their job;
- ⇒ 90% would choose teaching again as a career;

⇒ 67% (2 out of 3) would remain a teacher for the rest of their working life (Wine, Cominole, Wheelless, Dudley, & Franklin, 2006, p. 45).

These studies suggested that there is an “over-the-hump” point for teachers that tends to predict a high rate of retention in the profession due to overall job satisfaction.

Shann (1998) used interviews and questionnaires from 92 teachers in 4 urban middle schools to assess teacher satisfaction and found teacher-pupil relationships ranked highest overall (p. 72). Shann said, “What middle school teachers liked first and foremost about their jobs was their students” (p. 72). Marston, Courtney, and Brunetti (2006) examined similarities and differences between two groups of experienced elementary teachers in California and Pennsylvania. Both groups had mean scores of 3.75 and higher, using a 4 point scale, for the following items: satisfaction in working with young people, satisfaction in seeing young people learn and grow, and satisfaction in being successful at something they enjoy (p. 118). Another source of satisfaction that motivated both groups of teachers to remain in the classroom were social factors such as valuing relationships with colleagues (p. 123). This study descended from the work of Huberman (1993) and his life history studies in which “by more clearly defining the different stages of development for teachers, it would be possible for them to increase self-awareness and affect their life decisions constructively” (p. 112).

Goldberg and Proctor (2000) in response to the need to guarantee that the voices of master teachers on the subject of recruitment and retention be heard, surveyed 400 National and State Teachers of the Year. “The single most important factor in the respondents’ original decisions to become teachers was their desire to work with children” (p. 4). When asked about the changes needed to retain veteran teachers, “a majority (83%) of the Teachers of the Year reported that school administrator support and better pay would encourage experienced teachers

to continue teaching. Seventy-three percent cited a great need for having an active role in school decision-making” (Goldberg & Proctor, 2000, p. 8). Other notable responses were that 82% identified technology as an area of professional development need for experienced teachers, but that teachers need to be surveyed to determine what professional development would be helpful, otherwise it can be seen as a “waste of time” (p. 8).

Miretzky (2007) reaffirmed those responses when she interviewed 15 novice and veteran teachers. In the area of professional development, the district-imposed workshops “came in for special scorn because those usually involved significant amounts of teacher time and were non-negotiable” (p. 273). The teachers reported no link between the professional development activities they were required to attend and what they needed or were experiencing in the classroom; instead it was associated with pressure to improve test scores (p. 274). One teacher stated, “Our input is not valued” (p. 278). Teachers felt disconnected from policy discussions and desired to have more of a voice (p. 278).

In adding to the literature valuing teachers’ perspectives on their practice, another study by Brunetti (2006) and a study by Stanford (2001) reported resilience as the reason for teachers continued perseverance. Stanford interviewed 10 teachers with 10 to 33 years of experience who worked in the urban schools of Washington DC. The study listed the most prominent pattern to explain why teachers persevered was their love of and commitment to children (p. 81). The two themes that emerged were: veteran urban teachers persevere because of finding deep meaning in their work and through their sources of support. Brunetti (2006) surveyed 32 teachers and interviewed 13 teachers with more than 12 years of teaching experience in inner city high schools and found that the students and the personal and professional satisfaction gave the teachers the resilience to “stay the course” (p. 13).

Teachers leave the classroom for a variety of reasons, e.g., lack of support, disruptive students, the unmet expectations, but these studies give us some insight into why teachers stay in the profession and whether they are fulfilled and content. “Teacher satisfaction influences education reform, job performance, teacher persistence, and student performance” (Marston et al., 2006, p. 113).

Honoring veteran teachers’ stories. One does not have to search far to find journals and books honoring the stories of resilient, satisfied teachers. They sing their students’ praises and fill the reader with the desire to continue diligently in a career that can change the direction of child’s life. Levin (2001) and Muchmore (2001) did case studies to delve further into the lives of individual teachers, and an educational journal dedicated space to the stories of practicing teachers. Bisplinghoff (2002) added to these teachers’ stories by giving us a personal account of a veteran teacher changing from an elementary school teacher to a middle school teacher. As she reflects on her personal experiences with reading, she works through her feelings and challenges in a new situation. Hurst and Reding (1999) told us after composing a book about teachers’ stories that the most important way teachers keep “the light in their eyes” is from the love for their students (p. vii). These give us personal insight into the minds and thoughts of experienced teachers. Each participant offered stories that highlighted her/his educational experiences, and presented the reader with insight and understanding.

Levin (2001) described a longitudinal case study with a male, Caucasian teacher, Rick, who had 10+ years of experience. He taught in the same classroom and in the same school since he graduated. He taught fourth and fifth graders and has looped with his class in order to keep them for two years (p. 31). Rick found that teaching, learning, and sharing with his colleagues the “triumphs and tribulations” of his job and having an opportunity to talk about teaching, share

perspectives, and problem solve with peers changed his perspective and increased his job enjoyment (p. 33). Rick kept energized and challenged through his fellow educators.

Muchmore (2001) was involved in a collaborative research relationship with an experienced high school English teacher, Anna, for five years. This case study emphasized an understanding from the perspective of an *insider* looking around (p. 89). Utilizing personal observations, conversations, and interactions with a single teacher over an extended period of time led to an understanding of how a teacher's preparation does not last if it conflicts with who the teacher really is. The long-standing beliefs that are deeply rooted in a teacher's personal life experiences withstand the test of time and become the essence of who the teacher is as a person (p. 106). Muchmore stated, "Over time, then, it was her teaching practices that gradually changed, as she made concerted, career-long effort to develop a pedagogy that was consistent with her most deeply held beliefs" (p. 106). Therefore, this study illustrated how being a teacher involved the development of an inner awareness that ultimately will guide one's practice (p.107).

Bisplinghoff (2002) discussed her feelings and desire to "achieve professional confidence" as a teacher making a transition to become a middle school teacher (p. 243). Even with prior teaching experience, the move to a new school, grade, or area of study requires adjustment. She wrote, "My transition was not a gentle metamorphosis from elementary to middle school teacher. It was more like a daily twisting and turning. . ." (p. 243). In every new career or change in a profession, an incubation period exists, defined as a slow development of something, especially through thought and planning (Soukhanov, 2009). This veteran teacher's transition consisted of 'twisting and turning'; she persevered through reflection, "seeing my voice beginning to stand up for itself" and listening for her own drummers (Bisplinghoff, 2002, p. 252).

The English Journal (1996) published an issue honoring veteran teachers. A teacher from El Paso reflected that being young or old was not ideal in the high school classroom because you lose respect at either end; she suggested “getting off the stage” by sitting down and giving students a chance to learn on their own (p. 65). Two teacher-writers challenged veteran teachers to “hang out with the new kids on the block” by choosing a new teacher every year to meet and share ideas with (p. 54). An educator from Dallas suggested changing teaching positions and continuing to be a life-long learner (p. 67). In a writing project, elementary teachers taught a high school teacher who had 28 years of experience that hands-on is not anti-intellectual, community building is essential, children’s literature is a wonderful resource, and a teacher needs to focus on the students instead of the course content (p. 70). Finally, a teacher with 32 years of experience left us with this reflection “teaching is a craft, learned by apprenticeship, improved by experience” (p. 33). Sit down, hang out, and be open, this is the knowledge that veteran teachers can share with us through their stories.

Veteran teachers tell us that loving their students comes first, sharing with colleagues inspires and rejuvenates them, being a teacher involves using one’s own beliefs to guide his or her practice, and purposeful professional development and change has challenges and benefits. Educators are continually learning and reflecting what it means to be a teacher. “If we want to make education better for future students and teachers, we must continue to examine the lives of experienced teachers from their own perspectives and in the context of their own experiences and values” (Marston et al., 2006, p. 126).

Bringing together the experiences of new and veteran teachers. Schools need both, veteran teachers and new teachers. They need experience and wisdom in order to nurture the new and the eager. Research indicated that veteran teachers have important skills and knowledge that

need to be utilized and valued in order to encourage and prepare the next generation of teachers. So, now that we have looked together at the studies that share similarities and differences between new and veteran teachers and found that discipline and academic issues are more difficult for new teachers, but both new and veteran teachers value working with students and their relationships with colleagues, we can focus on research studies that examined opportunities for these two ends of the teaching experience spectrum to be brought together.

Gschwend and Moir (2007) described a successful induction program for high school teachers and told us that “one method for building collective efficacy in high schools is forging communities of practice that blur the lines between new and veteran teachers” (p. 22). Alvy (2005) discussed the value of retaining veteran teachers, not just new teachers. Johnson and Kardos (2005) discussed how school principals can bridge the gap between the goals and expectations of new and veteran teachers in order to improve teaching and learning (p. 8). A report presented at the National Commission of Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF) offered ideas for using veteran and retiring teachers in a flexible capacity to support new teachers through learning teams (2009).

Alvy stated, “Certainly, our emphasis on strategies to support and retain new teachers is vital, but we should not neglect our efforts to support and retain veteran teachers” (2005, p. 764).

He went on to list effective ways to encourage veteran teachers to stay in the profession:

- ⇒ shape and support a school culture that honors experience and wisdom
- ⇒ honor veterans through asking them to mentor new teachers
- ⇒ support them by offering mentoring “on the other end of one’s career”
- ⇒ promote creative job sharing and scheduling

- ⇒ promote differentiated professional growth to meet the needs of veteran teachers
- ⇒ use central office resources (pp. 765-771).

Alvy (2005) reminded us that mentoring is a two-way street: both parties benefit from the experience (p. 765). Veteran teachers can demonstrate varying teaching styles and strategies while new teachers bring with them the latest trends and techniques. Also mentioned in the article is the common criticism that veteran teachers are resistant to change. But, the author said that the reason may come from a “healthy skepticism based on experience” (p. 765). When the veteran teachers retire, the balance, maturity, perspective, insight, and experience goes with them, and it is not easily replaced (p. 771).

Johnson and Kardos (2005) discussed the two distinct generations of teachers in our schools. Both bring needed resources. A school must draw on the knowledge and skills of experienced teachers while capitalizing on the fresh ideas and energy of the new recruits (p. 8). When the veteran teachers were hired, long-term careers were the norm and few professional career choices existed for women and people of color (p. 9). As a result, public schools attracted the bright, talented, and determined at a relatively low cost. Now, both populations are recruited into banking, law, medicine, and all other careers. Also, society has changed in such a way that young people expect to have many careers (p. 9). In a random-sample survey given by Johnson & The Project of the Next Generation of Teachers (2004) to teachers in six states, between 33 and 48 percent of teachers were entering the profession from another line of work instead of college (p. 9). This information lets us know that teachers may start in education and leave to pursue other careers; however, we will also benefit from people who enter other professions and realize that they want to be a teacher. The maturity and previous life and job experiences will enhance and add to the fabric of a school’s faculty and knowledge base.

School leaders are beginning to focus on teaming new and veteran teachers so that planning together and collaborative teaching will naturally occur. After all, new and veteran teachers have the same job description and can empower and energize each other. “Bridging the generation gap among teachers can provide support for new teachers, leading to higher retention rates. Simultaneously, it can ensure that before they retire, experienced teachers bestow a legacy of skills and knowledge on the schools and their successors” (Johnson & Kardos, 2005, p. 5).

Understanding Rural Education

What Do We Understand about Rural Education?

Rural schools have a long history of significance in education in the United States. Economic, cultural, and historic diversity form the differences between each system, but commonalities provide the characteristics that determine a rural school community (Sampson, 2005, p. 1). A few characteristics of rural communities would be areas with an economic reliance on agriculture industries, located away from concentrated populations, with few shopping choices, and who may have difficulty recruiting high quality teachers (Monk, 2007, p. 155).

“Rural schools have long struggled with attracting and retaining teachers. The federal *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 adds to this challenge by requiring that every public school teacher be “highly qualified” by the end of the 2005-6 school year” (Rural Education, 2004, p. 2). “Under NCLB a teacher is highly qualified in a core academic area if she holds a bachelor’s degree, a teaching license, and demonstrates knowledge in every subject area in which she teaches” (Eppley, 2009, p. 2). NCLB is a reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) of 1965 and the legislation that shaped the definition of what a highly qualified teacher would look like came from the *Nation at Risk* of 1983, *Goals 2000* of 1994, and others including the NCLB of 2001 (p. 4). Along with recruiting and retaining competent

teachers, rural schools also have to contend with varying state funding formulas that seem to favor bigger and more prosperous school districts (p. 3).

Rural schools and communities, in many states, are disadvantaged by public school funding and face harsh economic challenges (Dayton, 1998, p. 142). “Poorer rural areas are significantly disadvantaged in political battles with more populous and wealthy metropolitan areas” since the U. S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Reynolds v. Sims* (1964) “establishing the one man, one vote principle” (p. 143). “Without the political influence that results from substantial voting power or wealth, rural school districts will have a limited voice in seeking legislative remedies for rural funding problems” (p. 144). With a need to obtain greater funding equity, litigation may be the only remaining option that could increase the rural share of the state’s resources if legislators ignore the difficulties of rural schools (p. 144).

In a report by Save the Children (2002), approximately 2.5 million rural children in the United States are poor (p. 8). Americans are accustomed to visualizing poverty in urban areas because magazines, newspapers, and television constantly report the struggles people face in urban cities. However, the public’s image of rural life is a slow, easy lifestyle filled with family get-togethers and the town gathering for a home football game. Even though activities such as these do take place, “many rural areas suffer from limited employment, income lag, underdevelopment of human resources, inadequate infrastructure, a continuing financial crisis in agriculture, a weakening political base, and population loss” (Dayton, 1998, p. 145). The opportunities for students after completing high school are limited and those completing college may need to search elsewhere for options and diversity in their career choices. According to the Population Reference Bureau (PRB):

Although child poverty conjures up an urban image for most Americans, one-fifth of children in poverty live in rural areas. Poverty rates are higher for rural than for urban children, and the gap has increased in recent years. . . And, while many people move in and out of poverty as their circumstances change, spells of poverty last longer for rural children. They are the “forgotten fifth” of poor children because most programs and policies to help the poor are focused on urban areas. (O’Hare, 2009, p. 1)

Nationally, 22% of our nation’s rural children were reported to be living in poverty in 2007, compared to 17% of our nation’s urban children (O’Hare, 2009, p.1).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in 2003, rural students in the areas of reading and mathematics perform at similar levels in the 4th and 8th grade with their peers in suburban schools and slightly better than their peers when compared to urban schools; however, a troubling finding in 1998-99 was that even though rural schools posted the highest graduation rate of 12th graders when compared to suburban and urban schools, their students were the least likely to attend colleges (Rural Education, 2004, p. 1). This may be explained by economics or by many other factors; however, it could be accounted for by what Bauch (2001) described as students who identify so strongly with their rural community that leaving it to seek higher education or to follow a career path might not be desirable (p. 5). He discussed this feeling of having a ‘sense of place’ and the value of social capital in a small community. As far as teachers developing a ‘sense of place’ and continuing to stay, Collins (1999) discussed the fact that rural teachers who become involved in the community (make an investment) are influenced to remain (p. 3). A ‘sense of place’ is strong.

One draw, or reason, to encourage new teachers to want to choose to work in a rural community could be a desire to be near family and friends, a return to a comfortable setting.

Education, as a profession, can offer college graduates from rural communities the opportunity to return to the community. Monk (2007) suggested a “grow-your-own” strategy to help with the need for teachers in hard-to-staff rural school districts (p. 169). This idea takes advantage of students in rural high schools aspiring to be teachers with tendencies to prefer to return “home” to teach (p. 169).

In 2003, the social and cultural ties to their communities, local histories, and the reflections of the residents’ values, along with being situated outside of urban and suburban areas, designated one-third of Georgia’s schools as rural (Sampson, 2005, p. 1). Rural schools become the place where the community comes together to interact and enjoy the accomplishments and talents of their children and to discuss public issues. The benefits of a rural education come from opportunities to take on leadership roles, play on sports teams, and participate in extra-curricular activities, in addition to the feeling of being safe and connected to a community. Teachers in rural areas often become innovative with instruction such as combining subjects and in the grouping of students. Yet, long bus rides and poverty are two struggles associated with students in rural schools because “15 percent of Georgia’s rural children live in poverty. Often rural schools have limited staff, scarce resources, and a sparse tax base” (Sampson, 2005, p. 2). According to the National Rural Education Association Report (2006), as a result of Sputnik and the Cold War, the consolidation of high schools was considered to be a move in the right direction to increase international competitiveness, and the larger schools were, also, thought to be more cost-effective and to offer increased curriculum choices (pp. 40-41). Community resistance was ignored and regarded as not knowing what was best; however, Cotton (1999) did a quantitative study of the literature and in her analysis determined many advantages to attending small schools: academic achievement is equal to or

better, positive student attitudes, student social behavior, levels of extracurricular participation, attendance, greater sense of belonging, higher self-concepts, positive interpersonal relationships, lower dropout rate, and the same college preparation and opportunities, among others (pp. 12-13). There is controversy and concern about whether bigger is better and what the best guide should be for how many students in one school is too few or too many.

As a result of consolidation, Georgia has the largest rural schools in the nation, and they serve families that struggle with poverty and live long distances from the schools (Sampson, 2005, p. 2). In 2001, it was determined that eighty-five percent of the elementary students that attend rural schools in Georgia ride the bus longer than thirty minutes, the maximum time recommended for elementary students, and twenty-five percent rode longer than an hour (p. 2). These extended distances can bring on feelings of detachment by the families and can hinder communication between home and school (p. 2). However, one of the positive aspects of rural schools is the connection to their community.

Some rural schools in Georgia have become very active within the community. Screven County Middle School students and teachers present a living timeline to 3,000 visitors each year through their “A Walk Through Time” project (Sampson, 2005, p. 3). Hancock Central High School partnered with Georgia’s Rural Entrepreneurship through Action program and produced spirit towels with the school’s mascot to sell at school-sponsored events (p. 4). Another example of this would be the Foxfire program, which is named for a student-produced magazine containing stories and interviews gathered from the elders in the southern Appalachian community (NGE, 2005, p.1). This educational approach rooted in the study and service of the community, is an example of how a school system embraced their heritage and culture.

This approach to education follows John Dewey's guidelines in encouraging the student to be central in the educational process by developing a purpose, along with assistance and guidance, and formulating a plan of action that allows the student to be an active learner, teacher, and evaluator in his or her own educational experience (NGE, 2005, p.4). "There is, I think, no point in the philosophy of progressive education which is sounder than its emphasis upon the importance of the participation of the learner in the formation of the purposes which direct his activities in the learning process" (Dewey, 1938, p. 67)

These students, with the ultimate goal of producing a magazine from stories in their community, interviewed citizens on topics such as preserving and cooking food, folklore, farming, religion, community life, beekeeping, ghost stories, personal histories, hunting, weaving, music, and burial customs (NGE, 2005, p. 2). These experiences are an example of what Dewey (1938) meant when he said that it is important to be informed about the past in order to better understand the present (p. 78). The articles were later published into more than twelve books, a play, and movie. The magazine continues to be published. This "movement in social history and education that reflects a desire to integrate cultural appreciation" created an interactive and engaging learning environment that was student generated and completed in a rural North Georgia community (NGE, 2005, p. 4).

Today, technology and accountability have begun to provide opportunities for growth and academic improvement in rural areas while the uniqueness of each community is still embedded in the experience that a rural education offers. The teachers have become the mediators between the curriculum and the lived experiences in the classroom (Eppley, 2009, p. 1). They identify the importance of helping children to be able to fit into a larger context or world. (p. 1). As rural

communities become better understood and embraced, the present and future educators who fill each classroom will have a clearer understanding of what they might expect and experience.

Timeline of Educational Policies

What Educational Policies have Affected Schools over the Last 50 Years?

Culture, economics, politics, and education are factors that have affected the expectation and experiences of teachers over the last fifty years. So, by ‘delving into our roots’ we can assess the direction in which education is going while examining where it has been.

In this study, the term “Baby Boomers” means those born during the years 1946 to 1964. The Baby Boomers born between the years of 1946 to 1954 might recall memorable events such as the assassinations of JFK, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, Jr., the first walk on the moon, the Vietnam War, anti-war protests, sexual freedom, the civil rights and women’s movement, and the experimentation of various intoxicating recreational substances. The Baby Boomers born between the years of 1955 to 1964 might recall memorable events such as Nixon resigning, the Cold War, the oil embargo, raging inflation, and gasoline shortages. The veteran teachers that I interacted with and learned from in this study all fell in this generation. These teachers are now between the ages of 44 to 62.

The next generation, so-called “Generation X,” defines those born between the years of 1965 to 1982. These teachers born in Generation X were primarily the first to confront a more accelerated culture and the widespread definitive societal changes attached to the times. While working mothers, single parents, and divorce always existed, this was the first generation to deal with them en masse. These teachers are now between the ages of 26 to 43.

The “Millennium Generation” or “Generation Y” refers to the generation born between the years of 1983 to 1997. They are now between the ages of 11 to 25, and are absorbed in a

technological culture, which is constantly expanding and changing at unprecedented rates. The new teachers in this study emerge primarily from this generation.

In an effort to understand where each generation is invested, it is imperative to examine educational and legal policy issues, which have had significant affects over the last fifty years. This is an era of constant and sometimes extreme change, from the dawning of the Space Age to the policies of the 21st Century, from Sputnik to No Child Left Behind.

We have learned important lessons and seen progress as we have taken this walk through our past. Fifty years ago, fear brought on our need to improve schools. Since then our nation has experienced moments of celebration and moments of conflict. The preparation of our youth is an area that we will continue to strive to make one of our nation's strengths. The latest reform movement, NCLB, was originally the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* of 1965. Since then our nation and lawmakers have struggled to improve it with each generation of students (see Appendix A).

Conclusion

The teachers on each end of the professional experience continuum have been the focus of this literature review through empirical research, understanding the rural community, and educational policies. Evidence has been provided for the level of support new and veteran teachers need and the opportunities that keep them invested in their profession and their students.

Consistently the literature calls our attention to: expectations, discipline issues, the need for support, the enjoyment teachers experience from the personal and professional relationships with their peers, and job satisfaction from working with students. We continually heard from both voices, from new and veteran teachers, discussing what they expected teaching to be like, what they were experiencing, and what the opportunity to reflect together could mean to their

practice. Communication, conversations, teachers talking, what would they say to each other? Could we learn from listening to what each one of them experienced this year, last year, or 30 years ago? We must honor the beginning, the continuing process, and the closure in a profession that matters so much to the success of each generation.

The voices and stories from rural schoolteachers were not mentioned as much as those from urban school systems. Teachers in urban areas have much to teach us about struggles and ‘keeping the path.’ But, rural educators are unique in their ties to the community, their desire to continue teaching in the same school system, and the support they can provide for each other. This study produces insight and understanding of new and veteran teachers who come together around a table in the late afternoons during the school year in a rural county to interact and discern what is important to them individually and together. The methods used for studying this particular, personal, and professional opportunity are addressed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY



Old books and stories tell of neighbors all being invited to a quilting.

A qualitative case study approach was used for determining the participants and reporting the data that were collected from seven educators at two schools in a rural school system in Georgia. Guided by the theoretical framework of constructivism, the data collection was founded on the conceptual framework of John Dewey's focus on experiences. Narrative inquiry became the key strategy for data analysis. Data collection occurred during the 2008-2009 school year. At the time of the study, six participants were classroom teachers and one was a school counselor. At the end of the 2008-2009 school year, one teacher retired. Data were gathered through multiple sources to add trustworthiness to the findings. Seven individual case studies were reconstructed as narratives from the data collected through the two interviews with each of the participants, the four focus groups, and the reflections.

The literature review in the previous chapter detailed the empirical knowledge base associated with new and veteran teachers, offered a backdrop of understandings related to rural education, and presented a historical glimpse into educational policies that have and are

influencing schooling. With this foundation, the guiding question directing this study gains additional momentum. Our communities want to know: What do new and veteran teachers have to say to us about their expectations and experiences in teaching?

About the Researcher

In 1982, I was hired as a middle school teacher in a system with one elementary school, one intermediate school, and one high school. New teacher support systems were desperately missing from my first year of teaching. The other “new” teacher in my school that year happened to have a lot of teaching experience; she was just new to the county. Our desks were in the same room. She taught me how to cut out letters without a stencil, how important it was to understand classroom behaviors, and was my mentor whether she knew it or not. By design, I had the same planning time as all of the other language arts teachers in the school. So we sat, talked, and graded our papers together every day in the teachers’ lounge because another class was taking up our classrooms in this overcrowded school, collaboration across grade levels occurred before it was mentioned in the literature.

Today, I am a veteran teacher with 23 years of experience, but the veteran teachers I encountered that first year and in the years to come seemed to know everything, and have become somewhat ‘legends’ in my mind. They are still teaching, and have seen our schools through accreditation, policy changes, leadership issues, and are the teachers I ran to when I decided to do a pilot study involving new and veteran teachers. They are the ones I think of when I contemplate all of the knowledge silently walking out the door when they retire.

During my last year of teaching, a new science teacher was placed on my team, right across the hall from me. She needed me constantly. We talked between classes; we spent our planning times together; we solved problems, and we bonded. I truly enjoyed the total experience

of being there for this new teacher, and her engaging me and reinvigorating me with new ideas and strategies. I needed a push toward the 'new'. She was an excellent teacher with a wonderful education from a nearby university who needed help on a daily basis. She was a part of the GSTEP Program (the system-wide induction program), co-planned with the other sixth grade science teachers, and worked in a team concept with two other teachers and me. We had a great experience. But, that does not mean that she was not frustrated, stressed, and over-whelmed most of the time.

Without a new teacher being placed on my team during my last year of teaching, I would not have realized how the changes in education were affecting new teachers. This experience fueled my desire to study new teachers who come into teaching with so much energy, enthusiasm, and new ideas, but seem to get discouraged enough to leave within a few years. Additionally, because I had so much respect for veteran teachers' accumulation of knowledge and so much confusion over their relative voiceless existence, I had a desire to study veteran teachers. Therefore, I chose a cross-generational study, which includes teachers at the beginning and end of their profession. I had chosen the main characters and needed to decide on the setting.

I have many connections with rural schools in Georgia. I was a rural schoolteacher in Georgia for twenty years. My children were educated in rural schools. Also, my father started his business of selling audiovisual equipment to schools in rural areas of Georgia forty years ago, and I have been working for him these last four years in seventeen Northeast Georgia counties. My educational experiences as a teacher, my background, and my heart beats to the rhythm of the rural schools in Georgia.

The most challenging aspect of this study, for me as the researcher, and an ethical issue as well, was to listen, observe, and analyze data from reflections, lists, and audio taped

interviews and focus group transcripts. I had the desire to offer suggestions to the teachers and get them help when they presented classroom issues. But knowing that I had these subjectivities, I tried to use Alan Peshkin's excellent example and just write what I actually heard and left the research results to the data analysis. In a personal narrative, a Keynote Address, made by Alan Peshkin on experiencing subjectivity, he explains that his affective state, his history and biography invariably created the dynamic composite he calls subjectivity. He says that he could not shed it, but he dealt with it, managed it, grappled with it, and understood it. He just could not shed it (Peshkin, 1992).

My sensitivities included my teaching experience, my experience as a mother of three, my background in education, and my beliefs. In addition, I believe that each new and veteran teacher with a passion to teach children should be encouraged and supported through this endeavor. My goal was to conduct my research as an insider, observing my participants in their natural setting. My relationship to the participants in my study was as a participant-observer and research coordinator. The goal of the research was to add knowledge and insight into the expectations and experiences of new and veteran teachers.

Overview of the Research Plan

In a rural southern school district in Northeast Georgia, sixteen teachers volunteered to participate in the study. These teachers worked in the primary (K–2) or elementary school (3–5). The six new teachers who volunteered had one to two years of teaching experience. The eight veteran teachers who volunteered had 21 to 30 years of teaching experience. I limited the participants for the study to less than 10 in order to give each teacher the amount of time they deserved to tell their story and for the focus group to be small enough for each participant to have an opportunity to share and respond. Therefore, I asked the four teachers with the least

amount of experience and the four teachers with the most experience to be the participants. One new teacher and four veteran teachers were located at the Primary school and the other three new teachers taught at the Elementary school. The eight participants completed a consent form (see Appendix B).

We began learning together in the 2008–2009 school year. A combination of sources and methods of data collection were used. The study began with an individual open-ended interview conducted with each participant. Interviews were conducted at the two school sites, in the individual educators classroom or office, in order to better understand the local environment that shaped the participant's experiences. After the first interviews were completed, the new teacher at the primary school moved to Alabama and withdrew from the study leaving me with four veteran teachers at the Primary school and three new teachers at the Elementary school. Her initial interview was not included in the study. There was a second individual open-ended interview that took place near the end of the 2008–2009 school year. All of the interviews lasted approximately an hour and were audio-recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were returned to the participants to check for accuracy, to add comments, and to make clarifications as needed.

Four times during the school year, twice in the fall and twice in the spring, these participants came together in a focus group setting to discuss topics pertinent to their present teaching experiences. Two of the focus groups were held at the Primary school and two were held at the Elementary school. They were held on different days and at different times in order to respect the participants' individual commitments and schedules and to have the most participants present as possible. In an effort to reflect on the topics discussed, each teacher had a few minutes

at the end of the focus groups to write down their thoughts and reactions to the discussion. These reflections were included in the final analysis.

Profile of the Community

Filled with pastures, pines, and clusters of buildings and businesses, this large county in Northeast Georgia includes an occasional red light and a few scattered towns. Its 14,000 citizens are spread out over a varied landscape containing small rural communities connected by county roads. On average, the families make less than most in Georgia; there are few doctors and no hospital; but the low crime rate and slow, easy atmosphere encourages families to put down roots. The school system has a low dropout rate and a high percentage of the seniors eligible for HOPE. The opportunity to hear the educators' stories in this rural county provided the setting for this study.

The district serves a student population that is 75% White, 18% Black, with the remaining 7% distributed fairly equally between the Hispanic and Multi-Racial. Of those students, 47 % are reported as economically disadvantaged, 13 % with disabilities, and 1 % as English Language Learners. Consolidation for this county took place in 1954 while the integration of schools began slowly in 1967 and was complete by 1973.

In the 2008-2009 school year, the district reported having 2,500 students and 166 teachers. The school system had a Primary, Elementary, Middle, and High School. This study focuses on the Elementary and Primary Schools. There were 571 elementary students with 35 teachers and 549 primary students with 41 teachers. In 2007, the district did not make Adequate Yearly Progress, but the Elementary and Primary schools did. Both of these schools were Title I schools. According to the Georgia Parent Information and Resource Center, Title I schools are defined as "schools where at least 35 % of the children in the school (more than one third) are

from low-income families. This is determined by the number of children who are eligible to receive free and reduced-price lunch at the school. Over half of all schools in Georgia are designated as Title I” (p. 1).

These two rural Georgia schools have each established a mission for their school. Jamison Primary School’s mission statement is: Our mission is to provide a varied and challenging program that guides each child toward success. Listed below this general statement are over ten beliefs, for example: We believe all students can learn and succeed when learning is relevant to their lives; when they are actively involved in their learning; and when they are challenged at a pace and manner appropriate to their styles of learning and stage of development. Jamison Elementary School’s mission statement is: Education is the shared responsibility of school and community. By putting children first, we accept the responsibility to provide a varied and challenging program, to accept all students as individuals, and to guide them toward successful achievement. Therefore, our mission is to establish a strong foundation for lifelong learning. With the research site set, choosing the participants for this research study became the focus.

Profile of the Participants

Participants in this study were purposefully selected. The criteria required participants to be: (a) an educator in Jamison County who presently worked at the Primary or Elementary school, (b) an educator with fewer than three years of experience (defined in this study as a new teacher) or more than 20 years of experience (defined in this study as a veteran teacher) (c) willing to be interviewed twice and participate in focus groups, thereby donating six hours of his or her time during the 2008-2009 school year.

The seven participants, four veteran educators from the Primary school (three teachers and one counselor with teaching experience) and three new teachers from the Elementary school were a diverse sample in terms of gender, age, and experience level. Table 1 provides a general overview of the participants, including the participants' college or university, majors and degrees, years of experience, age, gender, family make-up, and the number of school systems where they have taught. Table 2 was designed to provide a look at what each teacher was experiencing over the last 35 years (see Appendix C). Table 2 lists when the teachers started college, student taught, and began teaching; it even lists when two of the participants were born.

The veterans taught in one school and the new teachers in another. That was not done purposefully; it just worked out that way. Participants included six females and one male from two schools in the same county who ranged in age from 24 to 55 and had taught either two years or 28+ years. Each participant will be introduced to you starting with the four veteran teachers and ending with the three new teachers, from oldest in age to youngest. The veterans are numbered one through four and the new teachers will be five through seven. Because all participants were assured confidentiality, the names used in this study are pseudonyms. Each participant was asked to choose a pseudonym for him or herself. The researcher decided on the pseudonym for the school system and county. Each case begins with the first interview, moves to the focus groups and reflections, and ends with the final interview.

Case Study and Research Design

In order to find a methodology that best suited a research study that included the expectations and experiences of new and veteran teachers and was dedicated to honor each individual voice, I looked at qualitative methods that included individual interviews, focus

Table 1

General Overview of the Participants

Participant	College	Major and Degrees	Years of experience	Age	Gender	Married	Children	Number of School Systems taught in
Mr. White	Georgia Southern	BSED in Social Sciences, Masters in Counseling, Theology, and Admin.	29	55	M	yes	2	7
Ms. Mountcastle	UGA	BSED and Masters in Interrelated Sp. Ed., Masters in ECE	31	54	F	no	1	1
Ms. Adamson	UGA	BSED in ECE	31	54	F	yes	2	1
Ms. Jones	North Georgia College	BSED in ECE	30	52	F	yes	3	2
Ms. Dixon	Stephen F. Austin, UGA, and Piedmont	BSED in Ag. Business, Math, and Masters in Animal Science	2	41	F	yes	2	1
Ms. Stewart	UGA	BSED in ECE	2	24	F	no	0	1
Ms. Smith	Piedmont	BSED in ECE	2	24	F	yes	0	1

Table 2

Participants Overlapping Timeline over the Last 35 Years

Years	Mr. White	Ms. Mountcastle	Ms. Jones	Ms. Adamson	Ms. Stewart	Ms. Smith	Ms. Dixon
Born:	Middle Georgia	Griffin, Georgia	Monroe, Georgia	Tifton, Georgia	Athens, Georgia	Winterville, Georgia	North Carolina
1974	college						
1975	Student taught	College	Graduated from H.S.	college			
1976	taught		College				
1977				Student taught			
1978		Student taught		Taught @Jamison			
1979	counselor	Taught @Jamison	Student taught				
1980-1984			Taught				
1985					Born	Born	College
1986							
1987			Taught @Jamison				
1988							
1989							Graduated
1990-1993	taught				Kindergarten @Jamison	Kindergarten @Jamison	
1994-1998	Pastor						
1999-2002	counselor						
2003					Graduated from H.S.	Graduated from H.S.	
2004	A.P.				college	college	Substituted @Jamison
2005							
2006	Counselor @Jamison					Substituted @Jamison	Received provisional certification
2007					Student taught	Student taught	Taught @Jamison
2008					Taught @Jamison	Taught @Jamison	
2009	29 th year teaching	31 st year teaching	29 th year teaching	Retired w/ 31 years teaching	2 nd year teaching	2 nd year teaching	2 nd year teaching

groups, and reflections from participants. Flexibility in design and the opportunity to listen, honor, and explore teachers' opinions and acknowledge their experiences pointed to case study.

The case, or unit of analysis, is a bounded system selected because it is an interest, issue, or concern (Merriam, 1998, p. 28). Since my interest was in learning from and understanding new and veteran teachers, teachers were chosen to interview that were in their first years and last years of teaching. Each teacher became a bounded case. In this way, I, as the researcher, was taking a sample to study, since studying all new and veteran teachers is not reasonable. Boundaries, also, needed to be formed so that each case had a beginning and an end. In case study, the research could be endless. Therefore, a length of time was set, which was the beginning and ending of the 2008-2009 school year. Case study provided the boundaries needed for this research. The frame supported the necessary reflection and interpretation required of the researcher as artist and scientist (bricoleur).

Hayes (2004) explained case study research as involving the close examination of people, issues, programs, or topics (p. 218). Merriam (1998) suggested that researchers choose case study research because of an interest in "insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing" (pp. 28-29). Yin (1994) observed that case study is commonly used to "investigate contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, and especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly defined" (p. 13). Merriam (1998) further defined case study as being particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic (p. 29). Particularistic means that the case, or focus on a particular situation or phenomenon, is important for what it can reveal and for what it might represent; descriptive means that the end product will be a rich, "thick" description of the study; and heuristic means that the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study will be illuminated (pp. 29-30). More commonly, though, Merriam

explained, “case study research in education is conducted so that specific issues and problems of practice can be identified and explained...” (p. 34). The specific issues highlighted in the cases within this study include two topics: the work expectations and work experiences of new and veteran teachers.

Case studies seek to answer focused questions by producing in-depth descriptions and interpretations over a relatively short period of time (Hayes, 2004, p. 218). Unlike historical research approaches, case study investigates contemporary cases for the purpose of illumination and understanding (p. 218). Discovering the uniqueness of each case is more the goal than being able to generalize. Researchers begin by exploring each case expecting to uncover new and unusual interactions; they seek to understand how the context and people fit together. Readers of case study research use their own experiences to draw meaning from each case (p. 219).

Stake (2005) defined case study as both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry (p. 444). He described three types: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective case studies. Collective case study is an extension of instrumental case study using several cases that may or may not have commonalities (pp. 445-446). It is when “a number of cases may be studied jointly in order to investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition” (p. 445). The most suitable match for listening to the expectations and experiences of new and veteran teachers is collective case study, or multiple case study, because of the belief that understanding them will lead to a better understanding of a larger collection of cases (p. 446).

In this research study the expectations and experiences of each teacher is one case, analyzing data from the first interview, the four focus groups, and the last interview making these seven cases a collective case study. They are being studied jointly in order to investigate a phenomenon, which are the expectations and experiences of being a teacher. The teachers give

insight and understanding. The case is looked at in depth, its contexts scrutinized and the details of the day-to-day experiences pursued in order to learn more about the external interest (Stake, 2005, p. 445). “A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes...in discovery rather than confirmation” (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). Then, as a researcher, I connect the cases together in such a way as to generate new understanding and insight through the overlap and intersections of the context and people.

Yin (1994) stated that a major strength of case studies is the opportunity to use many different sources of data. Hayes (2004) gave us the definition of triangulation as: multiple sources of data and multiple methods for each question (p. 228). In this study, I used an interview at the beginning of the year, an interview at the end of the year, four focus groups, reflections at the end of the focus groups, and a list of what each teacher’s expectations were for his or her first year of teaching. The interviews and focus groups were audio taped and transcribed and the teachers had the opportunity to read them for accuracy and member check.

Jamison Primary School and Jamison Elementary School became the sites for the research. I went to the schools and met with the two principals, and we discussed the study. They decided on a day that I could come and meet with the teachers at each school and invite them to participate. The principals put the date of my presentation on their school calendar and explained to the teachers at the next faculty meeting that teachers in their first three years of teaching and teachers with 20+ years of experience were invited to attend.

On August 13, 2008, I went to each school, took refreshments, and explained the study (e.g., purpose, how the study will be conducted, confidentiality, who will be interviewed, how many times, how many focus groups will take place, if they can review the transcripts, length of

time involved, and final product). I enjoyed meeting the possible participants, answering their questions, and explaining my interest in the subject. Toward the end of our time together, I invited all of them to consider being a participant in the study and asked them to write down their name, experience level, teaching position, school placement, and contact information, if they were interested. I told them if they wanted a chance to think about it, they could let their principal know in the next few days. According to Hayes (2004), empathy must be established between the researcher and the participants. Patton and Westby (1992) believed that “the capacity for empathy. . . is one of the major assets available for human inquiry into human affairs” (p.11). Merriam (1998) writes, “empathy is the foundation of rapport” (p. 22). The level of empathy and foundation of trust that developed at our first meeting together provided access to information by the participants opening up in our future conversations.

“Gathering data begins when the background reading, research, and planning begin. Everything read and discussed has influence on the researcher” (Hayes, 2004, p. 230). Reflections are very important throughout the research process and need to be written continually while collecting and analyzing the data. I kept notes, thoughts, and reflections throughout the study. I wrote about my expectations and my experiences. I wrote about things that worried me, surprised me, upset me, or things I did not want to forget. I noticed things in other areas of my life that seemed to relate to my study, the concept of “new” and “veteran” seemed to surround me through my research, readings, writings, conversations, and even on television. I wrote questions and thoughts daily.

Data Sources

The Interview

The development of the purpose of the study led me to quickly know whom I wanted to have as participants. Once the participants had volunteered and consent had been granted, setting up the interview was like asking a friend for coffee. A time and place was agreed upon and a reservation was made between the participant and myself.

deMarrais (2004) asserted that in qualitative research, the questions are flexible and serve mainly as a guide focusing the conversation on the participant's views and experiences (p. 54). The interviews developed into unique discussions or dialogues. I learned about each participant's experiences, opinions, views, perspectives and reactions to a particular phenomenon or a variety of different phenomenon. As the researcher, I brought to the table my life experiences, cultural background, gender, age, and other characteristics that influenced the way in which I attended, responded, and constructed meaning (p.55). This interactive process was shaped by our shared interaction. However, I became the learner; it was the participants who did most of the talking, relating experiences and drawing on memories from their past and adding knowledge and insight into the richness of the study. I just guided the conversation. The participants were considered the experts who had lived the story and were informing me through the interview conversations.

According to Tellis (1997) "interviews are one of the most important sources of case study information" (p. 8). The different forms are open-ended, focused, and structured; open-ended was the form I used in this study (p. 8). Each interview began with an open-ended statement or question. I started by saying, 'Let's talk about your educational background or tell me about your first teaching experience.' This started the conversation and the interview was taken in the direction of these related experiences. "The essence of an experience emerges from

interview data as participants describe the particular aspects of the experience as they lived it” (deMarrais, 2004, p. 57). Authenticity is dependent on more than one source being interviewed about the same issue or topic. Therefore, in this study, seven teachers from one year of experience to thirty gave their views.

There were benefits for the participants in the interview process. They not only received satisfaction from participating in a study that could increase the knowledge base for future teachers, but appreciated someone wanting to listen to their story and appreciating their views (deMarrais, 2004, p. 61). I felt like I developed a relationship with the participants, as I read their words over and over again. I could hear their voices.

Focus Groups

Kleiber (2004) wrote, “As a method of inquiry, focus groups typically bring together 7 to 12 people for an average of an hour to an hour and a half to discuss the topic of inquiry. The participants are selected on the basis of common characteristics in order to obtain their perceptions, opinions, and attitudes on a research topic” (p. 91). Focus groups are dependent on the participants to voice their opinions and articulate their thoughts. If the participants will not share, the benefits will be minimal. Trust is involved, and making oneself vulnerable. The groups “operate on the assumption that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts” (p. 91). By bringing the seven new and veteran teachers together to discuss issues, they were able to brainstorm solutions, discuss strategies they have tried in their classrooms, and understand that every teacher has students that will need help and assistance. The focus groups broke down walls, restored confidence, built peer relationships, and opened up communication.

“Focus groups may be used alone or in combination with other methods of data collection” (Kleiber, 2004, p. 92). Using the focus groups in combination with the interviews and

reflections added tremendously to the study. Even though I needed the individual thoughts and experiences that each interview brought to the research study, the benefit for the teachers came mainly from the focus groups. The teachers sharing experiences and asking for help with problems was certainly beneficial to my research, but also to each other. Having teachers from two different schools gave some new faces around the table with a different perspective, too. The focus groups were audio taped and the transcriptions were analyzed along with the reflections written after each meeting.

The focus groups had no end product, but instead consisted of the flow of information based on the opinions and interactions within the group (Calderon, Baker, and Wolfe, 2000, p. 92). They were small groups that had as their objective to provide perceptions, beliefs, views, and opinions. According to Hennink (2007) focus group discussion is a unique method of qualitative research that involves discussing a specific set of issues with a pre-determined group of people. The interviewer can play a non-directive role where the dynamics of the group discussion is used to gather information (p. 17). As the moderator, I started the focus groups with a statement of purpose or direction. The essential purpose was to gain a wide range of perspectives on specific issues. This reliance on interaction between the participants was designed to elicit more opinions and particular points of view than a researcher-dominated interview might would (Mertens, 1998, p. 174).

Documents

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) documents are different from records (p. 277). Records consist of marriage certificates, driving licenses, bank statements, or file records, to name a few examples. Documents are prepared for personal reasons (e.g., diaries, memos, letters, field notes) and can add personal thoughts and details to a study. The documents that were

pertinent to this study were the lists of expectations and the reflections the participants wrote after the focus groups. Lincoln and Guba assert that documents and records should “more consistently be tapped” because they are an available, stable, rich source of information that is usually free or of low cost (p. 276).

The Initial Process of Data Analysis

Constant Comparative Method

I started my study by interviewing the participants, listening to their stories and reflections. I became a part of their lives and immersed myself in their setting and environment. I tried to hear what the participants were saying and to feel, see, and understand where they were coming from in their thoughtful answers. I knew it would be important to be alert to body language, changes in emotions and inflections, and notice where we were and what was going on around us during the interview. Much can be learned from presence and interaction. After rewriting my notes and working with the transcriptions of the interviews, I recognized the need to begin writing about the process.

I was analyzing the data using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). When using the constant comparative method, the researcher compares individual units of data with one another in an effort to discover common themes and categories between the case studies. I read and re-read the data. Going line by line, I analyzed the meanings and looked for commonalities. I went through the data and began to sort and separate and note specific phrases. These phrases began to form some of my categories. I looked for other places in the interviews where different words were said, but where the same meaning was implied. As I went through the interviews coding each participant’s responses, many questions and thoughts came forward that I did not want to forget to explore later. So, I made notes and wrote my impressions.

These notes were just for my eyes. I jotted down probing questions that I wanted to be sure to ask, made comparisons, thought about collapsing categories, or I simply wrote down a thought that I did not want to slip away. I constructed categories and made comparisons during each stage of the analysis. I stayed close to the data and let the themes emerge. Once I had all of the transcriptions from both interviews and the focus groups and had added the reflections, the case studies began to form. After the seven case studies were completed, I analyzed each one for similarities across the cases. Important phrases, events, and words were written down on sticky notes and attached to a poster board representing each participant. Then, new poster boards were titled with overarching categories. These sticky notes were moved around, grouped, and sometimes taken off in an effort to consolidate and formulate categories; then the categories began to become dependable, as did the topics under each category. Some categories collapsed into others and some demanded their own individual place. Through reading and re-reading, I looked at similarities between new teachers, veteran teachers, and new and veteran teachers. This was an on-going process with each new reading. As I reached a saturation point, I watched as the common categories and topics developed among the expectations and experiences of these seven new and veteran teachers.

Beginning to write what emerged from my analysis was the next step. The categories began to form an outline. As a researcher, I wanted to see and understand from the eyes and words of the participants. I wanted to analyze and compare their experiences and interpret the similarities and contrasts by offering meaning constructed through analysis. But, the meaning did not come easily. I had a very well organized notebook with 5 categories and 23 topics (see Appendix D for the table listing the categories and topics generated from the initial attempt at analyzing the data.)

I had analyzed, organized, read, re-read, written notes, and completely taken apart the beautifully crafted stories that each one of my educators had so thoughtfully shared with me. Even though the process completely familiarized me with my data and gave insight into each case and into the similarities and differences across the cases, I did not feel like I had added to the research, discovered new knowledge, or honored the stories of my participants. I was seeing my data through the lens of familiarity – I was once a new teacher; I was once a veteran teacher; I was once a mentor: I taught in a rural Georgia school system and was successfully assimilated. After going back to my research question and thinking about my study, I recognized a need to change the approach to analysis.

The analysis that I had developed up to this point in the research process was not what I had envisioned. Dewey (1938) said, “A purpose is an end-view. That is, it involves foresight of the consequences which will result from acting upon impulse” (p. 67). I began with a purpose that had started by an impulse, to discover new insight, meaning, and understanding. Therefore, in order to accomplish that purpose, I needed to change directions and “see-again” or revision my final product or report. In the constructivist paradigm, every case is viewed in two ways, as particularly unique and as an example of an occurrence commonly experienced (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The “presence of thick description” about the case is necessary in order to “facilitate the drawing of inferences by the reader which may apply to his or her own context or situation” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 224). Through the reading and processing of the case, the reader is able to generalize from the case presented to his or her own personal experiences (Stake, 1994).

The final product will be a case report that emerges through a *joint construction* of a “variety of individuals—deliberately chosen so as to uncover widely variable viewpoints”—

reaching some level of consensus, thereby helping the reader to come to a realization presented by clarifying the “all-important context” and making it “possible for the reader to vicariously experience it” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, pp. 180-181). In this way, constructivists’ put emphasis on the “world of experience as it is lived, felt, undergone by social actors” (Schwandt, 1994, p. 125). I needed more than a notebook filled with categories, topics, and a chart to offer as my “all-important context”. I wanted the reader to be able to experience my participants just the way I had.

Crotty (1998) suggested that the researcher, or *bricoleur*, needed to possess the ability to “re-vision” and see these objects as having the ability to have different purposes when serving in new settings (p. 51). Therefore, in an effort to honor the participants’ words in their purest form, a narrative approach was used in reporting the cases and combining their voices. I started by re-writing the seven case studies using each participant’s exact words, embedding narrative inquiry into the analysis, and in this way, produced stories that provided insight and understanding into the expectations and experiences of new and veteran rural teachers.

The Final Phase of Data Analysis

Narrative Inquiry

The qualitative researcher conducts studies in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of experiences and the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). Using a collection of interconnecting methods and materials that include case study, personal experience, life story, and more—qualitative researchers are hoping “to get a better fix on the subject matter at hand” (p. 2). Keeping experience as the central focus, the works of Dewey have education, experience, and life as intertwined; therefore, in this educational study, we are studying experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 415).

In this qualitative approach to research, I have chosen the narrative approach for analysis. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) defined narrative as the “way humans experience the world” (p. 2). They went on to explain that “education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own stories and other’s stories” (p. 2). And, that “people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience” (p. 2). Therefore, the process of narrative inquiry is a “collaboration involving mutual storytelling and restorying as the research proceeds” (p. 4).

Polkinghorne (1995) described narrative as a type of discourse that “draws together diverse events, happenings, and actions of human lives” and integrates these happenings into a “thematic thread” which is referred to as a “plot” (p. 5). “When happenings are configured or emplotted, they take on narrative meaning” (p. 5). Polkinghorne discussed “*narrative as story*” and uses the term *story* “to signify narratives that combine a succession of incidents into a unified episode” (p. 7). He referred to Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) grounded theory approach to inductive analysis as a process where the researcher developed concepts from the data instead.

Polkinghorne (1995) listed the strength in this type of analytic procedure as having the “capacity to develop general knowledge about a collection of stories” (p. 15). I found such guidance to be helpful; it reconfirmed the challenges I had encountered during my initial efforts with this approach to analysis. I was able to bring to the forefront several categories, topics, similarities, and differences between my case studies that I could use to add to the general knowledge of new and veteran teachers. But, I found that I agreed with Polkinghorne when he added, “this kind of knowledge, however, is abstract and formal, and by necessity underplays the unique and particular aspects of each story” (p. 15). During the initial analysis, I felt I had lost

the individuality that made each case distinctive and significant and was just adding confirmation to the findings I had previously read in the literature instead of being open to new insights and discoveries. It was at this point of looking for direction and assistance in my final analysis that I met with my Committee Chairman; with her encouragement, I turned from using the constant comparative method of analysis associated with grounded theory and case study to narrative analysis.

Narrative analysis begins with information from a variety of sources in a bounded system. In this study, the sources consisted of interviews, focus groups, and reflections. The boundaries included teachers in their first two years of teaching and with 28+ years of experience teaching in one school system, teaching grades K-5, over one school year. The next feature is to take the different pieces of data and develop a narrative case study for each participant in which the “process of narrative analysis is actually a synthesizing of the data rather than a separation of it” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 15). The result of the research that utilizes narrative analysis becomes an “emplotted narrative” in the form of a story (p. 15). Polkinghorne explains the outcome in this way,

In this type of analysis, the researcher’s task is to configure the data elements into a story that unites and gives meaning to the data as contributors to a goal or purpose. The analytic task requires the researcher to develop or discover a plot that displays the linkage among the data elements as parts of an unfolding temporal development culminating in the denouement (p. 15).

Polkinghorne (1995) suggested that when proceeding with narrative analysis: arrange the data chronologically, identify elements that contribute to the outcome, and finally, write the story (p. 18). This is the process I used in writing the seven narrative case studies. I organized the data

starting with events told to me by each participant that gave insight into each person before going to college, during college, beginning as an educator, and continuing to the present. Let me turn over the quilt and point out the many stitches that made up this process. I started with over 400 pages of transcriptions and reflections. Through cutting, trimming, backstitching and basting, I merged each participant's first and second interviews, focus group participation, and reflections thereby narrowing the data to under 150 pages. After hemming the edges, each narrative case study became a part of the quilt that embraced each educator's lived expectations and experiences. Using their own words, I told the story of each participant in 14 to 26 pages.

Needing a frame for the quilt, narrative analysis served the purpose of producing a framework from the data in which to logically associate the disconnected parts of each story to each other. Therefore, after writing each narrative case study through honoring each participant's words and experiences in their true form, I developed analytical charts to provide a frame for each case study that would include the two parts of my research question: expectations and experiences. Then, I proceeded to go through each case study and filled in each chart with the initial expectations from each participant and the experiences from each participant.

Through inductive analysis, themes "emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis" (Patton, 1990, p. 390). Using this inductive method I began to examine the lists of expectations critically, looking for meaning. Themes were created as I grouped the data and these themes became the basis for the organization that I used. "The qualitative analyst's effort at uncovering patterns, themes, and categories is a creative process that requires making carefully considered judgments about what is really significant and meaningful in the data (Patton, p. 406). The expectations fit into an analytical chart in the form of a Venn diagram and later into a table.

When analyzing the data from the seven interviews, three themes emerged: places, people and the culture/community, and other experiences. These three themes became a way of organizing each analytical chart. According to Dey (1993), a natural creation of categories or themes occurs with "the process of finding a focus for the analysis, and reading and annotating the data" (p. 99). Patton stated, "The analyst moves back and forth between the logical construction and the actual data in a search for meaningful patterns" (1990, p. 411). So, I first became familiar with the data and aware of the context. I began to consider connections and made the decision of which themes were helpful in interpreting the data. "Inferences from the data, initial or emergent research questions, substantive, policy and theoretical issues, and imagination, intuition and previous knowledge" became useful resources that I applied when finalizing the themes that emerged for expectations and experiences in my study (Dey, 1993, p. 100).

The analysis of narrative interviews required a slightly different approach to the constant comparative method of analysis. Narrative analysis recognizes that the stories told provide insight into the lived experiences. Analyzing the narrative data required that I detect the themes that emerged from the stories. It was these themes that were used to interpret how these participants made sense of their lives or experiences.

From this final compilation of the data, a cross case analysis began. I proceeded to look for the overlap between the expectations, the 'experiences' of places, the 'experiences' of people and the culture/community, and the other 'experiences' in order to provide a cross-case analysis of the seven educators' expectations and experiences. After stitching up the seams and uniting these overlapping intersections of expectations and experiences, a cross-case narrative was written. *Ms. Jamison* was produced by 'cobbling together the stories' of the seven educators,

thereby producing a form of storied art, a quilt of a rural educator. The important pieces from the fabric of each educator's expectations and experiences produced the final analysis sewn together into an intricate re-visioning—a storied quilt of expectations and experiences for Ms. Jamison.

Trustworthiness to Judgment

Synonyms for trustworthiness are dependable, responsible, reliable, and truthful. These are all descriptions of what the participants and I have endeavored to be throughout this research study to the best of our ability and knowledge. In order to aspire to achieve a level of internal validity, Merriam (1998) gives six basic strategies that enhance this process: triangulation, member checks, long-term observations, peer examination, participatory modes of research, and researcher's biases (pp. 204-205). Therefore, by using multiple sources of data, taking the data back to the participants, observing over a period of a school year, asking colleagues to comment on findings as they emerged, involving participants in the phases of the study, and clarifying my assumptions as the researcher, I am confident that the results of this study can be considered as trustworthy.

My use of the term 'judgment' is drawn from the work of Dewey (1938) who refers to judgment as that "which puts together what is observed and what is recalled to see what they signify" (p. 69). Judgment is defined as the ability to form sound opinions and make sensible decisions; an opinion formed or given in consideration (Soukhanov, 2009). In the same sense, a proposition is considered an idea, offer, or plan put forward for consideration or discussion; a statement of judgment (Soukhanov). The cross-case analysis will be put forth in the form of propositions and end with judgments, or opinions formed and given for consideration. The intent of this study is not to generalize or infer that all new and veteran rural teachers have the same expectations or experiences, but instead to recount what was told to me by these seven educators

in Georgia and to provide storied re-viewings patched together to honor the beauty that each career offers.

“The evaluation of the story has a pragmatic dimension in the sense that its value depends on its capacity to provide the reader with insight and understanding” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 20). Therefore, if the reader is provided with new knowledge or understanding and can take from the cases a solution that can be applied to a problem or issue in his or her own situation, the evaluation given by the reader will be higher and have greater value. I have relied on the participants’ trustworthiness and willingness to share their expectations of being a teacher and their experiences with the research community in order to add knowledge and give insight to future educators and assist them in understanding their own experiences.

Riessman (1993) reminded us that there is a key semantic difference between “trustworthiness” and “truth” (p. 64). She added, “The latter assumes an objective reality, whereas the former moves the process into the social world” (p. 64). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) remind us “case studies are read, and lived, vicariously by others” (p. 8). It is up to the reader to ‘transfer’ the information gained to his or her own personal experiences. Peshkin (1985) also wrote:

When I disclose what I have seen, my results invite other researchers to look where I did and see what I saw. My ideas are candidates for others to entertain, not necessarily as truth, let alone Truth, but as positions about the nature and meaning of a phenomenon that may fit their sensibility and shape their thinking about their own inquiries (p. 280).

Two approaches toward validation in narratives that Riessman (1993) addressed were persuasiveness and correspondence. Persuasiveness, similar to plausibility, asked the reader if the story could happen (p. 65). Correspondence goes back to “member checks” and this was

achieved in this study by giving the written accounts back to the participants to look over for accuracy. This increases the study's credibility (p. 66). The use of triangulation methods, such as in this study where two interviews, four focus groups, and reflections were collected from seven participants, are sought in an effort to help in producing confidence in the data, as well (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 20). Through the trustworthiness built into this study by these many forms of validation, judgments can be proposed as opinions are formed and consideration is given. Riessman said that our goal is to "learn about the general from the particular. Individual action and biography must be the starting point of analysis, not the end...Narrative analysis allows for the systematic study of personal experience and meaning: how events have been constructed by active subjects" (p. 70). Propositions will be brought forth for contemplation, as statements of judgment. They will have been put together from "what is observed and what is recalled to see what they signify" (Dewey, 1938, p. 69).

Summary

Case study methodology was chosen to allow the researcher an opportunity to study each of the seven educators individually and across the cases while providing for the reader a look into the window of each educator's unique storied life experiences. Case studies were developed from the data collected over an eight-month period from seven educators in the same school system. All of the educators were prepared for teaching through a college or university in Georgia, with one using an alternative route. Their level of experience spans from 2 years of teaching to 31 years, and their ages cross over three generations. Five of the teachers began their careers in this school district. Throughout the inquiry process, narrative analysis was used in re-telling their storied educational experiences. I wrote narrative case studies using the words of my participants. When I was researching the *Civil Rights Act* (1964), I read a book review by Dr.

John Dayton. He reviewed the book *Removing a Badge of Slavery* edited by Mark Whitman. Dr. Dayton (1994) quoted Whitman in the review as saying: “I have tried...to let the record of *Brown* speak for itself in this book to the greatest degree possible” (p. vii). I would like to say that I, too, have tried to let my participants speak for themselves to the greatest degree possible.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) wrote in the last chapter of their book, “The methods of qualitative research thereby become the “invention,” and the telling of the tales—the representation—become the art, even though, as *bricoleurs*, we all know we are not working with standard-issue parts...so we cobble together stories. . .” (p. 584). And what remains will be “the commitment to study human experience. . . from the point of interacting individuals who, together and alone, make and live histories. . .” (p. 584).

Each case narrative will be shared in single chapters releasing the stories of professional expectations and experiences. Data analysis comes together through the informed lens of the researcher as a cross case analysis represented by Ms. Jamison. The participants’ words inform the concluding judgments and propositions. This study is a “wonderful story to be read” and a touchstone text for considerations regarding teacher preparation, retention, and how we think about mentoring.

CHAPTER 4

MR. WHITE



The goal of a quilting bee was mainly social and beginners were welcomed along with the experienced.

I didn't expect to be treated like a rock star. . .

Those words continually echo through my mind. They capture the essence of this unique educator. He was truly surprised that in his last years as an educator he would experience the unexpected. At 55 years of age, Mr. White is in his first year of being the counselor at Jamison Primary School and in his 29th year in education. He has a slow, sure, deliberate way of sharing his stories.

I walked into his office and was invited to sit in the largest chair at the table, but the chairs were obviously designed for five, six, or seven-year-old children. I made myself as comfortable as possible and soon realized that Mr. White had quite a lived experience to share. He painted a distinct difference between education past and education present.

Well, I was a product of the public schools in a rural setting. I attended elementary school in a South Georgia county and everything you hear about that county is true. It is south of Macon. The politics was very colorful down there. A long time ago like in the 1920's, 1930's

there was a lot of violence, a lot of lynching, a lot of shootings that went on down there. Some continued right on through the 20th century. As I said, politics was very colorful down there. At this point, I interrupted Mr. White and asked him if he was referring to race. He said that he wasn't and continued to tell his story.

What I mean by that is like, for instance, there was a contested election one time where somebody from the middle Georgia area, around the Telfair County area, was running. The Tallmadge family, and some other groups, were running and they actually had three people claiming to be governor at one time. It was found that a number of dead people had voted for one of the candidates. As far as I know dead people can still vote in that county. My two grandfathers were very much into politics, democrat and republican, and my grandfather was buried in Ms. Smiths County so he can no longer vote, but grandfather Fincher, who is buried in that county, he still can. He got the last laugh on that. Then when I was a little older we moved to another small rural setting, and I graduated from high school there.

After high school he enrolled in Middle Georgia College where the professor of his first education class said, "Don't enter education unless you love it...unless you love the work of teaching." *He didn't say love kids, which that is necessary too, to love the kids. He just said don't do this unless you love the work of teaching.* From there, he briefly attended UGA and ended up graduating from Georgia Southern with a Bachelor's in Education, a Master's in Education and Counseling, and a little later received a second Master's in Administration.

My first degree, the Bachelor's degree, was in Social Science. I wanted to teach history and geography and that kind of thing. To get a degree in Georgia, I think this is still required; you had to spend at least one academic quarter or semester doing student teaching. You did a practicum and then you did something where you went in and you pretty much took over for a

teacher and taught that class. Ideally the older experienced teacher would guide you along and then gradually turn it over to you.

In my experience, I taught for a number of months at a high school that was a very racially divided school. Very rough neighborhood. Most of the kids there came from two neighborhoods they had been nicknamed Vietnam and Korea. They would spend the weekends fighting each other and then they would come to school. The school was so racially tense and divided that they actually had two co-principals, one White and one Black. The Black principal would take care of anything dealing with the Black students and the White principal would take care of anything dealing with the White students. This was January of 1975, and the school had been like that for 2 years. Now, it had been integrated by law since around '70 or '71.

Legally, all schools had been fully integrated. There had been riots; there had been violence. There had been violence where certain groups had tried to literally take over the school, and so I think that is why they finally resolved the issue by having two principals. I think the following year they finally went to just having one principal, but at least for that time they had that situation set up. I went in there the first day that I was supposed to be there and I was assigned to teach Afro American Culture, what some people called Black History, back then.

I walked in and the teacher was Black; all the students were Black. There was this tiny man in the corner and he handed me his roll book and he said, "I will be in the lounge if you need me." So then I stood there in front of those people and they looked at me, like, all right, teach me something. I tried to teach them something for the time I was there from January until the spring and we actually managed to have a good time together in spite of everything.

My first actual paying job was in a high school in one of the other sandy South Georgia counties. I was idealistic then, hoping to change the world; and I had this impression that kids

out there would be eager to learn and fairly engaged in what I had to present to them. Also, I had thoughts that maybe one day I would rise to be a professor and be a published author, gain some fame in the teaching profession.

He taught in a high school close to Reidsville. Reidsville is where the famous prison is located, and it was very much a redneck culture. Some of the kids there actually tried to sell me some stolen CB radios and Moonshine. I declined. I had already experienced a little bit of what discipline problems could be like, but I realized that you had to be pretty much a manager of people. Most people didn't care to learn that much about US History or World History. They just come to school because they had to. Unless you really connected with them as a person you weren't going to teach them anything. So that was an awakening that year, that just being a scholar was secondary to just being somebody who could manage a room full of people. And if you can't manage a room full of people, then it doesn't matter how much you know.

In an old building that year, the building was built probably during the Roosevelt administration, the windows were falling out. The floor was wooden and cracked and there were holes in the walls. Large rats. We had a big high school boy who, when the rats come out he would hit them with a hammer and that would stir the kids up for few minutes, but then we went back to what we were doing. No air conditioning. Believe it or not there were still some schools in Georgia up until 1980 that were not air-conditioned. I don't know how that lasted so long, but we would take turns actually passing a fan around. We would hand out cups of ice and a kid would pass a rotary fan around cooling everybody off and that would be his job for a while. We learned what we could about US History and World History and World Geography and You and the Law and those other things they used to teach back then.

Next, Mr. White tried his hand at teaching in a private school, but discovered it wasn't for him; so after another one-year experience, he made his way back to public education in a different county. This would be his first experience at the middle school level; he was leaving high school behind.

That was around 1977. I taught US History to middle schoolers for a while. Coffee County is a culture of tobacco farmers and hog farmers and chicken farmers. Kids come in sleepy because they had been up the night before catching chickens. They would still have some of the feathers on their clothes. They sit there and sleep and you would try to wake them up to teach them something. They come in hungry. They would have a big bag of food and you would go back there and take the food away and they would say, I am not eating. That was a large school. It is very, very large but I guess the tax base from that county was mainly from all the agriculture because it was not a rich county, but a large county, a lot of people, a lot of territory.

The land is so flat in Coffee County that a lot of the drug dealers make airstrips down there. The FBI, I think, finally busted that up. But, a big football program, other than that not a lot of stuff to keep the kids interested or motivated. Most of them from poor backgrounds. A lot of old superstitions, a lot of people living back in the swamps down there and talking the old way and living the old way. A lot of spousal abuse. But for 2 years I taught there, that is where I met my wife and that is where I did my internship for counseling.

His next move situated him in a junior high school working as a counselor for seventh and eighth graders. *I worked for a principal named John Richards. He got his Doctorate while I was there. He looked a lot like Charlton Heston in his younger days, very tall, deep voice, an ex-Marine, and no nonsense. Not a lot of patience with things that weren't as they should be. I felt blessed to get an excellent evaluation from him every year. He did not give those out very easily.*

He ran a very tight ship. He did not have an assistant principal. So a lot of times, instead of just being purely a counselor, I wound up doing administrative type work, also. I found that to be true with a lot of counselors. We did get air conditioning in the building shortly after I got there. So schools were moving up in the world.

The next school he moved to was not a pleasant experience. He found many layers of bureaucracy in this county. *I wound up in a different county for a year. The independent republic of _____ where no matter how much the federal government or the state government has written down all ready they have to re-write it and add to it. They have many layers of bureaucracy. Large building down town where there are layers and layers and everybody has many bosses in this county. I told people that if they ever wondered about the existence of purgatory that I found it does exist because I spent a year there.* The school system seemed to like him a lot more that he liked them and even though they wanted him to stay and to promote him, his desire was to head back to the middle of Georgia. *It is a whole different culture there on the coast. If you have ever seen that movie Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil, a lot of that is true... But that was my first real experience in a large urban multi-gang kind of setting where you have masses of people. I managed to make a few changes for the better while I was there, and like I said, they asked me to stay but I wanted to get back to Middle Georgia.*

This time he found his place in another private school, a Christian school. For the next four years he found a lot of positives about teaching there; however, there were two negatives. One was that *they were always having fund-raisers.* And the second was that *you always have to stay in good with the right people, the right parents, because they pretty much run and operate the school.* It was about this time that Mr. White finished his Seminary degree and was called into full time Christian service as a pastor of a large church.

He accomplished some good things by being a pastor, but found his new role to be actually more stressful than education. I told somebody later, that I got more respect from Bloods and Crips than I got from deacons. I told that story a number of times and finally I ran into a guy from Valdosta who said, look, at my church the deacons are Bloods and Crips.

So, after being away from education for five years, Mr. White received a call from a principal to be the counselor of his school. I said, " Really, let me get back to you." So I went to the window and said a little prayer and then I called him back and told him that I would come and look at the office and look at the school...and he agreed. Another thing about full time ministry is that, at least with Baptist, there is no retirement plan. There is no insurance. There are no benefits. Not even any real good job security, so getting back to the public schools didn't seem that bad. So I went and started looking at their test scores. They were some of the lowest test scores in the universe. I literally cried when I looked at them. But while I was there, a number of my relatives, interestingly, also came to work: my wife, 2 sisters, a sister-in-law, and some distant cousins. And once all of these Irish people got into the county, we did a lot of reforms and some good administrators also brought in some reforms, and we managed to bring those test scores up. This county became a success story.

As a county, we adopted some good school reform models. The 'America's Choice' Program is what they called it back then. It started as a government program. The Agency for Education and the Economy called the reform America's Choice, and sometimes it was called Georgia's Choice, as well. The people who were instrumental in that later went on to work for the State and wound up writing the GPS standards. So America's Choice is pretty much gone away now because everything they were doing has now become GPS. But, that county was one of the first places to implement those new standards and the new way of teaching. Everybody got on

board with it. It took a few years, but managed to pull the test scores up. Sonny Purdue came and held a big rally with us, and everybody celebrated the success. Felt good about that.

Mr. White served as a counselor for a few years and then an administrator, for two years. When budget cuts came, he was asked to move to the Elementary School to the position of counselor, and he accepted.

It was about that time in our life that my children were grown, and I always wanted to get back to the country and live on a farm. So, we found a farm on the Internet and made plans to buy the farm. We could either commute two hours to work every day, or we could find a job closer to the farm. So Jamison was hiring, and we felt lucky to both get on at Jamison Middle School.

Jamison County has probably been our best education experience so far because they pretty much already adopted a lot of reforms and already had a lot of good things going on. We were able to actually kind of breath easy a little bit, enjoy having a lot of motivated people all around us and just admire their good work while trying to help wherever we could. Reminds me of the story a preacher friend of mine told, he went down to the train station every day just to see something that would move under its own power. We no longer had to push the train, in other words. We came to a place where the train was already moving, and we didn't have to push it to where it was going. So this is where we hope to finish out our education experience.

When Mr. White first came to this county, he served as a counselor at the Middle School, where his wife is employed. This is his first year serving at the Primary School. Mr. White had positive comments about this school and county. *They had already implemented the idea of being a learning center with professional learning communities. Of course, that is educational jargon that means simply that the teachers work as teams. Instead of each teacher closing up in*

their classroom and doing their own thing everybody works together as a team of teachers. They share a group of students. They share objectives. They have common testing or what we refer to as common assessments. They work together as a team, a united effort, to make sure that everybody knows the needs of every student and keep running files and records of what they have tried; what worked and what hasn't worked.

Another thing is that the people here are highly educated, and you would expect all teachers to be educated, but quite frankly, some education programs are better than others. I came here and looked at all the credentials. I saw the University of Georgia and universities from all over the world. I saw highly motivated, or highly caffeinated, or highly energized some kind of way, people that really went about their work with a zeal and cared about the kids. Cared about the job, and had a good attitude to do what had to be done. Whereas, I hadn't seen that everywhere. I won't name any names, but I just haven't seen that everywhere. So they are well-prepared and well-qualified and enthusiastic people. Good leadership. Leaders who know how to be stronger leaders, but at the same time, they don't micro-manage. They do delegate a lot to their teachers, and the teachers are quite capable of doing what they have been asked to do.

As a Primary School counselor, Mr. White has different responsibilities than when he was a teacher, especially since the children in his school are so young. He helps students who are having problems being away from their mom for the first time, teaches basic manners, sharing, the good touch/bad touch program, different genders discovering each other, family dynamics like breakups and transitions, custody issues, restraining orders, the loss of a parent or grandparent, even the death of a pet can be very difficult. So, he has to be sensitive to these *big people emotions* that the young students are dealing with, and also investigates neglect and abuse, and what to do about it. *Also, since I have been an administrator and since I am getting*

some years on me now, I still have the younger administrators come to me for advice sometimes on thing. . . I am content to be just a counselor.

Mr. White is the only male in my study. When discussing gender, Mr. White commented that the high school level has about as many men as women. He has even seen a good many men teaching at the middle school level. However, his experience has been that as the ages of the students go down, so does the amount of male teachers in the building. When he was at the Primary School in one county, there were two other men on staff, and then one left. He is the only male on staff where he works now.

Mr. White feels that smaller children *probably identify with a mother as the nurturing parent and the authoritative figure* in their home. He says he has found this *true in the South, the mom as the enforcer of discipline and the dad as the fun one, of course, not in every family.* People have told him, though, that a *male voice has a calming effect on children, like a Papa Bear figure, kind of reassuring.* He feels like since the pay scale is determined by experience and degree that both genders make the same pay and have the same responsibilities. Everybody has to pull his or her weight. *So, gender hasn't been an issue. Just something you can't help but notice every now and then.*

Mr. White has seen a change in how many women have become administrators. *There was a time when the administrator was the chief disciplinarian. He was usually a former coach. He paddled people. He suspended people and ran everything pretty much like he did when he was a coach, but that is no longer the case. Administrators now days are more like the lead learner, I think that is the term they are using now.* But, many have confided in him that it is *lonely at the top.* You are it; it is up to you; the decision is yours. *There are not many people you can talk to when you get that high up on the food chain.*

In thinking about the changes that have taken place over the years, Mr. White shared some of the positive changes. *Well, the good thing I see about education that has changed the most since I started in the '70s is the technology. There is just all this wonderful technology that computers and computer related things made possible. Changes in the video technology, music technology, and most any kind of technology have made that kind of amazing so much is available now. Also, writing on white boards with markers now, instead of chalk. They are in the rooms that are bright and clean and air-conditioned and inviting.*

He feels like, on the negative side, that the culture in general has deteriorated. Students are forced to deal with problems and issues sooner. . . . *Another thing is the teachers are now being asked to do so much more as far as putting in more hours every day and attending more meetings, doing more paperwork, and having to meet so many requirements. I have said this and other people in my age group have said this that we are glad we are getting near the end of our career now, instead of starting out, because I wouldn't want to be starting out with it like it is now.*

Mr. White's parting words to me at the end of our first interview were similar to this thoughts at the beginning, *you have to love the kids. You have got to love the work. Otherwise it is hard to get up in the wee hours of the morning and drive to work every day and face it every day. You have to be strong on the inside. I told a teacher who was very burned out one time, I said, you have got to be very strong on the inside and you have to be near perfect. You can't react to everything emotionally. You have to be so strong your immovable on the inside. Stay professional and remember you can't hate the kids because if you hate the kids they will know you hate them and they will hate you back. You have to really love these children, even though a lot of them are very hard to love.*

Mr. White waited toward the end of the first focus group to add his thoughts to the discussion. He told the group much of the same details about his job that he related in our interviews. Children deal with very serious issues, even at this very young age. He proposed that counselors were first added to the staff of high schools to assist students with career choices. Now, however, counselors are sometimes needed by the office staff to help with parents or by administrators in dealing with sensitive issues. He addressed some of the concerns that had been brought up about students by saying that students who act out could be reacting to situations in their home life. *That affects them in the classroom. A lot of time with the not doing their work or their acting out or they react in different ways and then if you don't look further to see what the root of the problem is you just think it is just a disobedient child or child who can't or won't learn, or whatever. Kids have always needed a lot of love ever since there have been kids.... At the Primary school, I try to help everybody get the day started off on kind of a lighthearted note. This seems to help morale. Some people probably don't know what to make of it, but it seems to help morale. I deal with some serious stuff. If you think about it, it gets depressing, the stuff we deal with.* Then he touched on the problem he sometimes has of knowing when to seek outside help from authorities and when he just doesn't have enough evidence. He ended by saying *a lot of times you have to make a judgment call and pray you make the right call.*

Mr. White was absent the day we met for our second focus group, but our in the third focus group, Mr. White gave insight and assistance to a new teacher concerned with the proper documentation for students needing interventions. He explains the flexibility in the program and ways of reporting and encourages the teacher to trust herself to assess, adapt, and adjust as she sees necessary developing her own forms and sharing with other teachers. *I wouldn't worry about store bought instruments for evaluating. You can get real creative with evaluating. It is not*

research based products, it is research based practices that they are really wanting people to use and you can evaluate any number of ways. Anything that you can put down on paper and say this is what I want him to do and this is what actually happens. This is how it is done over a period of time. Be real specific about the skills. . . You, your fellow teachers, parents, whoever is making up your little committee, your team. You decide when you want to move forward. . . And if ya'll have forms that work for you then keep using them. If you have forms that others might benefit from, share them. . . Don't let it scare you or intimidate you or anything. It is a lot of trouble, but you draw a lot of control over it.

In the last focus group Mr. White is paired with a veteran teacher, who happens to be his mentor. He remains fairly quiet listening to her reservations and anxiety directed toward the Pyramid of Intervention. (The Pyramids of Intervention is a process teachers go through in order to find strategies in the classroom to help students become more successful. Documentation is the key. It is the beginning process that could evidentially lead to testing.) Mr., White then shares the topic that was on his mind at the beginning of the focus group: *Comparing 21st Century children with 60's and 70's children (i.e. intelligence and character)*. She continued with her thoughts on this topic and the amount of general knowledge students are required to learn in schools today. Mr. White finally responds to the last topic Ms. Jones is discussing by telling her that his wife said, "I am glad I am getting near the end instead of starting out." Ms. Jones had been discussing the additional responsibilities being placed on teachers.

Mr. White only wrote one ending reflection for the four focus groups and it was after this particular group session. He wrote: *Idealism starts us out with energy when we are young in the profession. Dedication to duty and learning from experience keeps us old warriors fighting. In war, there are always casualties among the new recruits.*

Six months have passed since I first walked into Mr. White's office. The school year is fast approaching the end. As the experiences of Mr. White's first year at the Primary School have developed, surprises and feelings of support have been revealed. Mr. White has settled into a comfortable place where he feels appreciated, needed, and has been able to be creative.

In describing his thoughts about the focus groups during our last interview together, Mr. White reflected, *it is good to meet with people that have had experiences and compare experiences. It is good to hear how the new people are thinking and perceiving things and dealing with the things they encounter in the profession. I think they are very strong people. They have to be strong. They have to be well prepared, and they have to be strong because they see what they are getting into. And, if they didn't know before, they learn very soon after they get here. If they run into anything they haven't anticipated, they have the veterans to help them through it and guide them through it. I see a pretty high survival rate among the young people over the last few years. It has been a long time since I have seen anybody actually run out screaming. I saw that back in the '70s. I saw a young lady that couldn't handle stress, actually run down the hall of the school screaming and didn't come back. But I haven't seen that in a long time. People now days seem to be pretty tough on the inside and can handle it; they seem willing to listen to advice where as you might think some people might be arrogant and know it alls, they are not like that. They are learning. You still have a certain number of people who say they are going to look for something else. A lot of people are worried about if they are going to have to go looking because of the economy now. My observation that I made in our last meeting, round table meeting we had a few weeks ago, is that you see veterans like in the old wars. All the way back to the Civil War and the World Wars, they are the veterans that see these new recruits come in and have to teach them how to duck and not get shot and how to survive in the trenches*

day to day. It is these old veterans that you wouldn't think would be able to hold out for the battle but actually wind up being the best warriors because they have learned how to survive. They teach these young people how to survive and I have seen the days in the trenches now, and that is still the role of the old veterans helping the new recruits. So they make it so that they can become veterans down the road. I know that is rambling a little bit, but that is kind of the impression I get of these round table discussions.

Mr. White felt like time given to share with other teachers is a priority. That is why mentors are assigned, and it is not just for the young teachers. It is anybody who is not familiar with how things are done in this particular building. Like I was assigned a mentor, even though I have been in the business for 30+ years. They try to make sure that nobody comes in here and struggles and doesn't know what to do. They make sure everybody knows, and of course, they are very open to questions. If you see something coming up you say, "What is that?" And, they are happy to answer the questions for you. It benefits the person that needs to be oriented, and it also helps the functioning of the school, because if you have a bunch of people that don't know what they are doing, the school doesn't run well.

There are scheduled meeting with mentors and mentees, but Mr. White says that the individual meetings are more on need and previous experience. I have been around the block a few times. My mentor has too, so, when I have a question, I ask and I get an answer and that is that. Otherwise, I pretty much already know what to do.

Because of his past experiences of being an experienced teacher, administrator, minister, and counselor, Mr. White is thought to know something about most things. Mr. White serves as a resource and support person for children and adults in his school. Even administrators tend to come for help or advice. He answers questions on how to handle family situations that get kind

of delicate sometimes or about something that might be a security issue or a legal issue or an ethical issue. They just want to come and get my thoughts on those things. I have a lot of teachers of every age, the old ones and the young ones, that come and ask me to hear them out about things they are going through in their family. Some of it is school related and some of it isn't. But they just need somebody to talk to.

Mr. White and I have shared many experiences together this year through interviews and focus groups. In providing this time to reflect over his past and present experiences, Mr. White responded to whether he experienced what he expected being a teacher to be like. *Well, I don't think I really changed the world if you talk about the world as a whole. And the changes that have come about in the world, I hope I didn't have anything to do with that. But I have hopefully made a difference in some lives along the way. I think I have made some positive contacts. Changed a piece of the world. Hopefully there are some people out there who can remember that I helped them somehow along the way. Maybe they know something they didn't know before, or maybe I helped them feel better when they were having a bad day. So that part of my expectations was met.*

As far as kids being eager to learn, in all honesty, only a few really are. And the rest wouldn't necessarily say they don't want to learn. It is just that they will come around when they are ready. If they feel like it suits their interest or their need, then they will pursue it. Otherwise when you are up there talking about what is on your lesson plan, they probably have something else going on in their head that is more important to them at that moment.

As far as being a professor, it is not likely since I am nearing retirement and haven't gotten my doctorate. I may still write books. I actually have written books; they have just never been published because it is as hard to find an agent now, as it is to find a publisher. But

perhaps when I do retire, I will have more time to write and try a little harder to find somebody to publish the words.

This is the first year at this school for Mr. White. He had been at a different school in this same county for a couple of years. He expected this school to be *highly regimented and well run*. And, he found that to be true. But, a surprise took place this year for him. *The administrator who was here years ago set up something that has been continued by the present administration of having everything being very tightly regimented, like the kids line up on the blue squares and, even when they go in the restroom there is a sign in the restroom telling them the proper procedure of what to do.*

They even play music in the cafeteria, and that is a cue to the kids to stop talking when they hear the music. When the music stops, you talk. They have special CDs made with pauses in them. . . The paraprofessionals who usually do it have learned to make it work very well for them. These are the things that he did expect. But something happened that he did not expect. I didn't expect to be treated like a rock star. That is something that had never happened to me before, until I came here. But because of the little TV show and a few other things, I can't walk down the hall or through a classroom or library without causing a disruption. So, I have to be kind of careful about when and where I walk— I make sure I walk through the cafeteria when the music is playing. . . It's been a surprise. I have enjoyed it. I didn't expect to do a TV show when I came here, but it has been a nice thing. They asked me to do that. They said 'we have this word of the week and any announcements and anything else you want to say,' so that also had a tightly regimented format, but they have allowed me to be a free spirit.

So every morning I am on TV. Every morning I direct traffic and every morning I am on TV. Every morning I check on certain classes that need a lot of checking on. That is how my day

starts every day. I just go and spread Ms. Jones and touch base with the cafeteria workers and the janitorial staff. It helped me to have instant name and face recognition. So kids think they have a celebrity. They will learn better in a few years. But right now, they think Mr. White is a big TV star. Also, the innocence that you are not going to see at any other age, like a child said to me, 'Mr. White, I waved at you when you were on TV, did you see me?' 'Oh, yeah, yeah, I saw you,' I told him. Sometimes I will pretend that I can see them and what they are doing. Just have to be a good guesser there. I enjoy playing the different characters. Something else I hadn't really expected to do.

It started out just being me, but when we got to special things like red ribbon week, I just started doing characters. It is kind of like the guy that created Sherlock Holmes, he got tired of Sherlock Holmes a long time before the public did. They kept demanding Sherlock Holmes. They even killed off Sherlock Holmes and brought him back. I did this character called Daddy Coco Puffs, a wrapper that everybody seems to be real fond of, and cowboy Mike, singing country songs, and the old Gordon Fisherman. I have enjoyed a chance to be a lot more creative and artistic. Also, I can sit down and read storybooks, do puppets, and just have a good time with the kids, teaching lessons at the same --- having a good time while I am teaching.

This experience has made his year more enjoyable. When he told his friends about the rules in the bathroom, they suggested that he try to *loosen folks up*. Luckily, the administration has allowed him to do just that. *I have had a lot of people tell me that I have really brought some joy. . . They say morale is up and that I am part of the reason for that. There are some people in the world who just have an aura. Who make things better just by their presence, whether they say or do anything special or not. Just by being there, they seem to make things better. I have tried to be one of those people.*

I guess I had certain expectations, and I figured that I would just come in and get in line with the rules and regulations and try to do what the last counselor did, but they allowed my own personality to come out, so I ran with it. And, I get a lot of positive feedback from teacher e-mails, and the administrators pretty much let me be me. I don't know what kind of evaluation I will get later, but they just let me be me. It has been a good experience, a different experience. I guess I didn't fully know what to expect or how good it would be. When I came over here people from the other school I used to work at said, 'Are you okay? Are you okay?' I said, 'Yeah, I am fine. They treat me like a rock star!'

If Mr. White has a choice next year, he will remain at this school in this position. Working with the younger children has been a *nice reprieve* from working with teenagers. The negative side of working with young children is dealing with the parents, i.e. custody battles, restraining orders, which can and cannot see the child. Whereas, when they get to be teenagers, Mr. White says the parents are *plum happy to have somebody else take them*.

He is planning to work at least one more year. Next year may be his last or not; depending on how many years he *can get vested into teacher retirement*.

At the end of our last interview together, I asked the open-ended question of what was important to him? *What I would tell you about what is most important in life is probably what you have already figured out, but there is nothing more important than family. What we do here as educators is extremely important because we shape minds and shape lives for many years to come, and we always have to be aware of that heavy responsibility. But, it is important to take care of your own health. It is important to take care of your mental health. It is important to take care of your family. Don't be staying at school too late and neglecting your family. Don't be spending your weekends at home doing school stuff. Tend to your family. Don't neglect them.*

You can put a lot of yourself into your schoolwork and most dedicated teachers will do that just by nature. But, make sure your family is really taken care of. Take care of your spiritual life, and make sure you have some kind of spiritual life, whether it is going to a Baptist Church or whether it is in meditation. Whatever it is, just something to keep your inner peace and keep in contact with the universe that is bigger than you are. Be in tune with it. We know that what we do will be somewhat important in the long run. We may or may not be remembered by name or by what we did, but it does have lasting consequences. When you come to the end of your life a lot of people have said this to me over the years and now I am saying it to other people who are younger than me, nobody gets to the end of life saying, well I sure wish I would have worked more. They may say, well, I wish I had done a better job, but nobody says I wish I spent more time at work. Most people express regrets or express things they are happy about and it is something related to the family or to their personal development. Take care of yourself, your relationship with God, your relationship with your children, your spouse, and the other people that are really important to you. It is good to have a network of family because if you are in a stressful job and you are driving home and you say, well, I sure do dread going home, you are really in a world of hurt. It is good to be happy at work and the most fortunate people are the ones that are very happy to be going home, too. Those people have a good thing going both ways.

The answer he gave made me think back to our first focus group. I had asked each participant to write down a topic that he or she would be interested in discussing, and then I asked them to slide the slip of paper to the center of the table. We agreed that if there was a lull in the conversation, someone would reach to the middle of the table and read someone's topic. That lull never came. But, at the end of the time together, once everyone had left the room, I

gathered the topics together and read them. Mr. White's slip of paper read: Juggling work and family. That is a topic that is important to him now, and one he thought was important to talk about when new and veteran teachers were gathered around a table one October afternoon.

CHAPTER 5

MS. MOUNTCASTLE



Such a gathering would be a great way for women to get together to share family news, exchange recipes, give child-rearing tips and all in all support each other.

I walked in the classroom to interview Ms. Mountcastle for the first time. She introduced herself and her granddaughter, who was waiting for her mom. Ms. Mountcastle's daughter walked in and as we all visited, I discovered she worked for my husband as a 911 operator. This has been a nice connection for us. Her daughter and grandchild left, so we moved closer together around the kidney-shaped table and she began to unfold the fabric of her story. Ms. Mountcastle's first year was overwhelming. The county had misinterpreted the special education guidelines. But, she stayed in the county, continued to go back for additional degrees, and has taught in many varied positions and innovative capacities for 31 years.

When Ms. Mountcastle was a young child, she remembers a unique school in her community. *It was probably when I was about 4 years old. I began visiting a play-to-learn facility for children that were mentally and physically handicapped. I went there with my mom, she was a volunteer, and I got to play with the children and work with the children that way. As a high school student I joined our youth Association for Retarded Children (ARC) and spent*

summers doing volunteer work at the same school. So I had been around a very loving, protective climate that this teacher, Ms. Berry, had provided for a group of, I would say, about 20 special needs children. She also had support from other staff members. She developed many of the games and materials that the children used. She had a carpentry degree, so she made board games and things like that. All of her games had some type of ultimate goal to teach the students something they would need to be life-long learners. That was my expectation and throughout the summers when I was still getting my special education degree, that is what I thought I would be doing when I got to the public school system. But, that was not the case.

I began my first year teaching as an inter-related special education teacher for grades 6 through 12. From my prior experiences, I expected to be able to do one-on-one teaching and implement play-to-learn strategies. I anticipated having a clear definition of students' needs, giving support to other staff members and having students who were motivated to learn and were willing to except their limitations; and, I expected support from other staff members.

When I began in 1976 it was just a year or two after the Special Education law had come into effect. I was in this county, and they had not thoroughly developed a good protocol for the Special Education program. The first day of pre-planning they took me to a room and said, 'Here are the Special Education files.' They were a mess. What had happened was they had been transferred to this room. They were scattered out all over the floor. The Special Education law at that time stated that a teacher was limited to 25 students. The school misinterpreted what was meant and gave me 25 students per segment. I had four segments during the day.

Also at that time, since I was in a middle school/high school each homeroom teacher was responsible for teaching their homeroom spelling and taking them to lunch. So in addition to providing for my Special Education students, I also had to teach spelling and take my homeroom

students to lunch. . . I learned a great deal about being organized and how to stay organized. The first year that I was in this county I served about 50 Special Education children, and because they might have been double served for academic needs as well as behavior needs, I wrote about 80 IEPs that year. The next year it was clarified and the Special Education Director made a point of trying to help the county understand what my role should be and what my expectations should be. During Ms. Mountcastle's second year of teaching in this county her caseload capacity was held to a total of 25 students.

When I first started teaching, the teachers were evaluated according to the Teachers Performance Assessment Instrument, the TPAI, and I was a part of the pilot group to write that assessment. So in addition to that I also had to go through the TPAI procedure three times. I went through it three times through my schooling and three times my first year of teaching. Then a teacher wanted to be trained as a TPAI evaluator, so I volunteered and ended up going through it seven times altogether as a student and a first year teacher. Ms. Mountcastle was thoroughly evaluated.

Ms. Mountcastle thought that this instrument was helpful to her practice as a first year teacher. I thought that I just needed to meet these children's needs by play-to-learn strategies or really look and see where the problem was and try to make a diagnosis in order to help them. But, the first time I met with the RESA instructor her question was, 'How did you determine these reading groups?' And my answer was, "It was just a gut feeling." Ms. Mountcastle had not done a pre- or post-test. She was just following the previous teacher's IEP.

After three years, Ms. Mountcastle had been with a lot of her students through their 6th, 7th, and 8th grade years in middle school. She did teach some high school students with behavior needs, but mostly she taught middle school students. The county wanted her to continue with

these same students for the next four years until they graduated. However, Ms. Mountcastle was pregnant and she wanted a chance to work with younger students. *I felt that the children might need another approach or someone else that might have different teaching styles that would better meet their needs. So I requested a transfer, and I was moved to what at that time was the Elementary School. So, for the next seven years I taught kindergarten through fifth grade special education using the resource model. Then, in my eighth year, I got the opportunity to have the same group of children all day. It would be a self-contained special education class for academic needs. That's when I discovered that I could teach the children other things besides reading and math.*

This was unexpected discovery for Ms. Mountcastle. She had not anticipated having a desire to teach all of the subject areas. This type of educational setting allowed her to not only work with students in reading and math, but to explore science, social studies and health, along with playing games at recess. By this time in her career, she had already completed her Masters in Inter-related Special Education, but decided to go back to school for a Masters degree in Early Childhood Education.

When I changed from Special Education to Early Childhood Education and went through the course work, I was actually required, even though I had 10 years experience, to do student teaching. . . And what I had to do, because at that time I financially couldn't afford to go do a student teaching practicum at another system, I was allowed to do it in this system. What happened was that another teacher and I started off co-teaching where my Special Education students were incorporated into her classroom. And, as I took on her regular education students, she was allowed to take on my Special Education students. She stayed in the classroom so that I would still be able to supervise what they were doing with her. So, I had to write double lesson

plans. I had to write the lesson plans that I was using for my regular education experience, and I had to write the lesson plans for her to implement with my Special Education students. Now, this was a time where it was a real unique experience in this teacher's classroom because not only were we serving in this capacity where I was getting my student teaching, but we were both assigned student teachers at that time. So we were rotating four groups of children with four instructors. It was a very unique experience. And those children had an awesome experience that year with what we were doing.

So, after teaching special education for ten years, Ms. Mountcastle became a regular education classroom teacher in second grade. She continued as a second grade teacher for the next thirteen years. *In my thirteenth year of teaching second grade, we recognized that we needed some type of a way to give our children additional language arts support. At that time, I had started working on my gifted endorsement to be a gifted teacher, and so I developed a program that was known as the 'environmental zone.'* Then, for the next seven years I taught science, health and social studies to all of the second grade students as a block program. *In addition to teaching three segments of the 'environmental zone,' I started doing pull out for EIP and working with gifted children. So basically, for seven years I taught every second grade student, and some of those might have been taught twice; some in the capacity of being EIP students or some in the capacity of being gifted students.* Ms. Mountcastle has learned through teaching students with designations that ranged from very low to average to very high that all students have strengths and challenges that need to be enriched.

Another endorsement Ms. Mountcastle added was in the area of working with pre-service teachers and new teachers through the Teacher Support Services or the TSS program. Teachers in a school go through training and then are given opportunities to work with college students

preparing to be teachers, with student teachers, and with new teachers. For eight years Ms. Mountcastle co-chaired the TSS program at her school, which began with a district wide grant put in place to assess the attrition rate for new teachers and to help in determining why most teachers only taught three years and did not continue. Ms. Mountcastle went to a meeting with representatives from the surrounding counties and each one was asked to present what support was in place for new teachers in their county. *It was very interesting, the first meeting that we went to, we had already had our TSS program in place for two years. But, some of the other counties were saying, 'Well, this is what we do. It kind of works and kind of doesn't work.' And, we were very successful with ours. When we went back, I think it was about three months later, all of the other counties had adopted what we were doing for their TSS program to try to help their beginning teachers stay longer than three years. There were a lot of instruments that were in place, surveys that were taken, and the main reason given for new teachers leaving was that they felt like there was a lack of support and the expectations in the classroom were not the way they had been trained. Our county was not experiencing it as severely as other counties were. The concern was statewide. Our only change that we were having at that time were teachers that were leaving because their husbands or spouse had been reassigned.*

Ms. Mountcastle has seen a change in the expectations of student teachers and new teachers. *Most of the universities and colleges that are implementing the teacher preparation courses are doing a lot better job of making it more realistic, as to what is being expected in public schools. So now our TSS support that we give is mainly support. We are not having to be as instructional as we were in the past because the young ladies and gentleman that come to us now are better prepared than 10 years ago. They have more realistic expectations as to what to expect in the classroom.*

In thinking about changes in education over the last thirty-one years Ms. Mountcastle says the need for having *clear documentation, clear expectations, and the classroom teacher having interventions that they need to try, those types of things have not changed. Basically the way that a child qualifies for the special education program hasn't really changed in that amount of time. We still need to go through the correct protocol in order for a child to qualify for special education. Also, on the IEP, the best way to meet a child's need in the least restrictive environment is still what is used. That hasn't changed. So if a child's needs can best be met by the teacher coming in and working with the homeroom teacher and they are working in small groups within a classroom that would be inclusion and that is the model that is followed. If the child's needs are best met by working in an even smaller setting that is away from the classroom, then that would be resource and they would do that. But, the main thing that has changed throughout the years...is that when I started out to write an EIP for a child I would have to physically write everything by hand. Now they have computer programs and it is the computers keeping up with the documentation that follows the child through special education. So technology, I guess, would be the biggest change.*

As far as the changes being projected by the present educational reform movement, Ms. Mountcastle thinks *the current expectation of No Child Left Behind that every child can fit the cookie cutter mold and be at 100% level is very unrealistic. It may come from the fact, or experiences, of being a special education teacher...It is very difficult to anticipate that by the year 2014, every child will be perfect in the state of Georgia. I also think it is unrealistic to think that a yearly test like the CRCT can be expected to denote what that child has learned all year long. Actually, what it is testing is how well they are able to take a test during those three to five*

days of implementation. And I think so many of our teachers feel pressure and teach to memorization versus teaching to mastery.

Jamison County is the only school system that Ms. Mountcastle has taught in, and outside of her first year where she really felt like she was just off on her own trying to handle everything, she has felt support. She thinks back and tries to recall what type of support she received that first year. *Definitely that first year there was an overwhelming sense of ‘Wow’ when I was shown the special education office and, in particular, because the special education guidelines had been misread. I think it was not only a change within the system, but it was a change within me, too – I definitely had to become very, very organized that first year in order to document and do what I needed to do on a regular basis, in addition to teaching.* But, as far as support that first year, *basically the person that mentored me was the person who would help if I had a fight in the classroom because with having the older kids, especially the high school kids, there were fights. I did have some support through RESA.*

At this particular school, the Primary School, Ms. Mountcastle has a different type of support. *Not only do we have support from our colleagues, but also I consider the women and men that I work with here as part of my family. They are extended family. It is a support group where if I feel like I have a celebration I can go to someone and celebrate, or if I have a concern I can go and express my concern. I have support in knowing that my concerns won’t become part of the school grapevine,* and she feels this support school wide, since she teaches students from all three grades.

Something unique Ms. Mountcastle feels like she brings to her students that other teachers can’t always provide is the fact that she has taught all of the grades at this school. *I think it is a limitation for some people if they stay with one grade and never see what comes before or*

after. I feel like that is a strength that I could give my children, that as a second grade teacher I had taught what was expected in first grade, and I had taught what was expected in third, so I knew what strength they should come with and I knew what to expect they would need in third grade.

Ms. Mountcastle's parting words to me at the end of our first interview were some she had already talked about as being important to her. *I guess what I had said earlier that I wish we could be relieved of the CRCT and actually go back to enjoying what we are doing more and actually working with the children in a variety of ways versus paper/pencil and teaching mastery instead of teaching to memorization.* Along with the support and variety of educational experiences she has had as a veteran teacher, Ms. Mountcastle has had some unexpected experiences these past few years that she did not enjoy and made her feel unappreciated.

At the first focus group, Ms. Mountcastle wrote down on a slip of paper a topic she wanted to discuss: *Lack of respect or professionalism for veteran teachers.* All of the participants wrote a topic and slid the slip of paper to the center of the table. We all agreed that if the conversation slowed down and a new topic was needed, someone would reach in the middle of the table, take a slip, and read it. Then, the conversation would be started again in a new direction. None of the slips of paper were ever reached for or read. The first focus group was filled with a veteran teacher describing the behaviors of a student in her class and asking for assistance. Ms. Mountcastle was supportive, but quiet. Her topic did not come up. Her reflections at the end were: *I enjoyed the opportunity to share, listen, and offer suggestions.*

In our second focus group Ms. Mountcastle gave her thoughts on motivation, when a new teacher brought up the topic, and how it related to gifted students. *I know when identifying children that are gifted, motivation is one of the things we have to talk most about to parents*

because the children at the Primary level don't appear motivated on the type of screenings that we use. And, motivation is tied in greatly with puberty. It is a developmental skill to become intrinsic. So you may just have a group of children that are not mature enough to accept the fact that it comes from within. On the other hand we have a lot of gifted children whose parents are very motivated for them and do a lot of their homework assignments and project assignments. They have a hard time understanding, well, look what a good job you did, and it is not a student's product. So it does tie into maturity. It is related to puberty. A lot of children, on the average, do not show interest and motivation until they are in 6th grade. It depends where they are developmentally.

We have a lot of kids that start off the year being pretty motivated, they really want to try, but then they get so frustrated because they realize they don't understand... 'Why am I even bothering?'. . . and they lose their motivation. That is one of the things we struggle with the most.

Looking at the – we just talked about this today - looking at the CRCT or test that they have been using to screen for gifted, your gifted children are the ones that balk on the CRCT because if they get to one of the “exceeds” questions and if it is truly one that they don't know, they shut down. They are more apt to shut down than your average student. They become emotional about it, too, because there is a goal.

A few minutes later, Ms. Mountcastle brought up a topic she wanted to discuss. Last week was one of our toughest weeks that we have to do as teachers because I had to do the good touch/bad touch program with all of second grade, and so that is where my thoughts and feelings are. I wasn't dealing with anything specific that happened with a child academically, I was dealing with what was going on at home and some things that children didn't really understand

that were happening to them. But it is so wonderful giving these children the opportunity to have ownership of their feelings and what is happening to them and that they have a voice and they can get help when they need it. They also in a roundabout way are getting help for their abusers. This was not a hard year, when I was teaching it, because I only had three children that came to me talking about some confusing touches that they had, they were concerned about, versus other years when it has been a lot more traumatic.

Ms. Mountcastle's topic for our third focus group was: time management for classroom and TSS ability. But, she first discussed Teresa's topic with her, which was test anxiety for teachers, students, and parents. You see with the gifted population... the testing that the gifted children have, is that when they hit the questions, the spelling questions, and they don't know it and they feel like they need to know it, they do just like E.I.P children, they stop. They miss several questions. They will either stop and not try to go further and that is something I need to address with them. And also they may not shut down completely like the E.I.P children, but for the next several questions they are thinking back to that other question. It is like, well, maybe this is what they meant.

I don't know – just as being teachers, you know, we feel like so much is riding on it as far as how we look. We need to realize that as long as we are doing our job, to the best of our ability, then that is all we can do. You can't get blood out of a turnip. And, I was talking about this, this morning. The anxiety that teachers feel is that publication of the CRCT scores and the fact that that is what people are looking at. They don't look where you started and where you have gotten to and the steps you have had along the way. They look at the end results and judge you from the end results and that not right either.

Time management, Ms. Mountcastle begins, I am really feeling that right now in my life. Big time. Trying to get in all the 1st and 2nd grade reading and math. I know we have to have the CRCT in April. I realize that, you know, you can't wait any later. But it is almost like you have to have taught all the standards by that test time. Well, mine is that I have built up my gifted population. I have started new groups of children, and am trying to get to know them. We almost don't have the time to say, 'Well, we will have an adjustment period.' They almost need to jump right in and be accountable for their behavior and be accountable for their class assignments and I feel kind of stressed that I haven't gotten the chance to really know them personally before I am having to redirect so much of their behavior, when it may be that they are anxious coming to a new class and things like that. The other thing with the time management is that now that all of my segments are filled with children, I have 40 more children to screen. I am going, when will I do that and how will I do that? And that is not the only thing that I am held accountable for. I have lesson plans. I have responsibilities to parents to let them know how their children are doing. I have the responsibility of a teacher that is not new to teaching, but is new to our school; I'm a mentor. I don't feel like I have had any contact with her either with things that I have done. It just – it is just always the hard time of year for me – it seems to really start getting stressful. It is like you were saying, there are certainly things I need to be doing with all these new groups of children to get them ready for the CRCT.

Ms. Stewart joined Ms. Jones and Ms. Mountcastle toward the end of the pairs/small group sharing time in the third focus group and their conversation turned back to test anxiety, but ended with the connection to time management. *At our school...we have been doing our testing workshop with our parents. We use to cover more of the test anxieties that those children were feeling and the parents would feel and the teachers feel. And we did exactly, what you said, we*

would say they are going to feel anxiety from a pop quiz. They will feel anxiety once a week on a spelling test. Instead of that, what we have swung to is not really test anxiety, but saying we want to do well on the CRCT because the scores will be published in the paper. And those two things are not the same. Those need to be approached very differently. And unfortunately it is not right now. We also talked about time management, especially this time of year when you are trying to get, you know, one kind of overlaps with the other, you are trying to get it all in before the test.

Ms. Mountcastle wrote in her reflection: *At first, each topic appeared to stand on its own . . . The overlap toward the end was spectacular. I enjoy working with small groups or partners, before sharing with a larger audience. I appreciate the time to have someone listen and offer suggestions.*

In the fourth focus group, Ms. Mountcastle was paired with the new teacher who teaches the entire fourth grader math because Ms. Mountcastle's topic was: *Math concerns for EIP students*. After listening to the new teacher's concern and offering her support, she suggested a person to meet with for suggestions. *She has her math endorsement and what they really did a lot of with us was what the GPSs, they actually verbally explained the types of things they were doing. They are doing more of the organizing items on paper and we have had a lot of success. The EIP kids are beginning to see it with even table graphs, so that might be a way that you could do that with doing the special shapes.* Ms. Mountcastle's last reflection was: *It is important to share frustrations and celebrations, find materials and resources to aid with frustrations, and to share verbally to gain a support system.*

I knocked on Ms. Mountcastle's classroom door, and was greeted by a smile. This would be our last time together. We were just getting organized when her granddaughter came bopping in the door. As the young girl with the big brown eyes started eating her snack, I pushed

down the button on the recorder and our final interview was underway. On a cold day in March in her secure and cozy classroom Ms. Mountcastle began by describing her thoughts about the focus groups.

Ms. Mountcastle felt like the focus groups offered a *unique situation* for the teachers since they were *across grade levels* and included teachers from *two different schools*. *I think anytime that teachers can get together and share, that good collaboration comes from that. Anytime that you can get another person's perspective about a concern that you have, that helps because sometimes we have blinders on, and we just keep seeing the same problems in one light. So, when someone offers a different view, then that might be a way we can come to work out a solution.*

As teachers, we come into teaching with ideas and expectations, in Ms. Mountcastle's case, that may have been generated from prior experiences in our youth. Ms. Mountcastle did not think that her expectations of being a teacher were met her first year or even her first few years. She did not feel like she received support from other teachers until she transferred to the Elementary School. Even though she dreamed or hoped that as a teacher she would find students who were motivated to learn, overall, she says that was not what she found. *That was a dream that I had, that I would have students that were motivated to learn, but overall I would say that wasn't what I discovered.* Ms. Mountcastle has expressed that she found at this school a support group that she considers *an extended family*. But, unexpectedly, Ms. Mountcastle has also experienced feelings of disrespect from peer teachers at a specific experience level.

For the past three or four years, Ms. Mountcastle has noticed, along with other teachers who have about the same level of experience as Ms. Mountcastle, that *the teachers that are brand new to this school system usually respect teachers that have a lot years of experience.*

And, the teachers that have been teaching 20+ years *have a respect* for experienced educators. But, *there is a little group that has taught between 7 to 10 (or 15 years), in her building, who do not respect those that have a lot of years in the system and have been there and done that and, you know, have a lot of ideas.* Ms. Mountcastle gave me a specific example. *Well, a good bit of it has been direct confrontation and being called the “B” word to my face. Being told, ‘I don’t have to listen to what you have to say’ and things like that. I don’t think that that is respectful.* Ms. Mountcastle says that she has gotten together with other teachers who have the same amount of experience in teaching as her and talked about the fact that they feel something from a segment of teachers with a middle level of experience in teaching. She has handled these feelings *by having a support group of teachers that I feel like I can trust and that I can go and talk to and have a genuine concern for me as a person.* She does not want to be talked about or gossiped about. She does not want to share thoughts and feelings with teachers that would turn around and say to other teachers, *‘Oh, did you hear what she said this time?’* She does feel like in her experience *‘grapevines’ or gossip* do exist in schools. She says that her support group is not just teachers that have a lot of years of experience. She sees her support group as basically everyone, except for the teachers that fall in that middle experience range.

This year, Ms. Mountcastle has taught the same classes as last year, 3 segments of EIP and 3 segments of gifted. So, in most ways this year has been what she expected. However, *because of so many budgetary concerns, I do feel like that has been an overriding issue to whether or not my position would be available next year because of funding or lack thereof. So that has been kind of – it has been difficult to teach not knowing the future.*

But, if Ms. Mountcastle were given a choice, she would like to have the same job description next year that she has this year.

About the future, *I have seen a lot of educators that have stayed in too long. Ms. Mountcastle has witnessed veteran educators being made fun of and laughed at in the teacher's lounge because of the mistakes they made. So I would like for it to be an easy transition for me that I would know when it is time to go. I don't think we ever stop being teachers, in the way, because we continue to teach our grandchildren. But ultimately, what I would like to do, because I am young, is that I would like to do one more full time year and then possibly go to part-time after that for a few years.*

As the weariness of the day begins to settle down on us, we draw our conversation to an end. Her ending thoughts involve teachers working together. *Collaboration is good, and there is a point where you don't need to just listen, but you need to do what is called active listening. When I actively listen, I am trying to figure out exactly what a brand new teacher is telling me and how to work out their problems. It is not just sitting there and saying, 'Yes, I understand.' It is going beyond that to help them with their needs. Or, to celebrate with what their celebrations might be.*" Ms. Mountcastle said that teachers should actively listen to each other, not just when talking to new teachers.

CHAPTER 6

MS. ADAMSON



In isolated regions gathering women in the area together helped overcome the loneliness that so many pioneer women experienced.

I waited in the hall for Ms. Adamson as she busily finished her days' responsibilities. There was a middle school-aged girl waiting with me. When Ms. Adamson returned and opened her classroom door for us to go in, she introduced me to my companion and said she had taught her in first grade and continues to teach her twirling lessons. *If you don't mind*, she said, *she is going to wait for me in the hall so we can ride to twirling class together*. With all the energy of a teacher just starting her day instead of ending it, Ms. Adamson showed me where to sit and started talking. She talked quickly and did not waste any time.

Ms. Adamson *came from a family of teachers* and always felt like first grade was *where everything came together for students. The phonics, the sounding out, the learning how to read and the excitement of reading for the first time. . . Everything. . . you know, teaching children how to use that and relate it to their everyday life. I was excited to use my own ideas, and not everything that my college professor said I had to do.*

Ms. Adamson started college at Abraham Baldwin in Tifton. *I am from Tifton, so I went there for two years. I met my husband my first week of school. Then, I transferred to UGA and finished here. I think our preparation was the best it could be back then, but the UGA education system at that time was having a really tough time with math professors. We had a math professor who was visiting and I cannot remember what nationality he was, but we had a really hard time understanding him... so I feel like that was the weakest part. As far as the language arts, reading, and special education, we had strong professors. I thought at the time that that was the best preparation, but what I found when I got in the school as a teacher was even more precious to me.*

Ms. Adamson had several pre-service teaching field experiences in a nearby county, but did her student teaching here in Jamison County. *I actually student taught here in this building. I was split with kindergarten half a day and 1st grade half a day, which is very interesting because my principal, my soon to be principal, knew she would have an opening soon in one or the other. She thought I should student teach in both, but that was a terrible thing. It was really hard. I didn't get the gist of either grade. You know, I pretty much got to find out what they were about, but I didn't get to really -- I just dove into the reading and math part of first grade. Kindergarten we pretty much -- back then, kindergarten was a little bit of letter recognition, take a nap, have a snack, you know, and it was full day kindergarten. It was not what I expected it to be.*

What I did find out was there are other ways to do things that work just as well as what we were taught in college, and I couldn't wait. I remember being excited about well, I can't wait to take some of the things I learned from real life teachers, not that our college professors weren't, but it seemed like it had been a while since they had been in the classroom. They were up-to-date with the new things that were coming out and down and across the country from

California, but I remember thinking I am going to show them; I am going to do what I want to do and pull from the best of everything.

I wanted to be able to control the learning environment. I learned from a teacher that had a wheel rotation system. She had a group at reading, a group at seatwork, and a group at centers all at the same time, and you probably remember that. So she had her groups. She had them grouped by their levels of reading and then she paired them up with center partners, and that took a lot of doing. But, I was very surprised at how well that worked. It took a lot of training for us to all learn how to do that, but that is what we did. We did centers, and the centers were directly related to the math and reading that we were doing at that time. So that was one of my big goals that I hoped I could do was to eventually control the learning environment and keep all that going at the same time without being disturbed at reading groups and all.

That eventually came to pass and another thing I wanted was to pass my evaluations because I was the first group to field-test the Teacher Performance Assessment Instrument (TPAI). We had to do all of the lesson plans for a unit and have a sit down conference with our buddy teacher. I did pass it that year, and that was very nice. I had lots of observations from my principal and did pretty well with those. Also, I wanted to be able to share and borrow ideas from other teachers. I had heard from my two sister-in-laws, one who taught in Atlanta and one in Florida that if you went into a room and looked at a bulletin board of another teacher and borrowed her ideas that that was often not taken the best way. There were teachers, particularly older ones I believe, that did not want to share and borrow ideas. That was their idea and you were not supposed to borrow it. But, when I came to Jamison County, it was the Elementary

School back then, it was just opposite. We all shared and borrowed and planned together, even back then, we planned together.

Another thing is, I knew I was going to need help with management and discipline. I had already had my first child, and she was one year old. So I was learning a little bit about that part of being a parent and maybe I could kind of relate to parents a little better I thought, but I just knew that the management system that I wanted to try might not be exactly what I needed. I was hoping that the rest of the grade would work with me and show me. Well, come to find out every grade had their own management and discipline system, and we were all suppose to use the same system, so that was great because it was set up for me. I did, as every teacher does, you know, you have to work with different children individually as their needs occur, so some things I changed and did on my own, but it was nice to come in and already have something set up. Also, I didn't have to worry because the kindergartners coming up already knew what it was going to be like, so that was very helpful.

Ms. Adamson expected to be excited to teach reading and math. She wanted to use her own ideas, be able to control the learning environment, and share and borrow ideas from other teachers. Ms. Adamson wanted to pass her evaluations and expected to need help with management and discipline. Ms. Adamson told me, *I wanted to be the best teacher that there ever was. I always thought that. I guess everybody comes in with that. You are really eager and ready, particularly after having your own child, you know, and just following through with all of that. You think, 'I am going to be the best one there ever was.'*

We did not have a TSS program or mentor/protégée program in Jamison County at that time, but one of the older teachers, who is still living now, was the remedial teacher. She would come in every day during the first two weeks of school and just say, 'Go down to my room. There

are some cookies and tea down there and punch. I am going to read them a story, you just go take a break.' She was a shoulder if I needed one to cry on or whatever, and she gave me breaks. So, I actually had a mentor built in there. She led me through and helped me with the reading program.

Ms. Adamson's first teaching assignment was a homogeneous group of gifted first graders, with the Superintendent's son in the class. I will tell you a funny story. My first year teaching, the same principal that gave me kindergarten and 1st grade to student teach in, gave me the last year of homogeneously grouped students as my first year of teaching. She gave me the gifted children. I never have worked so hard in my life making five folder games every weekend and coming up with work to challenge these kids. A funny story to go along with that is that the very first group I had, I had the youngest child of our Superintendent. Now, I had had a field experience with a wonderful teacher. I loved the way she had an open classroom. She invited parents to come in at any time. So, I sent a letter home to all my parents saying, 'Please come visit.' Well, the very first visitor I had was my Superintendent.

I had a reading group back at the back that his son was in, and he came and walked right on in and sat down with us. I know that my whole body turned red from blushing, I'm sure. I thought, 'Oh gosh, here I am, and he is checking me out. I am probably going to lose my job if I don't do it right.' So, I just carried on and the rest of the class was doing what they were supposed to do. At the end of the lesson I sent them back to their seats. He walked to the door and called me to the door. I just knew doom and gloom right there. He called me to the door and he said, 'Mrs. Adamson, I am very glad to see that you have so much going on in your room and that everybody is doing what they are supposed to do. I came today to tell you that this child of mine,' and I knew his other children too, 'is not like the others. He has a mind of his own. You

know, he can defy authority when he wants to and I came to tell you and to see how he was doing. All you have to do is pick up the phone and call me if you have a problem.’ So, you know, that was my very first parent that came to observe, and it was my boss. And you know, I always thought that he was there to see how – and he probably was, to see how I was handling things, but he was mainly there for his child. So that was a funny story. And that was the first week of school, also. Ms. Adamson is still teaching first graders at the same school today, and this is her thirty-first year.

In thinking about changes that have taken place in education, Ms. Adamson brought up the whole language reading approach. You probably remember this. I remember when whole language came through. I remember when the next county over got rid of their textbooks. I was told about that by my friend who taught there. I remember her saying, ‘We are so excited because we are going to use this new program,’ and I remember three weeks later her calling me up and saying, ‘Do you have any basals that I can borrow?’ Well, what I feel so fortunate about is that all of the principals that we have had, sent us to conferences, wanted to be sure that we were up to date on all the new styles that were coming down, new methods, but never bought into anything saying, ‘You are going to change what you are doing and do this.’ They always let us take the bits and pieces that were the best of all the new styles that came down and let us use those and fuse those into what we were already doing. So, yes, a lot of changes. As you have heard, the pendulum has swung back and forth many times. It has gone full circle so many times.

Ms. Adamson tried to remember the reading curriculum circle she has experienced. We went to whole language and then we went – well, we went first from reading groups where the children were basically reading at the same level because all we taught was the basal and a workbook. What you did was you pulled a group back whether they were your red robins or

whatever, you know, blue birds, and they just went around and read. You heard the same story every day, and if you had three reading groups, you heard the same story three times a day. They did the same workbook pages. Then, we went from that into whole language where you were supposed to infuse everything, theme related, you know, whatever your theme was or your main idea for that day. If it was weather, all your reading, science, and math centered on that. You took everything on just a language approach and taught it all day long. We did not actually go to that, but we did take a lot of ideas from that. We started using our writing. We took bits and pieces for writing, to work around the theme of what we were reading that day or whatever, then it went the opposite of that because they finally figured out that whole language was not covering the QCC's, Quality Core Curriculum, back then. We had QBE's, Quality Based Education, and then the QCC's so you know, we went to a different approach. It was more of trying to work with children more individually on what their level was for reading. Then, we added a phonics program called Sweet Phonics, that we teach and we added the word Wall Words. So those were some new components of first grade that go along with our language arts series. We added Sitton spelling, which is something that is different. A lot of schools don't use that, but we like it. It went from teaching small groups to teaching whole groups to teaching small groups and individually. So you know, I guess that is what I mean by full circle.

Ms. Adamson thinks the way her school teaches now is the best. I have seen the difference in my children's ability to read, their love for reading, because I am actually coaching them daily on how to read. She uses context clues, phonics, teaches how to comprehend, and what the main idea is. The school received a grant to purchase the Waterford Computer Lab, which is an individualized program for each child, and she thinks it is wonderful. We also started using a lot of money we got from the grant to buy stacks and stacks of leveled readers and a

place to put them. Trying to follow all of our standards. We also got a grant that we used to actually sit down, and I was on the committee for first grade, and we actually sat with kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers for science, social studies, reading, math, and language arts and we decided who was going to take ownership for which standards. But, this grant required the kindergarten teachers to go from the old teaching of a letter a week to teaching a letter each day, and you talk about some of those teachers not wanting to buy into that. It was obvious that they were not happy. They would say, 'We can't do that. These kids can't learn that fast.' Well, it was a struggle the first year. But when we got those students as first graders the next year, it was amazing how many children were ready to read or already reading. So, then we had the year of 'Okay, we have got to get through all this and cover all these standards.' So, when we sent them to second grade, the second grade teachers were, 'Wow, you know, these kids already know. . .' – so in other words what I am teaching now in first grade is more like what second grade taught years ago. It has all moved down. It may not have moved down nine months, but it has moved down at least a half of year.

Ms. Adamson says that the curriculum has cut out the fluff, and she likes and misses the fluff. The fluff included a lot more science and social studies, experiments and just, you know, taking that teachable moment, you know, the child talked about 'my grandmother and grandfather had a tornado near them. 'Here we go, that is your whole language, which still comes out in me. I want to stop and say 'Okay, let's get to the internet and find out about tornados.' And you can still do some of that, but cutting out the fluff means you stick to basically exactly what you need to teach to cover those standards and observe that the children can show you that they have mastered them by observation, by hands-on manipulatives, or by a piece of work that they have done. That kind of stuff is important and it took me a while to buy into it.

Now I understand because we give the Dibbles test, the Dynamic Indicative Early Basic Literacy test. The results of the tests at the beginning of the year and the end of the year show significant progress. It is amazing when you cut out the fluff and you stick to just what you need to cover in those standards and teach it. Ms. Adamson still reads to her students, but she keeps the pace, which means she has to find time to remediate and challenge. Ms. Adamson feels that she has seen education improve. In the state of Georgia, our school has improved dramatically. I have a very narrow viewpoint because I really haven't had a chance to go visit a lot of the other counties. We are given that opportunity, but I just -- I hate not being here. I love being here every day.

Ms. Adamson says that sometimes teachers do not buy into things or get their back up against the wall. If you have taught at least three years, you get in this easy pattern of 'Okay. I know what I am doing here. I figured this all out and this sounds really good and it seems to be working.' Then, along comes something new like the new GPSs coming down and you have to teach, money, for example. We have always done a good job of teaching money here, and then we were told with the new math GPS that the children were going to have to make change from a \$10 bill and a \$20 bill. When that first came down to us, we were like, 'Oh, no, this is not appropriate for first graders. You know, that is not something that they need to be able to do.' We had our back up against the wall. We were angry about it, stubborn, and we were very resistant to change because we thought we had been doing a good job. 'Now, the State Department, those people that have not been in classrooms and do not know what they are talking about as much as we do, how dare they tell us that we have to teach this, this and this.' But anyway, come to find out that after we sat down and cooled off, and our learning specialist came, sat down with us and broke everything down; she showed us in the math and the reading

what we were having to do, it was simple. It was basically using what they had already learned and transferring it to money with \$10 and \$20 by counting by 2, 5's and 10's. It was something that they could do. Then, we were very proud that our children were able to do that. So that is what I mean by back up against the wall, and buying into it. The teachers were told by the administration to trust that your children can do it. Set your expectations high, set your goals high, and trust that you can do it and they can do it. And Ms. Adamson adds, kindergarten showed us the way, referring to when they started learning a letter a day.

Since Jamison County is a rural area, Ms. Adamson feels like people view the students as having little to no preschool experiences. *I hate to say it, but some people think about our little rural county as, you know, children that come out of the yard without preschool experience. But, you would be very surprised at the children in our county. We still have some, just like anywhere, that are reared or raised by grandparents, so they might not have the most up-to-date bringing up and may not be read to as much. Although, that, I think, is a real atrocity that people would believe that because I have a lot of dear grandparents that have taught their children well, probably more so than their mom or dad would, but I think a lot of people feel that way about our county.*

She has had student teachers that did not seem pleased to be assigned to her school. She felt like they were unhappy because they were not placed in a school close to the university. *I have student teachers in the past who, when they come I could tell that they were like, well, we got stuck out here. You know, we have to drive all the way out here, and our friends are at schools closer and they can sleep late and get up and they are going to have the best of the best, because that county has more money and their teachers get paid more. Well, then they would come back after their first session and say, 'We are really glad we are out here. We don't have*

half the discipline problems that they have in the inner city schools. So and so had a first grader that brought a knife to school, a big knife.'

I think sometimes we feel like people think Jamison County is not the best school system just because we are rural. So, the teachers had to really believe in their students and buy into the fact that we can do this. It is going to take some hard work and the first years are going to be tough, but we finally all bought into it. Actually, there were a couple that did leave our school system, not particularly because they didn't buy into it but they had husbands who transferred or whatever, but I always wondered whether they would have bought into it as well as everyone else. But, when you have a strong grade group like we have, and kindergarten teachers are very strong. We are a family, first grade is and second grade. We all work together. It made buying into it the easiest thing to do. Ms. Adamson feels like people do not think of Jamison County as a good school system because it is in a rural area of the state. But, the teachers work together, become a family, and believe in the students.

Support systems are in place now for new teachers, but were missing from Ms. Adamson's first year. I have already mentioned that there was no TSS program, so there were really no mentors that came in except for the wonderful lady that I had. But it still was not like the mentor program here now, so it really starts from the ground level with your mentor and your protégée teachers who meet often to be sure they are on the right tract, that they get all the communication, that they understand everything thrown out at grade group meetings. We often throw out things, you know, right and left, there are terms and terminology that we understand and they are not going to raise their hand and say, 'Will somebody explain that to me?'... because they don't want to seem like, well, that is something I should have learned in college, when really it may be something that we just use here. Then, we have our ILS, our learning

specialist, who is wonderful. I am amazed at her. She is in the right place; she probably should eventually be a principal. New teachers have mentors and protégée teachers who meet with them. And, the other teachers have the benefit of having a Learning Specialist that keeps them informed with new legislation and can help them when necessary.

Our learning specialist brings everything down from the State. She travels all over. She has already heard it all, knows it all, but she has to go anyway because we are ahead it seems, Georgia is on some things, and our school is. So at her meetings when she is giving material to us, it is very quick. She does it very briefly, quickly, and she usually involves us. She passes out something that says, 'Okay, cut and paste this.' She teaches; she is a great teacher. She teaches us about the new things coming down and supports us with it. If you want her to come in and observe you or help with a particular child that is having a learning problem and you just can't quite figure it out, she will come work with that child. Anything from individual children, to testing, to new GPS understanding. . . We are just working on writing and new rubrics right now. We just met about that yesterday. I probably am going to call her and have her come watch me do a lesson with that to be sure, because we are implementing the fact that children need to take ownership for their own rubrics and own writing. Plus, the support given from the administration and grade groups through sharing and planning together is great, according to Ms. Adamson. So I think it is the best support system. See, I have only been here. I have never been to another school, so I don't really know how others do it.

Ms. Adamson ended with telling me what her first principal told her that first year of teaching. She sat down and she said, 'You're going to hear that there are better ways to do things than what you do and what you have learned, but trust in yourself ...and ask if you need help...and just do the best you can. I am always here for you. . . Reach out if you need it.

I thanked Ms. Adamson for the time we had shared together and before I pressed stop on my recorder she added. . . *You know, we have had the same reading series for twelve years, in fact, the little girl sitting on the floor, well she is not really little any more, she is in the eighth grade, I taught her in first grade with that same reading series. We all love it, but we are getting a new reading series next year; however, that is not why I am retiring. This is just a good time I think. I will still be teaching baton twirling, and I hope that as a grandparent I can come back and mentor and work in the classroom and go on field trips and cut and paste and do things for fun.* This is her last year of teaching, and I am honored to be experiencing it with her.

Ms. Adamson thought we were meeting at her school for our first focus group, so she came in a little late. The school she teaches in, and has always taught in, was originally called the Elementary School, when she started teaching. The name has been changed to the Primary School. So, when I sent the email that the first focus group would be in the conference room at the Elementary School, Ms. Adamson thought, *'Oh, that's my school.'* However, she realized what had happened and came looking for us. She found us in the Elementary School conference room. As she arrived, I was asking the seven participants if anyone had something to share or something they would like to talk about with other teachers. Ms. Adamson immediately said, *I do. I have a unique child in my room this year who has some behavior problems that are really hard, even after teaching 30 years, to put your finger on, so to speak, and I have had other teachers, one in this focus group, come observe this child. I have read very diligently through the kindergarten teacher's file with all of the documentation that she has done and all of his work, and another interesting thing is that I happened to have a UGA intern in my room for the past month that has also observed this child and done some documenting for me. I want to give one specific example about something that happened this week.*

On Friday, we normally do testing for reading and for spelling. We were out of school today, being Friday, so we tested yesterday. One of the problems, the main problem that this child has is focusing attention. If I had to give two or three words that express as a teacher how I felt about his ability to focus or inability, the easiest thing for everybody to understand would be that he is kind of 'in a fog,' so to speak, 'on and off' during the day. Well, I was calling out each word on our 10 word spelling test, and I tried so many different things to keep him on-task and at this point this child has no diagnosis of anything. Parents are aware of the problem, but there has not been any other steps taken, it is just plain documentation.

I had the UGA intern sitting at the back table and what was really cool about this, if you could understand, he has been in my room long enough to know my strategies and long enough to know this child. He caught on immediately to what I was doing, and we made eye contact. It was just like that, I wanted to say watch and see what happens for me, but he knew what I was doing. I started out 8 ft. away from the child, and I moved around the room as I was calling out the spelling words and I called out the first two words, and he stayed with us. I got to the third word and I noticed that he was staring off blankly, which happens a lot. I moved two steps closer and I raised my voice a little bit, you know, to call out the next word. I always say, 'Put your finger on number three.' I was very clear about that, but still no attempt from him to focus and find where we were. I called out that word, and then I moved to the next word. I moved two steps closer and about that time my UGA intern and I made eye contact, and he figured out what I was doing. I called out the next word, and I repeated it twice, said it a little louder, he still had no idea where we were or what we were doing. I finally walked right straight to his desk and actually made contact with his desk and stood, he was facing the front and I was facing the side of the desk, I called out the next word and said, 'Put your finger on black number five,' and it

was incredible that he never, even with me standing right next to him, I even lightly touched his arm, you know, that he never came out of the blank stare and never refocused to find where we were.

So for three of the spelling words, he just literally was somewhere else in the room or in his mind. But I just thought that was interesting. I know that is a specific, that is not a general thing that happened, but what I find as a veteran teacher that is happening now that is different from when we first started, some of us here, that you have more and more children, you know, who have specific needs, that you have to modify for and use different strategies to document for six weeks or longer. I just thought that was a neat example, particularly with the UGA intern. This was his first, I guess, level 1. So that was just something I wanted to say because it involved a veteran teacher and a teacher-to-be, that is already getting to experience children and how you teach individually for children and try to match their learning styles and change your methods. But there is definitely a problem there and it needs to be figured out as soon as possible because he is just missing chunks of learning. One teacher has observed him in kindergarten and first grade. She says what happens with him is he may be listening for a minute, like you are in the middle of directions, or teaching skills or whatever, and then he is off and then when he comes back to you he can't connect what you just said with what he is supposed to do because he has missed those chunks of learning. So he is in this world of 'What do I do? What do I do?' which is really, that to me would be anguishing to a child. It would be anguishing to us.

Yeah, can you imagine, like coming in late. I was already upset because I was in the wrong place, but the child, all day long this happens to him. Every fifteen minutes or whatever, so I just thought that was a neat thing to start with today.

I will go ahead and tell you, this parent called to set up a meeting with the principal and was going to ask for the child to be taken out of my classroom. Not that she disliked me, in fact, she said I was a, I can't tell you the words she used. She said I was a 'blank' good teacher, and she wanted to make sure I knew that. Then, this week the mom came back in to see the principal and said she had prayed about it and she decided that they were going to leave him where he was. But going back to the documentation though, in the meeting the mom indicated that he didn't have this problem last year. And the principal immediately said, 'I remember sitting in meetings where we talked about this last year. We have a whole folder from the kindergarten teacher that states everything.' Even though I had all kinds of observations in front of her from different teachers, you know, UGA interns, different teachers, she still – it is just hard to face when a child has a problem. You are trying to come up with your own reasons for his problems . . . Ms. Adamson wrote in her reflections at the end of our focus group: A veteran teacher asked for help with a special needs student. The experienced teachers gave helpful suggestions. I hope the new teachers received some useful information.

For our second focus group, Ms. Adamson wrote down *math curriculum changes* as the topic she would like to discuss. Ms. Stewart started the discussion about a parent conference she had been in recently where she wasn't sure whether she answered the parents concerns or knew exactly what the parents wanted her to do. Next, Ms. Dixon brought up her need for help with students who are not self-motivated. Then Ms. Adamson had an opportunity to share her topic. *I was just going to mention our math curriculum while I had two teachers from here and you guys that work with older children in math. We are still struggling to try to figure out our pacing and not only that, but scope and sequence. What we want to teach when, and you know, we don't just take our math book and go straight through it. We pull out and try to figure out, one of the things*

that really bothered me, and I remember talking to Ms. Jones about it last year, is that this series teaches a lot of strategies. Take for example in subtraction. It teaches a lot of different strategies, but one of the things it does not teach that we are use to teaching is counting up. It is not in our book and I know that – do ya'll use – when you are multiplying or dividing and you are having some subtract and divide do ya'll still teach that? Do you see the children still use that?

Ms. Smith and Ms. Stewart's topics were similar. Ms. Stewart needed help working with a parent, too. The parents' expectations with what the student is responsible for and what the teacher's responsibility is with agendas was the issue. In the third focus group, Ms. Adamson was paired with a new teacher, Ms. Dixon. This seemed like a good match because Ms. Dixon is a math teacher, and Ms. Adamson had a math curriculum question during our last focus group. Ms. Adamson's topic during this focus group was: *When should grade placement screening take place?*

Let me tell you about my situation. A student came to me not ready for first grade at all. In fact, she still has a lot of kindergarten skills that she has not mastered yet and she is very young. So from the get-go the mom came in and met with me and said, 'You know, we are not sure that this is the right class for her, but we wanted to try it. We didn't want her to be held back. Mom has worked with her really hard this year. But there is evidently some type of comprehension problem and I am not, you know, I am not even, after teaching this long, I can't narrow it down, myself. But she is weak in math, weak in reading, everything is weak.

Mom and I met recently. She is a very young first grader. I felt like we should put off any initial planning until she was closer to seven. But now I am second-guessing myself. I am wondering if we should not have already done something because it is so frustrating for her. She gets pretty much one to one testing. She doesn't do well and this is with extra reading, extra

math, staying late, small group reading, small group math and her mother. When we met at Thanksgiving her mother was pulling her hair out because she had too much homework. I got to thinking, if we got the mother to hold her back --- seven in first grade. --- I got worried about that --- It seems like it would be such a better experience for her to be held back now. I cannot imagine her sitting in a second grade classroom and doing what they do. She can't do enough of the work. She is shy. We would try to get her to join a group and work with a group.

Ms. Dixon's topic was again related to student motivation. Ms. Adamson tried to add to the behavior modification ideas and suggestions they had discussed during the second focus group. Ms. Adamson's reflection at the end of our time together read: *Loved the pairing; nice to talk one-on-one about a topic. Resolved an issue on testing a child, so thank you. I hoped I helped Ms. Dixon with her motivation issue.*

Our last focus group was formatted the same as the third one. Almost everyone wrote that they enjoyed having part of our time together paired with another teacher. Ms. Adamson's topic was: *veteran teachers helping new teachers with individualized instruction.*

Ms. Adamson was paired with Ms. Stewart, and Ms. Stewart shared her frustration over a particular student. Ms. Stewart even says that she thinks she needs an attitude adjustment.

Ms. Adamson leads into her topic by bringing up the student she had mentioned to Ms. Dixon. *It just hit me today that I had a child in my room that really needed to stay in kindergarten but didn't. She is so far behind everybody, and she has poor fine motor skills and there are so many things that I have done for this one child. I mean I have documented everything. Anything from the bubble wrap we take to recess to let her mash to try to work on just everything. She has individualized seatwork, individualized spelling, individualized reading, and I mean everything. But what worries me is that, you know, I understand that that has to be*

done for children who have special needs. I mean, she is not even diagnosed anything. She is just in our regular class. Doesn't need speech. But her reading and math are both low. But it worries me to think about newer teachers who, I mean, it took me years to figure out how to do that and we don't have a lot of time. We have our own classroom to go in and work. They need to learn how to manage a whole class, small groups, how to pace, keep up with struggle of teaching all the different subject areas and all that assessment and whatever. But that is something that has always worried me. I don't know. What do you think about that?

On Ms. Adamson's final focus group reflection she wrote: *I have enjoyed our sessions. I especially appreciate the opportunity to hear other teachers' voice their problems, opinions, and experiences. I hope to learn more about the finished product of this study and have enjoyed participating. You have been a gracious host and a good group leader.*

It was good to be back with Ms. Adamson for a final interview. She has so much energy. Her room shows signs of her leaving. She is beginning to pack and think about this being her last year as a teacher. She started talking almost before I could get my tape player turned on. She was excited about a student's progress.

Ms. Adamson began our discussion by giving me an update on a student she had brought up to the group during our first focus group. Ms. Adamson had read the documentation from kindergarten and had asked different educators to observe this student. In October, during our first focus group, Ms. Adamson admitted that the parents had initially requested a classroom change, but Ms. Adamson felt like she had a good relationship with the child and had met with the parents continually about the student's progress. She now shares that the parents did have the child tested, and he was diagnosed with Asperger, ADHD, and other emotional problems.

This child has come a long way...His parents finally decided to have him tested individually with a private psychologist because of his failing grades on his progress report and then on the report card. So, that lit a fire under them. The report said it was evident that the doctor was considering that he did have Asperger, and ADHD and some other emotional kind of problems. They did put him on medication for ADHD. I immediately saw a different child.

This child became more social. He was sweet and kind to everybody. He noticed children. This is a child who was in a fog most of the day. He sits in the front row. We turned the second day he was on medication, we turned to say the pledge to the flag and in the middle of it he said, Mrs. Adamson, so and so is pledging with their left hand. I don't know how he could see it because he was, you know, everybody's back was to him. This is a child that started noticing, in fact, now we have different issues that we are trying to work through because he notices when someone makes a mistake on something and he wants to tell them. 'That is wrong' – so now we are at the point to where we are working with a counselor here and working through issues that all the other first graders had to work through the first three months of school. We are catching him up, which is a good thing. Ms. Adamson had set herself a goal to find help for this child before retiring. She met her goal. He comes in the morning and speaks to me, 'Hello, Mrs. Adamson, How are you?' I mean, I almost passed out the first day he did that. I thought, now who was that, and he was the only one in the room. I said, 'Did you just say good morning?' And he said, 'Yes, ma'am, how are you?' It is just amazing, it really is. So that was a good goal to reach. This was a good experience.

Ms. Adamson has only taught in one county and at one school, but she feels like her school does a pretty good job of pairing mentor teachers with new teachers. They are called protégées. We are given time after school to meet with them. They pair us up for lunch and for

our swing schedule, which is our planning time or specials. So we do have time during the day that we meet. But, I feel like there is a need, and not just for those first year teachers. There are so many children now that have individual needs. They have different styles of learning, and I am coming up against a block wall trying to figure out how best to modify for them. The only way I got to where I think I am pretty good working with these students or even looking for their individual needs is after fifteen years of teaching. I think it took me that long to figure out, 'Oh, okay, this child is – this seat work is way too hard for this child... why don't I back up and let's build in some confidence and some success? Let's redo the seatwork for this child and let's talk with the parents about cutting down the spelling words.' It could be anywhere from preferential seating to changing seatwork to changing length of time that the children need to work, just anything. I think that first year teachers really have a hard enough time just trying to cover the material that they need to cover, but I think that is a good time to go ahead and have some in-service. You know, we haven't done that in a long time. Some in-service meetings on teacher work days or in-service days and have teachers that are experienced, that have real samples of work and real samples of documentation on these children with different kinds of learning needs and styles to show them, say, 'This is what you can do. This is what you look for.' Some real life examples from real teachers in their own school that they could then go to later and say, 'This is what I did, or I have a question.'

Ms. Adamson feels like even though she does classroom observations that she doesn't get a feel for how the new teacher is doing and what her questions may be. *It takes awhile to sit down with a teacher that is new. It is like me, the new and the old are much alike. It takes me a while. I have to talk through at least a good ten minutes before I finally get to my point, you know. I think it is the same thing with the new teacher. It is a process. They have to talk through*

this child and then they finally say, oh, now, I am there. I think this child probably needs – they don't recognize it easily. So, it would be great to have more time during the day or some observation time that was longer than just twenty minutes or thirty, and then some in-service time to really try to train teachers on how to spot and what to do: how to look for different learning styles and how to accommodate. This was Ms. Adamson's topic of interest to discuss for our last focus group. She expressed that it is a lot to expect. So we need to give them the support.

What Ms. Adamson enjoyed about the focus groups was *to sit and just think about something that you are concerned about because we don't often have time to do that. Usually we don't have time to think about it. It is like just fix it the quickest way you can and not really sit down and talk with another teacher about it and try to solve the problem. You know, or come up with different ways to try to solve the problems, so, I really enjoyed that time.* She felt like it was especially good for the new teachers to *talk about their experiences...to let them know they are not alone, and that they are going to have troubles...and problems.* Ms. Adamson felt like we did not get a chance to talk enough about parents. *And, we haven't even talked about parents, yet, and that is a whole other world: how to communicate best with parents, what to do in case you have parents that are angry or upset, or you have miscommunications. I think it is important that new teachers know that they have support there. All they have to do is ask. You know, so to me that is the most important thing, when you need help, raise your hand, go ask for it. Don't feel like you are stuck in that room, shut that door and you are there all day by yourself. Ask for help. I don't care how old you are.*

Ms. Adamson felt that asking for help was the most important thing for new teachers, to seek out support and answers, but for veteran teachers, she had other thoughts. *As far as veteran*

teachers go, I think it is important to remember that, and this is really important, that things are going to change and you are going to have to change with them, basically. It has been hard. We have been through several changes here at our school with that grant we got. We all had to join in or just, you either swim or die kind of thing. And we didn't all buy into it, to begin with. We didn't buy into the fact that kindergarten could learn just one letter a day and go on from there and not teach a letter of the week like I talked about, earlier. But they could do it, and then when they came to us reading, it was like, 'Wow! This does work.' That proved it to us. And then the next year, we took the ball and kept it rolling. So for veteran teachers, they just need to remember that the way you have done it for the last ten or fifteen years may not always be the best way. It is okay to try something new.

Ms. Adamson really does feel like she had the chance to experience the things she expected. One thing that first grade is doing this year that we have not done before is, we have our learning community time. We also have a sharing time and a planning time on Tuesday afternoons, and we sit down together as a grade group and plan. We actually go through our reading, math, language arts, science, and social studies units along with anything extra for that month. We plan together, and everybody brings anything and everything they have that fits with that month. We do it a week at a time, but we talk about it by the month. That is really neat. We have never done that before. I have always met with my protégée or pod, two or three teachers, but we have never sat down with all ten of us at one time.

Ms. Adamson says that sometimes they get off the subject, and talk about family or things they are going to do, but she thinks they need that, too. I think the sharing and borrowing ideas from others, and believe it or not, a lot of the younger teachers have really, you might not think so, have really good ideas and I am thinking, 'Gosh, why didn't I ever think about that

twenty years ago, you know?’ But they do a good job of listening to us’ oldie, goldie’ veterans. They do, they listen to us. They say, ‘Oh, that is good. I am going to try that.’ So they make everybody feel like you are worthy of sharing your ideas. I really enjoy that.

Ms. Adamson is retiring at the end of May. Her main concern is *clearing off her back shelf and packing up her things to take them home*. Additional concerns are that her classroom is being painted on May 4th. So, she has to completely move to another classroom by that date and *have everything off the walls* and everything out of the room. So, that date is pushing her to go ahead and pack her things early. She also is getting her first graders ready for the CRCT, teaching her twirling classes after school, and getting ready for a trip to Bermuda, given to her by her best friend as a retirement present.

Ms. Adamson is insistent that she will still be around next year. She will have two grandchildren in this school and has already *pledged to volunteer in their classrooms one day a week*. The principal has also asked her to be a mentor to a student that lives with her grandparents. The student’s mom died, but Ms. Adamson *taught her mom in first grade and taught her twirling. So I will be mentoring her. And, I will be around. I promise, I will be around.*

Contracts were given out last week and for the first time Ms. Adamson did not receive one. Ms. Adamson says that her retirement has been joyful in one way for the school. Because of the economy, each school is losing some of their personnel. The Primary school is slated to lose their learning specialist and two teachers. This was decided by years of experience. So, because Ms. Adamson is retiring, one less teacher will be without a contract. This has given her a little pleasure and made the going a little sweeter. *It has actually been joyful for the whole first grade because, I hate to say this but this is important too, we were told last week that two of our first*

grade teachers will not be getting contracts next year. And if it weren't for me retiring, there would be three who would not be getting contracts next year.

Ms. Adamson had many stories and strong feelings about veteran teachers accepting change and new teachers reaching out for support. As we were ending our time together in the back of that cluttered room that would soon be re-painted, I thought about the last expectation she shared with me during our first interview. And trying not to cry, I told Ms. Adamson that I am sure she was the best teacher ever. And, we hugged as two veteran teachers knowing how hard it is to leave that classroom and that last group of students behind.

CHAPTER 7

MS. JONES



So when we imagine women quilting together we can visualize many different settings.

I entered Ms. Jones's class quietly and watched as a small male student anxiously looked for the jacket he had brought to school that day. Ms. Jones was looking, too, and asking him questions like, 'Did you leave it on the playground?' He found it in the last place he looked and was feeling much better by the time he headed for the bus. As he walked out the door, leaving behind the security of this teacher who made sure he had all of his things, he looked back once and disappeared into the hallway. Ms. Jones introduced herself to me and explained that if he were to go home without his jacket, the boy would not have a very good weekend. She spoke from experience.

Ms. Jones showed me around her classroom, and as she took a deep breath and tried to relax at the end of this long September day, we began talking. *I knew from the time I was in second grade that I wanted to be a teacher. I had two years of undergraduate study at Truett McConnell, Jr. College, in Cleveland, Georgia, and it was there that I took my very first teaching class. After that, it was definitely a done deal. I transferred over to North Georgia*

College, in Dahlonga, and did all my teaching “training” under Dr. Janie Allison, who I thought was the guru of all gurus of education.

She taught me every class that I had in education except for, I think, maybe three. She had very high expectations of her students, and we worked ourselves to the bone. We had a lab school that we worked in three days a week and then we did a lot of work in the school system there in Dahlonga. We also worked over in an adjoining county, in several different schools. We were exposed to Montessori schools, church schools, and public schools. I felt very prepared for what was to come.

According to Ms. Jones, she had the opportunity to be in schools more than most pre-service teachers. In my junior and senior year, we did Lab School, like I said, three days a week, which was just right off campus. We taught two, three and four year olds, and we had to write up our lesson plans. We were observed doing that. We taught math, reading, you know, beginning reading skills, and we did art, music, and movement. It was very beneficial to me, especially, because I was an only child. I didn’t grow up with siblings, and also, I didn’t have nieces and nephews. I hadn’t been exposed to those very early beginning stages that children go through before they ever get to where I am now in public school. Then, we actually went to preplanning. We did preplanning with the teacher and were there when the children came. I think that is one thing that I see that beginning teachers kind of need, you know, they are always excited and uneasy when school starts. They just really seem at a loss these days. Not knowing what to expect.

These experiences left her feeling prepared for the task before her. It was very helpful, like in our social studies classes. We went out to the schools and we worked with different age levels teaching social studies. With our math, we did the same. With reading, all grade levels. I

don't remember working in kindergarten, but first grade through fifth grade we worked with all ages in different subjects. We were there a lot. Then, I did my student teaching in a nearby elementary school. It was an excellent experience. It was with a veteran teacher. I don't know if she was handpicked for me or I handpicked her, but we had a very good relationship. She was very supportive. She let me try things that were different for her class. She wasn't afraid to let me, you know, be my own person, but yet she was there to guide me through – and there were 33 children in the second grade class. It was excellent.

When Ms. Jones became a teacher, she had some expectations about being a teacher. I thought I would be able to teach children to read. I thought I would be able to help children have a sense of their own self worth. I wanted to be able to guide the children to have a desire to learn. I thought that I would have parents who wanted their own students, their own children, to have the same things, like wanting them to learn and have self worth. I thought that I would have co-workers who would be willing to help me teach these children and help these children be all they could be. I thought that I would have supportive administrators.

Ms. Jones had a wide awakening when she stepped into the teaching situation that she was hired to do. My first year was a very unique, very challenging, very frightening year. You know, right after I thought I was ready to teach, but I was given nothing to teach with, and it was a unique situation. I taught a transition first grade class. There were three first grade classrooms, and then I was the fourth. So there wasn't anybody else that was doing what I was doing. The co-worker part of it wasn't there. I didn't have anybody to go to, to say, you know, 'Now what are you going to do next week?' The school didn't want me; the system didn't want the children or me. I had 13 children. This was how she remembers feeling when looking back on her first year.

She was given 13 students who did not fit into a regular first grade classroom. They were either finished with kindergarten, but not ready for first grade; or had not been to kindergarten, but were too old to begin school at that place. *I think it was maybe nine of them had been in kindergarten, but weren't ready for first grade and then the others had never been to kindergarten. Because of their age, they didn't want them in kindergarten; they wanted them to move on to first grade. So they didn't have materials for them to use. They wanted me to come up with everything.* She was not given support, teachers to plan with, or the help that she needed. Some of the students were able to go on to second grade the next year, but some were not. *I think it was probably four of them who had to stay back. But, they were very needy children, academically. They didn't have a background at home that encouraged their learning. One of the main things I remember about that classroom was I had a back door that went outside, and I spent a lot of time chasing those children down across the field and to the woods because they would run out the back door. I would have to get someone to watch the others so I could chase the children. I spent a lot of time in tears at night because I just felt lost. I didn't feel like I was doing what I needed to be doing, because I didn't really know what to do. I thought I knew what I was going to do before I got there.* Ms. Jones felt prepared when she left college, but this was not the experience that she was expecting.

Ms. Jones stayed. *The next year I moved to a second grade position. I taught there for seven years in second grade, and I loved that. I had two very supportive teachers who had been teaching four or five years and I just felt like – I remember sitting there and listening to those ladies talking and thinking, if I could ever get to that point, you know, because they just seemed to have so much knowledge, and they had a hand on... seemed like everything. I just remember*

sitting there in awe of how they could discuss things and, oh, well this is how we are going to do this, and this would be a good way to do that, and they were very good mentors for me.

Next, Ms. Jones married, moved to Jamison County, and is still here today. *I have been here ever since teaching in many different positions. I started in Kindergarten for three years, and it was actually just called something different from that very first year that I had, it was a readiness kindergarten/first grade class. It was children who had either been to kindergarten or hadn't been. But I had support here because there was another teacher; there were two of us. Actually, we both started here at the same time, neither one of us had ever done it before. This teaching situation was much better than her first year experience. I had somebody to bounce ideas off of. Somebody that, you know, would just listen to me. We had a very supportive principal who helped make sure we had materials to work with in the classroom. Also, the other kindergarten and first grade teachers were there for her. They were very supportive.*

Another change was awaiting Ms. Jones, she was moved to third grade. These were the oldest students she had ever taught, and it would be working with another teacher. *When I left kindergarten I went to third grade and I taught there for four years. That was very different. It was unique in that it was in a team teaching situation. I did the language arts and social studies and my team teacher did math and science. I did that for two years. The first year was just a regular group of students. The second year one of our homerooms was just a regular group and the other was called Title I, I think, and we just swapped out and all of the Title I children were together. My team-teacher had a really hard time relating to those children, and she had a hard time relating to their parents.*

I spent a lot of time trying to keep the parents from not being angry, not being so up in the air. I worked with her for two years, and then I changed and worked with another teacher for

two years, and that was a wonderful experience. She was an older Black teacher – at this point I had taught school for years, but I tell my paraprofessionals and other people, and I don't know if I should even say this on tape or not, but she taught me how to teach Black children. I know that sounds very racist but she said, ' Ms. Jones, you can't talk with them. You have to just watch me.' So, that is what I did. I learned how, through her, to relate to Black children and to their families. I learned from that experienced teacher, and it has helped me all the way through my career.

From there, I became a Title I teacher and worked with fourth grade, second grade, and finally became a SIA teacher and worked with first grade. Then, we started this classroom where we have been for ten years. It is called an Academic Behavior Classroom, and it is a self-contained EIP class. Through this long journey, the most important thing to me is always the children and their sense of self worth. From way back at the beginning, if they didn't have a sense of self worth they were not going to have a desire to learn. They are not going to want to learn. So I have learned that if you can build that within a child, then you can start to teach them.

Ms. Jones explains that you teach self worth through love. Well, for a child, they have got to know they are loved. They have got to know they are appreciated. I think you teach that through how you treat that child. How you respond to their needs. Anything as small as stumping a toe or falling down skinning your knee, to the child coming in and saying, 'You know, my dog was run over last night.' You don't just say, 'Well, I'm sorry, go sit down and do your work.' You know, you let them know you are interested in their family. We talk with the children about their families. Who is important to them at home? How do you help them? How do they help you? You can teach self worth through showing them that they can do it. If you want the child to learn

something, set it up so that you know they can be successful. You might get to the same goal, but you don't always have to get there the same way. Different children need to go in different directions and learn in different ways. But let them know, even their small, small steps are important and that is what can help them to get to the high level. You know, we make big deals out of what most people think is nothing. But to those children it is important, so we just take it one day at a time, and sometimes we take it one hour at the time.

In thinking about expectations, Ms. Jones thinks that we expect too much of children too early. I don't think children have a chance to be children. Children learn so much through play. They learn so much about themselves and others and social skills by being able to interact through play. We still use a table of Legos. Until two years ago we had a housekeeping center. Even second grade boys loved housekeeping. And the main reason we had it was because we had seven and eight year old boys who had siblings that were newborns. These boys were very rough, violent children, and we were afraid for those babies' lives. So, we taught them in class, and they practiced how to hold a baby, how to pick up a baby, how to wash a baby, and how to feed a baby. But, because of moving classrooms, stricter fire codes, and more and more standards to cover, some things had to be eliminated from the curriculum.

I didn't feel pressured to take it out. It was – but actually, in some ways I guess I did. We were pushed so to get in this standard and this standard and this standard, you know, so we didn't have as much time to spend in those kinds of activities. We even had a barbershop hair-cutting center at one time. But I think that is one thing that really affects how children get along, even in elementary and middle school, is because they haven't been taught or had the opportunity to practice getting along with each other and with themselves, without direct intervention from adults.

Ms. Jones felt like through the role-playing that took place in the centers she could tell what had happened recently. *During that time we learned a lot about why that child came in and put his or her head down on the table first thing in the morning, or why that child is so sleepy, or why that child is withdrawn today or sad. It gave us an insight because they would role-play what had happened the night before or over the weekend, and it would help us know, well, this child needs a little extra attention for this reason.*

She also feels like expectations for children academically have increased. *When I taught kindergarten, back several years ago, 20 years ago, we taught sight words. We had like three, nine or so, site words. Now, they have 150. We taught numbers up to 20 and now they teach them up to, I don't know, I think 31. But it is not just that. It is like terminology and geometry standards. I just don't think some children are ready for it, not necessarily just having it presented to them, but the amount of things they are expected to master. You know, I can see maybe exposing them to some things, but not expecting mastery. When I first started working with second graders in this class for math, we taught addition and subtraction with the regrouping, but we didn't do that until December and January. Well, now we are through with that by the end of September. You know, we have other things we have to move on to, so I feel like it is too fast paced. There is not enough practice given, and not that you have to do 100 problems of one thing, but you know, for some children, it takes a little longer.*

When we first started this classroom we were given the leeway to teach the children where they were. We took the children from whatever grade level they were on and started from there. We took them as far as we could get them. Now, we are under very, very, very strict guidelines and have to do exactly what each grade level is doing. We teach the same story; we teach the same spelling, the same vocabulary, and the same math skills. Whatever the other first

graders or second grade classrooms are doing that week, that is what we are doing, too. And, what I have tried to explain, and this isn't from my principal but from higher up, is you don't build a house from the roof down and you don't teach a child reading and math from the top down. You have got to build that foundation. It is very hard for us, and it is very frustrating for the children. You can really see the frustration come out when you are asking them to read. Like reading this week, some of their vocabulary words are evacuation and precipitation, but when they are still trying to sound out long/short vowels, that is a lot to ask of a little child.

Ms. Jones feels like she is vocal and has a “voice.” She feels like new teachers need to know that they can object if they do not agree with a policy. As a mentor, she tries to instill this in new teachers. *My voice is heard often here. If I have a problem with something, every principal I have ever worked for, and I have worked for six principals, they know where I stand on all issues. I have always stated what I feel about something and why I feel that way. You know, don't just say, okay, I agree. Because if you don't agree, say why you don't agree. I am a mentor teacher for new teachers that come here and that is what I try to instill in them, is you know, don't just accept something because somebody says this is how you need to do it, or this is what you need to do. If you don't agree, you know, tell why you don't agree because you may have a better idea. There are always new ideas and new reasons for doing things.*

Ms. Jones feels like by giving support to new teachers through mentors, meetings, and common planning time, the turn over for new teachers is very low at her school. *Our beginning teachers are assigned a mentor teacher for two years. As mentors, we have logs of exactly what we are to cover every month. We meet, we have common planning time with them, and we meet on a quarterly basis with all the new teachers and their mentor teachers. We have a very strong mentor program in our school.* Ms. Jones says that she did not feel supported her first year of

teaching, but she did the next year because of the other teachers in her grade planning and working together. *When I went to teach in that second grade setting my second year, we didn't have a mentor protégée program, but we had that camaraderie with the three of us that taught second grade. We would plan together; we would work together, everything. I really felt a lot of support there, but it wasn't under an actual program.* She emphasizes that support does not have to come from a formalized program; *it could just be a buddy teacher that you just paired yourself up with. You know, somebody that you sought out yourself.*

As far as changes go, Ms. Jones feels like changes come in circles and nothing is here to stay. *You know, it is funny, a couple of years ago, I remember being in a meeting with another teacher who is the exact same age as me. The person that was doing the presentation said 'This is here to stay. It is not going away.'* And the other teacher, *that I spend a lot of time with and have a lot in common with, we both looked at each other and said, 'Nothing is here to stay.'*

We went through the whole language movement. We went through the hands on math movement. You know, hands on math, it has been through several times, you just call it different things as it comes through. Writing has become much more important, you know, now than when I first starting teaching. If you said something about writing then, they thought you were talking about penmanship, not writing in journals and those kinds of things. I think the writing process...has been integrated into the schools, probably for at least 15 to 18 years there has been a lot of writing in this school. So you see that is something that has stayed. The writing has stayed and been built on, you know, from year to year to year.

Our school never really jumped on the whole language bandwagon. We had a principal who was very gung-ho, very strong, and that was one of those times that we really stood up and shot that one down. And I know a lot of people didn't agree with us, but we can go back now and

say, see we told you so. We used other literature, but we taught our reading skills in direct reading and instruction. And the test scores were steady and rose over the years. We felt like we knew what we were doing.

Ms. Jones feels like direct reading instruction needs to be in the classroom and needs to be taught every day. The teachers need to hear those children read on a daily basis. It doesn't need to be a long drawn out kind of thing, but you need to hear those children read every day. They need some kind of math practice every day, too, a review. You know, whatever your standard is for the week, don't just teach that standard and move on and never look at that again. That daily practice in front of them every day is what keeps it fresh in their mind. I think those would be the most important things that I would say need to be in place.

From the vantage point of being a veteran teacher, Ms. Jones thought for a minute about anything she might want to add before I turned off the tape player and helped her stack the small, colored primary school chairs on the table. I just would like to say again that I feel very strongly that the most important thing you can teach a child is a sense of self worth. If they don't feel like they are worth something, especially with the kind of children that we have seen over the last ten years, if we haven't been a positive in their life, they wouldn't have had a positive. And some children don't know that, 'Oh, I am important, too.' And if they don't feel important, then they don't see a need to learn to read or do any math or try to get along with their friends. Everybody needs somebody. So I just feel like if you teach them that, then everything else will fall in place.

At the first focus group, Ms. Jones wrote down on a slip of paper the topic: The importance of mentors for beginning teachers. The topic went to the middle of the table and was not a part of the discussion during this first time together. A veteran teacher, Ms. Adamson, was sharing about a problem she was experiencing with a student. Ms. Jones responded by supporting

the teacher's efforts and encouraging her by complimenting her ability to work with students.

Ms. Adamson is such a great teacher. She has learned how to deal with this situation within her classroom. She knows how to stay on top of it. She knows how to keep moving along, which is great for the child, but it is not going to help him in the long run, to break out of this problem, whatever the problem is. She has to go outside of her classroom. I think for teachers it is a big thing, the documentation of whatever is going on in your classroom, behavior wise. Whether it is that he can't help it, or defiance or opposition or whatever. If you don't document it, I call it 'building a case for the child,' and especially with younger children a lot of times it takes us all the way through primary school to build that case, so they can get help when they get to the third grade. That is such a big part of education, accepting that this is where we need to move to. This is what we could do to help this child. If it is not documented that it happened every year, then you think it is a new problem, not an ongoing problem.

We go by the CRCT scores to decide if they need EIP help in reading, math or whatever. Think about this child on a CRTC test, just think, on the math you may have a page with 8 different skills tested. One and two are different skills. Three and four are different skills. You are hopping from one skill to another, and I can't see him, he at this point would have to have somebody with him 1 to 1, and then he still would not be able to – I have a little girl in my room who is in the same situation in my small group setting. If my para-pro or I am not right there with her, she is off somewhere, I mean, in whatever world she is living in. Like Ms. Adamson said, it seems like there are more and more children coming. I am sure that we had, when we first starting teaching, children with learning problems, we all did, but it may be that we have just learned, I don't know what you think, but we have learned how to identify those better. I am

sure we have, but it is just amazing, the difference, how much more we teach individually now than we used to. It really is.

The topic turned to children with disadvantaged home situations and making sure they have food on the weekends. *We have recently packed sandwiches and sent them home with children to make sure, not because there wasn't food in the house, but we weren't sure that child was going to get a portion of it. But when you send something home in the book bag, you know they have something. I think for beginning teachers, that is something you find out as you go along. Hopefully, you have a mentor teacher that can guide you in that. I think one of the hardest things for beginning teachers is working with parents. You know, conferences with parents, knowing what to say, knowing how to find out from them what their child thinks about school.* The discussion came to an end for our first focus group and Ms. Jones wrote as her reflection: *I hope I didn't talk too much. I hope the new teachers don't think the veteran teachers were too mouthy. I want the new teachers to talk more.*

Ms. Jones's topic for our second focus group was: *How the holidays affect children's behavior.* Each participant presented his or her topic and the teachers responded. Ms. Jones said this when the topic of teachers' expectations vs. parents' expectations was discussed. *The issue of parents having a hard time accepting B's is a question for something we brought up in our grade level meeting last week. Again, we seem to revisit it often. And one thing that I brought up was that I think as educators we need to re-train the general public, not just parents, lawyers, just the general public, that it is okay for children not to have all A's, because we have the issue here with children now. We have to justify why children have Needs Improvement or N's on their report card. We have to have a file showing, stating why these children need improvement. Well, on the second grade report cards, right beside the N, it has the grading system 70 to 79. Well,*

when I was in school, when I was trained in school, 70 to 79 was a C and C was average, you know. And I think that we have enabled these parents, and even some educators, not to understand that C is average. They think that their children should always have A's. Even my own children, I had one that had a really, really hard time accepting making B's herself, and heaven forbid the day she came through the door with a C. You know, and that wasn't something she has gotten from home. That was just something she had instilled into herself. I think we put that off on our children, also that is a problem even at this grade level with parents and just the general public, because we have some litigation in the county going on because of not meeting children's needs and not being able to prove that we had met their needs. And, a lot of it has to do with documentation, and that is why they were asking us to document why the children had the N. Well, you know, some children, like a second grade teacher said the other day, she had two children in her class who had N's who she was making multiplication for and she was doing – she had all different kinds of strategies and the child was still making an N. It was the best the child could do. You know, that teacher went on and said, 'An N is not acceptable any more. We are to make sure all children make E and S's, or we are to make sure all children make A's. You know, that is not what true learning is about. So, I know that doesn't help those parents, but just in general, we need to address that.

Now, back to the first thing you said. I have been doing this a long time and that may be why I do like I do, but when I sit down with parents I try very hard to speak very plain to them. You know, if I don't understand something they are saying, I just say right there on the spot, 'Can you explain that a little deeper for me? Can you explain that in another way?' If you can try to tackle it while everybody is still there around the table and not wait until somebody leaves and say, 'Did you get that?' Well, you can't get it after they walk out the door. It is okay to

question, in my eyes, anyway. If you don't quite understand what somebody is trying to ask you or something, just ask them. You know, 'I don't quite understand what you mean.' Really in the long run, they will appreciate that because they will think, 'Well, she is really concerned. She is really interested in knowing my feelings and my opinion.' Generally speaking, they don't take it as a questioning kind of thing. It is a caring kind of thing.

Ms. Jones tried to explain how she teaches subtraction when the topic of the math curriculum was discussed. You ladies are not going to like what I have to say. But we use that touch math. There is nothing wrong with that. That is coming back. The other day a teacher at our school asked for all the people who worked in second grade to give out fifteen problems, they were all subtraction. She wanted us to give it to each one of our second grade kids, let them work it, and then let them decide how they came up with that answer. She had different ways down there, how I got my answer. She is using this as one of her projects in school, and what she wanted to see was if the children who were doing well in math did it one way and the children who were struggling were trying to do it another way.

Well in my class, the boys, the three of them, they automatically did their touch math. Two of the three only missed one and I mean they did it and they were finished. The third one who is struggling desperately was focusing on the problems; he missed half of them the first time. But it is because he cannot, he can't do that yet. When I took my papers to the teacher, she said, 'This is strange.' I told her, we did our touch math, and they did it by that. And I said, 'But don't you think it might have been better to do the problems with two digit or three digits so you could really see the process they were using instead of them just knowing. And she said, 'Ms. Jones, you would not believe the higher levels of children that had missed problems. It was just simple subtraction.

Ms. Jones read her topic of holidays affecting student behavior. This was the day before Thanksgiving break and at this point in our meeting, only one teacher was left, Ms. Mountcastle. *Ms. Mountcastle and I agree on this topic, very much so, but the others probably could have seen a different side of it or it might have been something good for them to hear. Ms. Mountcastle and I talk about this often, every time a holiday comes up, and I wrote down that we need to be aware of how holiday seasons affect certain children's behavior, especially children who come from either abusive homes or negligent homes, and how that causes their behaviors at school to escalate. I see this in my class all the time. So, you know, I think that would be an important thing to talk more about when maybe more teachers are here. And when Mr. White is here, he might have some good thoughts on that as a counselor, you know.*

It is not only holidays, you are going to see these beautiful children who have been so well mannered and behaved and motivated to learn begin to shut down on you. It is because they know that they have to go home for six to eight weeks of summer where they are not going to get all the support they were getting. In May is when you really see a lot of this behavior. Also, at spring break, it doesn't have to be like Christmas or anything like that. Anytime they are going home. I have even had children when it was just a three-day weekend, that week you could see those behaviors. They would be –

Well, usually they can become real clingy or more whiny. They might even become verbally abusive toward you or toward their classmates because it is their way of trying to get things out. I have seen aggressive moves toward the teachers and other students where they would take it out aggressively, now we have it more where it is verbal, with the children taking it out on people that are there. It is kind of like we are being punished because we are sending them home.

It is just their way of coping or getting that little bit of extra attention before they have to go home. I will do whatever I have to do to get your attention right now. For some of the children, it is not related to holiday. It is related to the fact that this is the weekend that I am with dad. Next weekend I am with mom. Then the next weekend neither mom or dad have me, I may have to go to grandma's house. They go someplace different every weekend. I only have one child this year that goes regularly, I have a couple that go to one set of parents and then to another set. But one of them you can tell when he has been to his dad's house. Actually, when he stepped off the bus this morning, I knew he had been at his dad's house this weekend.

In the third focus group, each participant was paired up with another to discuss his or her topic. One new teacher was absent, so two veteran teachers were paired together, Ms. Jones and Ms. Mountcastle. Ms. Jones's topic was: *Test anxiety for students, teachers, and parents. I really mentioned the anxiety for teachers because I thought we were going to talk with the new teachers, but I am dealing with it by myself right now. I am really feeling test anxiety as a parent right now, too, because my daughter has end of course tests coming up. One of them is the new math in ninth grade. I am anxious about this.*

Ms. Mountcastle reminded Ms. Jones about the parent workshops they had done in the past that helped the parents through the testing process. Then, the pair switches topics and Ms. Mountcastle talks about time management. Ms. Jones concurs and adds; *I am really feeling that right now in my life. Big time. Trying to get in all the first and second grade reading and math. And it relates back to anxiety and having to make sure everything has been covered.* At this point, Ms. Stewart joined these two teachers because her partner had to leave, and she discussed the problems she has been having with POI interventions.

During our group sharing time toward the end, Ms. Jones tells the group what they discussed. *We were talking about test anxiety and time management and those kinds of things, and Ms. Mountcastle mentioned how we used to do parent workshops that focused on test anxiety and, you know, teachers working to try to get the children where they needed to be and how the parents could help with that, but, also, ways to alleviate the anxiety. Well, we still have the parent workshops, but we have moved so much from talking about the anxiety side of it to the importance of doing well on the test so we won't look bad in the newspaper when the scores are published, you know. It is the finished product versus the procedure and the process to take to get to the end results. And maybe if we went back to more, you know, the child friendly, what you could do to really help them, instead of being so concerned about what is going to be in the paper. The accountability. Everybody would be a little more, I mean, children don't just sit all year long and have test anxiety the week of the CRCT. We have children that have test anxiety all year long. They are anxious Friday, on that spelling test. They are anxious Thursday, when they take the practice test. It goes on continuously. So, change the shift of testing workshop just a little bit. Because when you look at that child, that child is sitting really in the middle. He or she feels anxious about, well, what is mom or dad going to say about this grade, and they want to please their teacher, so they are kind of in the middle. And with our kindergarten through second graders, like you were saying, it is not until about Christmas time that children in second grade begin to realize the value of a test score and what it means. Up until then, they are working just trying to please mom and dad –*

And you, the teachers. In her reflection, Ms. Jones wrote: I had not thought about the way we use to do parent workshops until Ms. Mountcastle reminded me how we had changed them. I think it is a good idea to revisit the “old” workshop ideas of how to deal with test anxiety. I am

going to share this with my principal. It's nice to know that others in our schools are unclear about POI and the stresses that come with implementing interventions before testing can be completed.

The pairing format that was used in the third focus group was so well received that we followed the same procedure in our fourth and final time together. Ms. Jones was paired with Mr. White and began with this question: *Do you think in general everybody has a lack of understanding or confusion of Pyramids of Intervention?* She continued, *I mean pretty much every week somebody says something like 'I just don't know what I am supposed to be doing.'* Or, *'I am not clear on what I am supposed to be doing and I truly don't know how to ask the questions I really want the answers to.'* *Do you know what I am talking about?*

My mind was so ingrained on SST and how to do those, that I just have such a hard time. Things are so vague to me, you know. My forms are specific as to how I use to do SST. Even when I sat in on a re-evaluation for my speech student the other day, you know, I didn't know that I could close out her folder and she would just be under that speech umbrella for everything she is doing right now. I didn't have a clue.

Then Mr. White began discussing his topic comparing 21st Century children with 60's and 70's children. *I think part of that, Mr. White, is that everybody in general, there is so much information available now that we are just saying, 'If you want to know about something you can have easy access to it.'* *So we are not teaching kids specific things. We are just assuming that they will have the desire to go and find it on their own as they get older. I even notice that with my own children. I have a 21 year old and then all the way down to a 14 year old. Well, my 21 year old was taught a lot more information in school than my 14 year old is being taught. As far as memorization and those kinds of things, and it is amazing to me, just at the supper table and*

we are talking about something, and my 14 year old will say, what are you talking about? And you would think any 14 year old should know that. And then I think, 'My own child doesn't know that.' I can't think of anything specific, but that just happens every now and then that I realize we are just not teaching specific things. Everything needs to be in general. We skim the top of everything, but we are not getting down deep into much of anything anymore because we are trying to hit so many different things.

But there again I am not sure how deep they are going because I have one of those ninth grade students in Math I, and supposedly they are getting everything within that one year and then they will go up a level and get everything again. Well, I just don't know how deep they are going, like with geometry or algebra. We picked up the slack. It started out with Algebra, and then you built up to Trig. Now it is like peanut butter and jelly. It is all together. Everybody in one pot. Ms. Jones reflected: It is always helpful to hear the opinion of other educators about concerns you may be having. I have enjoyed these days of sharing, and I will miss these times. Even with our busy schedules, I look forward to hearing what others had to share. I wish we had more time to do this together as a group and even with those just in our school.

We had to reschedule our last interview together because of the unpredicted March snow. But, as the snow melted outside, we sat down once again in this old, warm schoolroom beside the big window. Ms. Jones shared her thoughts on our focus groups. *I enjoyed them. It is good as a veteran teacher to be able to sit down around a table with beginning teachers, as well as veteran teachers, because you know, even veteran teachers don't always see things the same way as other veteran teachers. And we certainly don't see things the way beginning teachers do, and they don't see things the way we do. So, you know, it is always good to be able to sit down and*

hear other people's opinions and the reasons behind those opinions. Not just their opinions, but why they feel the way they do. So, I really did enjoy them.

Ms. Jones felt like she gained insight by participating in a group with new and veteran educators. *Well, I just gained from their insight of seeing it through somebody else eyes or their perception of it, because you know, when you are – I should not generalize this and say that when you are young you think you know everything. But I did. I really did. I thought when I started teaching I knew pretty much what I was doing, but the older you get the more you realize how much you didn't know. But as a veteran teacher, I appreciate seeing and I don't think the beginning teachers that were in this program had the same – I don't think they feel the way I did. I think they seek out more help and maybe the reason I didn't seek it out back in the day was because there wasn't anybody there to seek it out from. I think it is helpful for them to be able to sit down and share their feelings and their views like I said a while ago, and for us to share our experiences. But it is always good to be reminded of where you came from and even though times change, educational needs change, I guess the biggest thing is there are still people there that need support no matter how long you have been there. You will always need support.*

Through weekly grade meetings, pod meetings, and mentor protégé meetings Ms. Jones gets time to be with other teachers regularly. Because she serves students from multiple grades, she attends meetings with first and second grade teachers. She talked about the opportunities she gets to observe protégés and their opportunities to observe other veteran teachers. *Within the protégé program we have two groups that fall under this system. We have protégées, which are beginning teachers, and then we also have buddies. If a teacher moves from another county, they aren't considered part of the protégé program. They are assigned a buddy within the building, who is on their grade level, to work with them to make sure they understand all of their*

responsibilities. Even within our school, if you transfer from first to second grade you are given a buddy for that, too. Not just if you come from another school. This is in case they need extra moral support, a pat on the back, or a snack for the week, you know. The protégés are the actual beginning teachers. This program is for two years. We are given a notebook. It is laid out by the month, exactly what, as a mentor teacher, what I am responsible for making sure my protégé knows. It is a list about a paragraph long, just for that month, what you need to go over. Like, when you have parent conferences. First, you talk about setting up the conferences and then, what you could discuss during the conference and what you might expect. The mentors/protégés met monthly as a group before the grade level meetings took place. But, it got to be too many meetings, so now they meet quarterly.

This year, Ms. Jones has been given the counselor as a buddy. He has taught as many years as she has and has different kinds of needs and issues. So, you know, that can be kind of frustrating. I sometimes feel like I am not – he is being more of a mentor for me than I am for him. In the past I had – being the multi-age class, I was assigned to a kindergarten teacher or a special education teacher and I wasn't really familiar with the special education program. But, I was the best-qualified trained mentor for that person. So, sometimes we just kind of learned and went through it together with them. If a new teacher were in the area of special education, they would have different monthly needs than what was listed in the notebook. So I would have to go and ask our administrator to tell me exactly what she wanted me to cover.

Ms. Jones teaches an at-risk class. She does have one speech student, but the other students are not special education students. These are students that either in the regular classroom have had behavioral issues or academic issues, or it could be a combination of both. We have found out that a lot of behavioral issues, especially when you get to first and second

grade not so much kindergarten, but as the academics become harder the children, their behavior, either the explosive behavior or withdrawal behavior, it can be either one, or aggressive behavior, starts to come out to try to mask the academics. So we are a place to try to help those children learn to deal with their frustrations within themselves.

This is the eleventh year Ms. Jones has taught this class, and she has a full time para-pro. It is just like having another teacher in here. We started this program together. As far as Ms. Jones knows, this is the only type classroom of its kind in the state. We have had other counties come in and observe to see what we do here in order to try to set it up in their county. The way the children get placed is through our Pyramid of Intervention (POI). The children have to have been in a regular homeroom with documented modifications, results of what happened, meetings with the parents have to have already taken place, observations by the homeroom teacher, other peer teachers, my para-pro and me are also done before the children are even considered for placement. We are not a dumping ground, and that is a big thing to remember. I have nine students right now, and four are second graders. Two of the second graders were in this class last year.

Ms. Jones asserts that the only way for a class like hers to work is for people to be willing to change their perspective. I used to feel like every child could learn at the same rate. Also, that you had the same rules and consequences for every child. But I have learned that different children have different needs academically, behaviorally, emotionally, socially, and in every way, so you have to decide what is best for that child. And, you need to be consistent with that child, but just because the child sitting at this desk needs this modification doesn't mean the one sitting over here at this table needs the same thing. Everybody is different. I have learned that by teaching in this classroom.

Ms. Jones feels like throughout the last thirty years, she has experienced what she expected, but not every year or all in one year. *Some years I have had parents that really had a desire for their children to better themselves, but within this classroom I have had years when I didn't have a single parent that was involved with their children. You know, all they wanted to do was get them up in the morning, get them on the bus, and get them out of the house. They hated to see the yellow bus pulling back down the road. However, these children that I have this year, well, actually for the last several years, the majority of the parents are very concerned. I think for one reason, the parents have really bought into the idea of this classroom, and they realize it is an opportunity for their children to make up some ground academically, or with their emotional or social skills. So, the parents are supportive to try to help them.*

As far as able to teach children to read, that probably is the hardest one to swallow. Because I have had, I guess in my 30 years, I have had maybe three children that I felt like I just couldn't teach them to read. I have one of those right now, and it is one of the ones I have taught for two years. You know, he has been tested for special education and didn't qualify. I have tried all kinds of programs. I have tried all kinds of approaches. His mother works diligently with him every night at home, and he has the desire to learn. It just doesn't come. It is heart breaking. You think, well, I can teach this child to read. I can remember another child in this county and one in another county that – I guess when you think about the masses, you see success, but then you think about the individuals. Yes, it is frustrating.

Ms. Jones has had supportive administrators and co-workers. *There was that year when I started that those first grade teachers closed their doors, and they taught their way and I just had to figure it out on my own, in the very beginning. Since then, well that was my very first year, but when I moved to second grade in that same school, the teachers were very supportive. They*

taught me so much, and then I came here. I have been here twenty-two years now, and teachers don't just close their doors and try to keep all of their knowledge inside so no one else will steal their thunder, or whatever. Everybody wants to help everybody else.

The last couple of years we have had several teachers leave, but it wasn't because they wanted to leave, it was out of their control. They had to move with their husbands or something like that. I am trying to think of teachers that have left because of issues. In the last ten years we may have had three teachers that have left for that type of reason. I mean, when you have 50 to 55 teachers in one building and three leave in ten years. And one of those really left not because of ill feelings but because she needed – she wanted to go into administration and she wanted the experience in another setting, so really and truly, there were only probably two that left for issues. She feels like there is low teacher turnover in this county because the teachers have made an investment in the county. Most live there, have gone to school there, or have family there.

This year is probably a little more frustrating as far as uncertainty, but the uncertainty has a lot to do with whether this classroom will be here next year and that all comes down to budget and the economy. That is always hanging over my head this year. We hope this isn't the last year. So, that is one frustration for Ms. Jones this year, along with, like I said, the one child we have had in here for two years that I have not been able to teach to read.

Ms. Jones has taught for thirty years. When she began teaching this year, she thought it would be her last. Ms. Jones was planning on retiring in two months. But, the economy has changed her plans. A year ago at this time, I thought I would be retiring right now, but it seems I will be here another year at least. My husband is self employed and I just need to be here to make sure that we have a little more than the 60% I would draw if I retired. I love teaching school. I get frustrated with the political part of it, and you know, having to do things that I don't

think really affect how the children perform, the paper work and those kinds of things. But I love teaching school. I love teaching with that lady over there, (she points to her para-pro) and if I have to work, there is nothing else I want to do. I would want to be right here in this room.

We get a questionnaire every year in January that we fill out that asks our intentions for the next year. And for 10 years now I have said that this is where I want to be and I give the same reason every year and I feel very strongly about this. I say that I feel like this is a calling I have from the Lord. I feel like he put me here to help these children, and I have very strong convictions about that. I want to do it, if that is what the Lord wants me to do. This is what I want to do.

As I listen to Ms. Jones and look around her classroom, I asked her if there is anything she wants to add. And, for the fourth time since I started this study Ms. Jones tells me again that the most important thing to her has always been to help children develop their self worth. *Because if they don't have that, it really doesn't matter in my eyes what you do, how you approach it, either behaviorally or academically, if they don't feel that they are worth something, then you haven't done your job.*

CHAPTER 8

MS. DIXON



My great grandmother was quite sociable and my mother remembers her quilt frame as being a center of the community where women often gathered to quilt.

I waited as a line of hungry children made their way to the lunchroom. I could smell the familiar smells from my past. I checked in the office and received my visitor's badge. A sign of the times, every person entering a school must sign in and out. Visitors no longer walk the halls unnoticed. I located the fourth grade hall and looked on each door for Mrs. Dixon's room. I knew this educator was a new teacher with one year of experience and had the interesting aspect of being older than most new teachers. I was excited to interview her and get an idea of what it was like starting a second career as a new teacher. Ms. Dixon's room was large and the temperature was cool. No students were present. Math posters caught my eye. Ms. Dixon was thin with gray in her shoulder length hair. Ms. Dixon had a quiet way about her. She was willing to meet me in the middle of her day, during her planning time. She ate her lunch while we began to get to know each other.

Ms. Dixon *worked as a parapro for two years* with fourth grade students in Jamison Elementary School. *I talked to our learning specialist about what it would take to be a teacher. My biggest problem was trying to figure out what the possible routes were and deciding on the best certification program for her circumstances. Ms. Dixon already had a Bachelor's and Master's degree. My Bachelors is in Ag Business with a Math minor, and my Masters is in Animal Science. The Practicum programs didn't match with an Early Childhood Education degree. My degrees would have worked for being a science teacher in a high school, but not for Elementary Education. So the process that I ended up going through was that I was given a provision certification based on my transcripts and taking the PRAXIS. Therefore, I started teaching last year and am now working on a renewable certification.*

Ms. Dixon put off taking any of the classes needed for her certification until the summer after her first year. She has *five years* to get certified. This year begins her second year of teaching. *I chose not to try to start anything that first year just because I knew I would be overwhelmed teaching. So I chose to wait, and this past summer I started working on a certification program. I took a couple of classes this summer; I have three to take during this school year, and this school year is also my internship year. Instead of student teaching, since I am already teaching, this whole year is considered an internship. So I have observations from my supervisor, and I have a portfolio to get together this year in addition to teaching responsibilities.*

Ms. Dixon had been a *substitute teacher* for a year at Jamison Primary School, here in the county, and a *parapro for two years at this school*, even though she did not have a student teaching experience. She has a *math minor, is only teaching math*, and has been proactive in taking *on-line classes* to prepare herself. *So I don't know that I was at a real disadvantage for*

not having had the educational classes unless there is something that I just don't realize that I am at a disadvantage for. Some of the educational terminology and things I just have picked up as I go, rather than having learned it in a formal class.

It really worked out well for me to do it this way because I am only teaching math, so I don't have a homeroom. I think that would have been a huge difference. I wouldn't have wanted to start out without having had some student teaching and have a homeroom because I think that is a completely different situation. When you have the same kids all day, you have other classroom management issues that I didn't have to deal with. So I was seeing kids every day with their teacher. I was able to sort of pick up on the management part of it from them a lot. We did groups sometimes, but most of the time the students are with their teacher. So, I didn't have just a load of kids dumped in my room. You know, I had somebody in there that could help me, and I learned a lot from those teachers last year. They figured out that I didn't mind if they stepped in and said something during my class, and that, actually, helped me to get some different ideas about how to handle different situations. So it really worked out pretty well because of the kind of teaching position it is. The regular classroom teachers were able to teach her through real-life examples, and she was able to learn a lot while working with them through on-the-job-training.

This year Ms. Dixon and the classroom teachers have tried some grouping situations where students who are not ready to move forward might stay with the teacher in their classroom for a little while for extra help while the other students go work with Ms. Dixon, or the other way around. But, for the most part, Ms. Dixon teaches the whole class with another teacher. I love what I am doing now. I don't know if my position will be here forever, but I like the way we are doing it now. I really enjoy doing just math and working with the other teachers.

As far as support, Ms. Dixon has a good relationship with all of the fourth grade teachers. *We do have a mentor program. My mentor is another fourth grade teacher, and of course, I had worked with her as a parapro, so I do know her well enough that I feel free to ask her pretty much anything. Really, I knew all the teachers, the ones that had been here before I started teaching. So, they have all been really good as far as helping me with ideas for kids that I am having trouble with in the classroom, or about telling me what I should be including on my lesson plans, that kind of thing. I have had a lot of support from all the fourth grade teachers.*

Ms. Dixon started this second career at 40 years of age. Before that, she had *worked on a farm* and raised her family. *I was able to work and stop when the bus got there. Then, once they were a little older was when I started thinking about working in the school system. But, actually, teaching is so much different than being a substitute or parapro that it is like starting over as a second career. Just the responsibility part of it, as far as being responsible for what the kids are learning, you know, with the entire grade level. It is a lot more responsibility than what I had as a parapro.*

At first I didn't feel really like a first year teacher, I did as far as the kids, planning for instruction and that kind of stuff was new to me. But, because I had been in the same building for a couple of years and before that my kids had gone through this building, so I was so familiar with it all that it really didn't seem as overwhelming as I am sure it would be if I had never been in the building before, and it was totally new. So I didn't feel like I was totally new.

I think that being a parent makes a big difference, too. When I started teaching last year, my kids were in seventh and ninth grade. So, I had seen them go through this age level, and I had been in the school with this grade level when they were coming through, so I didn't feel like it was really completely new. We didn't have any other brand new teachers in my grade level last

year either, so I was not put with other new teachers or even getting to experience what they were going through very much because the school is so separated by grade level. But, I would think that it would be a lot harder, even though I have family and other responsibilities, for a 22 year old. I would think it would be harder for them because it is so different, where I was familiar with it already.

Ms. Dixon feels like she probably had an easier first year experience because of her familiarity with the school and probably would not have pursued getting her teaching certificate without encouragement from those at the school. *I am not sure I would have even considered teaching if I hadn't been working here and had some people that prompted me to look into it. But the fact that there were people here that encouraged me to do it to begin with is probably what made the difference. I don't know if I had just been staying at home or if I had kept working at the farm if I would have ever considered trying to get my teaching degree.*

I expected my first year of teaching to be a challenge. I thought the biggest challenges would be classroom management and time management. I expected to learn a lot from other teachers I would work with. As far as instruction goes, Ms. Dixon felt like last year went pretty well academically. Of course there were times when I thought I had a plan, and it went to pot, you just never know when that is going to happen, in the classroom anyway. And those kinds of things were frustrations, but I think overall the instructional part of it wasn't bad for a first year experience. I felt like I did a decent job with instruction. Probably time management was my biggest frustration. Both how much to plan for 45 minutes and not having too much where we can't get to it or not enough to fill the time and trying to scramble at the end.

Last year, of course I had a planning time, but it seemed like it was always filled up with something. I do have more time this year, and I think I am using it better. I am doing a better job

of balancing the short-term and long-term planning where last year it would sometimes be the day before and I am trying to scramble and make sure I know what I am doing. I did have to turn in lesson plans with specifics of how I'm going to structure the 45 minutes, but still I was scrambling. This year I feel a lot more prepared every day. Also, coming in with the new GPS standards was helpful. She did not have to make a change over to the new standards like a lot of the veteran teachers had to do. I think that was an advantage for me, not having to switch. I had worked with kids as a parapro with the old standards, but I didn't have to develop any plans or units. I came in and immediately was working with the new standards.

The students are supposed to get 90 minutes of math a day. Ms. Dixon teaches 45 minutes of math to the students and then the classroom teacher teaches 45 minutes of math with the students in their classrooms. So, Ms. Dixon gives options and choices to the teachers of what they can use to continue teaching the same standards in their rooms. We have a meeting where we plan together once a week. I don't tell them specifically, 'Do this page or do that page.' But, once a week I will have the things ready that they can look at and decide if they want copies for the next week and what lessons in the book we will be covering that week and then they kind of decide on their own how to do their part of that. She says they are looking at some grouping and creative scheduling with teachers so that a rotation could occur with three teachers and three classes.

Ms. Dixon feels like there is not a connection to how they are expected to teach, using hands-on learning and performance tasks, and how they are expected to test and decide promotion. Teaching and testing need to be better matched with each other. Well, with the GPS it is still kind of a new idea as far as the expectations for things to be hands-on and more performance-based. And, we have these performance tasks and things that we are saying is how

we are really supposed to be teaching, but then we turn around and give standardized test to grade kids on or to decide if they can be promoted to the next grade. So, it seems to me like there is not a connection between what the standards are, and I think the standards are good, but then we are testing in a different way than what they are telling us to teach. To me that doesn't make sense. I would like to see, and I think there is a place for standardized testing even though we all hate it, but there has to be some way to make comparisons without the rigidity of that system.

Ms. Dixon feels like a weakness in her first year of teaching was with parent contacts. Parents work *mostly with the homeroom teachers*, but Ms. Dixon feels like she did not actively seek out parents' input. *I didn't get a lot of feedback from parents. I didn't actively go after it like I should have last year, I don't think. Just because I didn't know that I needed to do that. So even like with parent conferences I would sit in on some, if it was requested, but I didn't pursue the parents that I really needed to talk to earlier in the year. I tended last year to just respond if parents came to me, but I didn't actively seek parent involvement, so that was probably a weakness last year. This year I am trying, and especially since the standards changed last year, the math is hard and there is a lot of vocabulary. So that is something I need to do a better job of, communicating the need for vocabulary development in math class with parents.*

Before we turned off the tape player and said good-bye, Ms. Dixon wanted to go back and talk about the pros and cons of having another teacher in the classroom with her all of the time. *My first year, having an extra teacher in there all the time was good in a lot of ways, as far as with classroom management. But it was also a little stressful to have somebody in there all day every day, like you are being observed all the time. Even though that is not what they were in there for, it was kind of that feeling a little bit. I think in the long run it has helped me because now I don't really think anything about another adult being in the room when I am teaching. So,*

if someone comes in to observe, it is just another day with another adult in the room. And my kids are use to having other adults in the room. So, it has turned into a good thing, but during that first year that was stressful having teachers who I had worked with as a parapro watching me with my first attempts at teaching whole lessons. So that was something that I didn't think to mention, but it had two sides. It was good as far as helping, you know, with the support, but it was also stressful to have them in there, especially when things weren't going as planned, or I was running out of things to do. So it was kind of a two-sided thing.

It was certainly stressful having a certified teacher with her all day every day during her entire first year experience. Some teachers added to the teaching of her lesson more than others. I think sometimes the ones that were the most helpful to me last year were the ones who were also teaching inclusion. I think it is because they were use to that. They were use to having two teachers in there and kind of bouncing off each other and responding to the other adults instead of just you know, being afraid to say anything. So it is a different kind of teaching, but I am glad now that that is the way we do it. It was just a different way to start.

Collaboration is a positive thing in education. I think that new teachers may be better at it because they need the guidance, or they welcome collaboration where the veteran teachers tend to resist it. They see collaboration as going against their independence. Sometimes they see it as taking away their authority in the classroom instead of looking for the positive side of collaborating. I do think it is a good thing and it is just going to take some time to get everybody there. Ms. Dixon thinks that teachers in general resist any kind of change, not just veteran teachers. I am the same way. You have a way of doing something and when somebody tells you that you need to do it differently, it is just natural to resist it. I think we get defensive. Teachers

see suggestions *to change* as an indication that they *were doing it wrong* and therefore, need to change.

Our first focus group consisted of four veteran teachers from the Primary School and three new teachers from the Elementary School meeting early one morning to share expectations and experiences. The teachers would carry on with their different agendas after our focus group concluded on this fall teacher workday. Ms. Dixon sat at the end of the table beside a veteran teacher and quietly listened, but never spoke. The topic she had written down as being of interest to her to discuss was: *lack of student motivation*. Ms. Dixon will continue to be interested in this topic and will discuss it with other teachers during future focus groups. At the end of our time together, Ms. Dixon reflected by writing: *I liked listening to veteran teachers share experiences. The new teachers seemed shy and quiet.*

Ms. Dixon wrote the topic: *engaging lower performing students in a lesson*, for our second focus group. She began by saying, *I don't have anything specific, but I have just a few kids, I see all of the fourth grade students, so I have just a few students scattered across different classes that just have no self-motivation at all. They don't do their best. Every time you hand them a paper they are like, 'Is this for a grade?' Because if it's not, then they don't try. I just was wondering what you could do to help kids, you know, you shouldn't have to give them a treat or a grade every time for them to want to do their best. But I don't know how you do that.*

The participants gave their thoughts and suggestions for Ms. Dixon to think about, and later Ms. Dixon responded to the question of whether students continued to count on their fingers in upper grades. *You can still see them using their fingers. I had a child last year; you could see him every single time because he hadn't developmentally moved past this yet. He would mentally put the big number in his head, and he would do this every time, and then he would count on his*

hands. Ms. Dixon had to leave early to go to another meeting and did not do a reflection for this group time.

Ms. Dixon's topic for our third focus group: *student motivation* was a topic she had written down before. Ms. Dixon was paired with Ms. Adamson. They talked mostly about the student Ms. Adamson had that she was considering holding back in first grade. Ms. Adamson did make some behavior modification suggestions for Ms. Dixon to try for student motivation, and Ms. Dixon gave Ms. Adamson several examples of ways behavior modification has been used in her school with the fifth graders and with the help of the administrators. She reflected at the end: *The conversation in pairs was a good way to address topics. Our group is more vocal in pairs. It seems we all do have similar concerns, both new and veteran teachers. Even if we don't solve all of our problems, it helps to be able to talk about different ideas together. My concerns about motivation are really connected to the other topics: POI, Placement, and Test Anxiety.*

For our fourth and last focus group Ms. Dixon was paired with Ms. Mountcastle. Ms. Dixon gave Ms. Mountcastle her thoughts on Ms. Mountcastle's topic about math concerns. Ms. Dixon talked about ways to teach concepts using *manipulatives*. Through this topic, the subject turned to geometry and Ms. Dixon brought up the fact that her students that Ms. Jones taught in second grade retained a lot of geometry vocabulary. Suggesting Ms. Jones would be another good resource. *I told her a couple of weeks ago that I heard her name a lot when we started geometry. We were brainstorming all the words they knew about geometry. All the ones that had a good vocabulary for geometry said they had Mrs. Jones as a teacher; it all went back to second grade.*

Then in third grade, *they don't do a lot in geometry so there is kind of a skip. They do perimeter and area. Something I have seen with GPS in general, there seems to be skip, skip,*

skip. And they keep saying they don't want to do the curriculum spiral, but in some ways it has to be a spiral. Like in geometry, we hit shapes and then we hit it again in fourth, well that is a long time for somebody to go. And then in third, they do the definitions of things like circles. Then in fifth, they are supposed to do circumference. Well, if they have forgotten all those terms, it has been a whole year. Ms. Dixon reflected: I enjoyed the way we held this and the previous focus group – talking with each other in pairs and then coming back together. I do feel like we learn from each other, and it's nice to have the opportunity to be together. Blocking out the time for the focus groups was the biggest hurdle. Once I was at the meetings, I enjoyed them. I think teachers could use more opportunities to just observe each other's classrooms and have conversations about the educational process.

Again, Ms. Dixon and I met in the middle of the day, my favorite time to be in schools. Learning seems to be creeping out of the classrooms and into the halls. The feeling of purpose and focus surrounds each person. I make my way down the hall and seat myself at the same back table. She got her food and smiled her shy smile at me as she joined me at the table. Ms. Dixon started our time together by saying she enjoyed the focus groups. *Every time I thought it was just one more thing to do that day. It was always hard to get there, but then, you know, it was always a positive thing once we were there. I especially liked the way that we ended up doing the last couple of them, where we would talk in small groups and then together, because I thought we got more done that way. We got to talk about more topics, I guess, that way.*

I think that being one of the new teachers in the group, I think that the biggest thing was having several different veteran teachers with different experiences that they could bring. So when we were talking about a particular topic, they could bring up a time when that had happened or what they would do in that situation. So being one of the new ones, it was very

helpful to have that many different veteran teachers in one place together with just time to talk. It was nice to not have an agenda, like most meetings, and just be there to relax and talk about education. Ms. Dixon mentioned having a chance to talk with veteran teachers during their mentor meetings. But, she said that those meetings were more planned. They mostly talked about upcoming events such as parent conferences and what comments to write on report cards. You kind of have to go out of your way to do this. It doesn't seem like it happens.

Ms. Dixon is a math teacher. She teaches math to every fourth grader and does not have a homeroom. So, she says that *the mentor program seemed to be more geared to homeroom teachers, and the meetings aren't as helpful to me.* But, she does feel comfortable just walking in and talking to her mentor about different situations when she needs to. Ms. Dixon does feel like more assistance is needed for new teachers in her school. Ms. Dixon was lucky that she had been in the school system for two years before her first year of teaching. What she sees as missing is information about how things are done in this particular school. *I think new teachers could use more of just the actual mechanics of how we do things in our school, how we transition them to class or to lunch. That seems to be missing a little bit.*

Ms. Dixon's second year has been similar to her first. *I think it is a better – last year was our first year with the new standards and it was the first year with having a math specialist. So having that one year behind us, we are more comfortable with the new standards, with the new textbooks, and with the way we change classes. I think it has been a little bit smoother.*

The fourth and fifth graders have a math specialist; the third graders don't just yet. Ms. Dixon says that she doesn't get to spend as much time with the fifth grade math specialist as she'd like. *We try to plan together sometimes...and try to correlate, to make sure that I am*

teaching the right things in the fourth grade so the students will be ready for the fifth grade standards. . . Time is always the problem.

In an effort to get her certification as a teacher, Ms. Dixon has been taking three classes at night along with her teaching responsibilities. She says being this busy has made her school year go fast and her school year has gone well. *I think the kids are doing well this year, overall, and it has been pretty much what I expected. It has been similar to last year. I don't think I could have done it during the first year of teaching because it was hard this year. I know that last year I spent a lot more time planning outside of the school day than I had this year.*

Ms. Dixon has used the lesson plans that she started with last year, but *there are some things that I really feel like I did better this year because I knew which activities worked better than others and which one they were really going to remember. I do think that my teaching has improved in that way, just having the experience of doing it one year and knowing what worked, what didn't, what took too long, and that kind of thing. And, the time line has been a little better.*

In looking toward next year, Ms. Dixon is willing to *teach anything they ask me to teach*; however, *if giving the choice*, Ms. Dixon would like to continue *teaching only math* to fourth graders for as long as she can.

As the time got closer for the students to line up outside her door for the next class, Ms. Dixon told me what was important to her. *It is important that we continue to adapt. That is what teachers do all the time; they adjust to different things and that is a good way of doing things. Teachers need to be able to take the time to spend with other teachers, just talking about education without necessarily a specific agenda. They need to just be able to talk about different methods of teaching, about different classroom management ideas...just that collaborative discussion. I think it is good to adapt, be flexible, and change as your needs change.*

CHAPTER 9

MS. STEWART



The most essential piece of equipment for hand quilting was the quilting frame.

I walked down the fifth grade hall of Jamison Elementary School looking for Ms. Stewart's room. When I found the name on the door and looked inside, the room was well organized and neat. Paperback books filled the bookcase and colored folders were standing up in a rack on the back table. Posters, schedules, and a calendar were hanging on the front wall and the chairs were just my size.

Ms. Stewart smiled shyly and stopped working on the paperwork in front of her. She stood, introduced herself, and led me to a space at the table where we could sit and talk. Ms. Stewart grew up in this area, went through this school system, graduated from the University of Georgia, and is a new teacher in her second year of teaching. *I went to the university nearby and was really brought up here and my family lives here. I was really excited about the idea of coming back and teaching here. The reason why I chose this school to work at is because of the community, and I knew people here. That is sort of my background.*

Ms. Stewart's expectations came from her previous experiences with children. *I did a lot of baby-sitting when I was younger.* She had various field experiences in college, and it was not that long ago that she was a student herself. Ms. Stewart felt like because she was a new teacher, students would *want to test the waters to see what the boundaries were going to be.*

Her first field experience in college put her in a diverse class of 12 students serving many children with first languages other than English. *My first experience was in an elementary school close to campus. It was a low-income neighborhood with a very diverse economic class. There were language barriers there, and it was just a questionable neighborhood. You didn't necessarily feel safe in that neighborhood, but the school did a really good job of making the school feel safe itself. I didn't really see any behavior problems with that group, mostly because of the language barriers. They didn't know how to – the students were so inside of themselves because they didn't want to break out of their language, out of their comfort zone.*

My second experience was at another school in that county with a larger group of students, not quite as diverse. There were more behavior problems in that room; mostly because it was largely an African American background. There were very few white students or Hispanic students, actually. It was just interesting to see. There were a lot of white teachers, and there was sort of a tension between cultures there.

The next field experience was in another county and you could see which teachers had control of their classrooms and which ones didn't. I wanted to be one of those teachers that had control, instead of the ones that didn't have control. I wanted to learn from the teachers that really knew how to discipline and obtain that discipline in their room. The question came about; can you be one of those people? Can you be a person that is going to maintain discipline, but

still has a welcoming atmosphere in the class? This last experience was her student teaching experience.

Ms. Stewart feels like her discipline strategies did not come from her supervising teacher during her student teaching experience. *It was sort of a collection of things that I got from other teachers.* But, she did like some of the things her supervising teacher taught her. She, also, learned through each experience what “not” to do. *I found in a lot of experiences, you learn what not to do more than you learn what to do.*

I expected my first year to be hard, difficult, and to have little to no life outside of school. I expected to have to write detailed lesson plans, have help be given by fellow teachers when I did not know what to do, and to be baffled by curriculum expectations. Also, I expected to possibly have behavioral and discipline problems that would have to be dealt with. Her expectations were all confirmed, except one. *It was hard; it was difficult. I did put in long hours, but I didn’t really have as bad of behavior problems as I thought I was going to. I just had some interesting personalities.*

Ms. Stewart reflects on her experiences in teaching these past two years. *It has been a good experience. Last year was my first year. It was very difficult because I wasn’t use to the long hours. I was coming in around 7:00 and leaving around 6:00 most days because there was so much to do. I didn’t have any materials. I came into this room, and it was empty. The file cabinets were empty. There were no materials in here at all. I started from scratch. Another teacher across the hall was in her first year as well. She had a lot of stuff in her room, but this room had not been a regular classroom. This was a Special Education classroom, so when I walked in, it was empty. I really had to scrounge a lot for materials and make a lot of materials. You know, make tests and study guides and things. Some of the teachers had things, but it wasn’t*

the kind of stuff that I really wanted to use. It was a lot of scrounging for materials last year and a lot of feeling out what my classroom was going to be like.

I did a lot of experimentation the first couple of months just because I really was not sure what I wanted to do and that to me was the most frustrating part. I could not really make a decision about how I wanted to do things. By the time I did make a decision, I had to teach the kids again. So the kids had to go through this constant adjustment which made it a little frustrating for them as well. They said, 'Last week Ms. Stewart said to do this, now this week she is telling us something different, which do we do? She keeps changing her mind.'

I did have some personalities that were difficult. It was very frustrating. They were very moody people, and I am not use to that. I was not really sure how to deal with that and there were also challenges with students who had difficult backgrounds at home. They come with baggage and you have to sort of be a counselor to them, and you may not understand what they are going through. So you are not really sure how to help them. There were also students who don't do their work and students who don't necessarily take advantage of situations that they should. Like when I give them a study guide and they don't study. It was little frustrations like that.

Another challenge Ms. Stewart had was being without a mentor for a while. I started out with a mentor teacher the first couple of weeks and then circumstances occurred that she couldn't be here anymore. So I didn't have a mentor teacher for about a month. That was frustrating as well. Not really having someone to go to during that time. I had a teacher next door, but he wasn't really the most helpful. He had his own things to do and he didn't want to have to stop and drop everything just to answer questions. Also, as a grade level, there were eight teachers on the hall. We were split into two different teams. Ms. Stewart's team was on the

other end of the hall. So, you might have a question for someone and not have the opportunity to go and ask them during the day because they are further down the hall. Also, paper work, I kind of drowned in paper work a lot last year. I'm still drowning in paper work, but it doesn't feel as bad.

This year feels a lot better. I came in knowing exactly what I wanted to do based on last year. I learned from things that happened last year and mistakes that I made, things I wanted to do differently because it didn't work last year. It was just a different feeling and people are more comfortable with each other this year. We had four new teachers on the fifth grade hall last year, so now we are more comfortable with each other. We are use to each other and that kind of helped as well having that camaraderie with the teachers. It is a very different group, as well, and that kind of changes the dynamics this year. Ms. Stewart's frustrations her first year seemed to be with the lack of support she received by not having a consistent mentor or supportive teachers, the lack of materials, the amount of paper work, her indecision over classroom procedures, dealing with student personalities, and the team set up with the other fifth grade teachers. Of the four new teachers in fifth grade last year on her hall, two had taught before and two had not.

Ms. Stewart says that her support *waxes and wanes*. She says that more could have been given. *As a new teacher, last year was so frustrating and it was so difficult; I really kind of felt like I did not get as much support and as much help as I really should have be given.* There was sort of this expectation that information would be passed down to me but it wasn't, and I didn't know that I was supposed to know certain things, and I would find out later. It was just frustrating not knowing. It would have been nice if someone would have taken the initiative and pulled me aside and said, 'You need to know this'. Because that wasn't something that really

occurred last year. I did a lot of guessing. I did a lot of having to search for answers. I wish they had written a checklist of things new teachers needed to know at this school, and they had sat me down and shared the list with me. Ms. Stewart said that information and communication were missing.

Ms. Stewart especially could have used more help during pre-planning her first year. She had the responsibility of getting her room ready and attending a lot of meetings where she felt lost. *You are overwhelmed by, okay; there are things that they are talking about from last year. You don't have a clue what they are talking about because you weren't there last year and you have to sort of pick up the pieces as they fall. They are all very friendly people, and they are all good at what they do and will help you if you have a question, but if you don't know what to ask then you can't go ask them the question. That is sort of something that I wish was a little better.* Ms. Stewart needed more support.

This year the fifth grade teachers are planning together more than last year. Last year, five of the eight teachers tried to plan together, especially in math. *We did plan together as a grade level for math last year because of our initiatives that we were putting forth last year, but the other areas of the curriculum, you were kind of on our own with that. The other new teacher, she and I would get together part of the time just because we both knew we needed to get together and try to lighten each other's work loads. We would pull resources from people as we could. But other than that, we were really sort of on our own.*

This year we are doing unit writing for all of the subject areas, and we are paired with another teacher. I am paired with someone down the hall, and we plan the language arts units for the year. Another two teachers are planning the science and other units and we just sort of pull our resources and give our resources to those people and they write the unit based on a

template that was given to us to fill out. That has helped because it is already laid out for us, and I don't have to do the guessing that I did last year.

There actually has been a little bit of resistance to it, because it sort of feels today like one more thing to do. But to me it is helping a lot in the long run. Ms. Stewart says that it will be a good resource for new teachers who come to their school in the future and she is glad to be able to help provide that for them. We will be able to use the units next year, too, which to me, that is a wonderful thing. If that had already been done before I got here, then I would not have had to spend last year searching books, finding lessons, and looking for worksheets, because it would have already been provided for me.

Ms. Stewart started this school year with more confidence in her discipline plan. She did not wait and try to *feel out* her students. She started this year by saying, *'This is my classroom. It is not your classroom. This is my classroom and you will obey my rules and my procedures.'* You know, the students are supposed to be the ones that *feel out* the teacher. The teacher should not be *feeling out* the students and that is what I did last year. She says it has gone really well.

Last year I was nervous, sick, and I dropped five pounds the first couple of weeks. It was such a nerve-racking thing for me, and I broke down in tears in the middle of the day the second or third week. The counselor had to kind of take care of my class for a little while because I was just so overwhelmed by everything. I kind of felt like I needed to solve all the problems of these children, and I needed to do everything in one day. It took me a little while to figure out that I don't need to solve all of their problems because I can't solve all these problems. I just had to take a step back and take a breath and then push forward. This year it didn't feel overwhelming because I was use to the workload, and the students were different. It was just kind of a neat idea to think, 'I get to meet new students this year.' It was something I looked forward to a little bit

better. Last year I was so nervous about how difficult I knew the year was going to be. This year I felt like I had one year under my belt. I did pretty well last year. I can do even better this year. It was a sigh of relief really, to kind of start with a new group of kids. It was more exciting to me to start this school year. I wasn't sick; I wasn't nervous. It was real nice, actually.

In thinking about new teachers and why a lot of new teachers are leaving the profession, Ms. Stewart felt like it really depended on the reason a person goes into teaching. If the new teacher thinks of teaching as one of those careers that's sort of a stepping-stone for something else, then possibly, yeah. But I chose this as my career to last me until thirty years down the line. This is something that I knew I really wanted to do. It wasn't going to be a stepping-stone for something else. Also, there are people who want to have something to do until they start a family, that is a factor as well. But I don't really have any intention of leaving teaching when I start a family. I think it just sort of really depends on why the person went into teaching in the first place. I am not going to be one of those people. Ms. Stewart really wanted to be a teacher.

She talked about how the current school reform, No Child Left Behind, affects everything a teacher does. *There is the idea of someone looking over our shoulder. These students are expected, because of No Child Left Behind, to meet very high expectations and some of them are just not ready to do it. But it is reflected upon the teacher whether they can or not because we are the ones responsible for getting them the information and getting them ready. So that is a big pressure that is being put on us, and it is very frustrating to have that because we recognize we are not miracle workers. There are some children who developmentally are not ready. They might still be several grades behind, not because they can't do it, but because they just can't do it right now. That is a major pressure that we have, and also we have a new program that has come into play. That is, the Student Support Team (SST), is sort of being transitioned to*

Pyramids of Intervention (POI). It is a new way of documenting and a new way of tracking student progress. When you have things like that, the pressure is on the teachers to make sure that their paper work is done right, that they are documenting things, and that they are coming up with new ways to do different interventions. Those are major pressures.

The No Child Left Behind movement *has admirable goals*, according to Ms. Stewart. To push to *have every child ready for Algebra 1 and be on grade level by 2014 looks good on paper*. But, it does not take into consideration that children develop at different rates. *Comparing a child on the lower end of the spectrum to a child who is in the accelerated gifted program is like comparing apples and oranges. They can't do the same thing. It is really not fair to the children to tell them that you have to be able to do what this child can do and it is also not fair to put blame on the teachers and put so much expectation on the teachers to have that child do what a gifted child can do. There is no amount of days that will fill the gap between those two children. I do like the idea of a certain amount of accountability, mostly in that you don't want to see your children drop. If your children come to you at a certain level, they don't need to go down in any way. There should be progress. On the National level, I think it should be that all of your students make progress in some way, not meeting all these expectations, but did they make progress while they were with you? So that is the kind of accountability that I think there should be.*

It is important to Ms. Stewart that people realize that students are capable of learning at different rates and students should be met where they are. She likes the idea of and wants to learn more about differentiation of instruction. *There is this push for differentiating instruction and that is something that I would really like to read into a lot and that is something that I want to see more of. But, also, it is realizing that you are not going to be able to meet all the needs, but*

you do need to try. That is something that teachers need to keep in mind, that instead of kind of getting a self-defeated attitude that you can't meet the expectations, all you can do is try with the students. We have so many distractions and so many things that sort of interfere with teaching that I would just like to be able to sit in my room and teach.

Paperwork is what Ms. Stewart considers as a distraction. She is not referring to grading her students' work. *Monitoring* her students' progress is necessary in order to know if a child gets a *concept*. The paperwork that she is describing has to do with the documentation of the new Pyramids of Intervention Program. This program has *expectations that seem to be piled on top of expectations. It would just be nice to just sit and teach the students and not have to worry about the fact that I have got a mountain of paper work on my desk. Not to worry about the fact that I have a meeting this afternoon, and I don't have everything I need for that meeting.*

Ms. Stewart talked about how new teachers and veteran teachers have the same amount of duties, committees, and meetings. With experience, teachers *learn little tricks for getting things done faster* and become *more efficient* with their time. Therefore, it may seem like a veteran teacher has less to do. Then she mentioned to me that because none of the other fifth grade teachers would take the position, she was asked to be the team leader of the fifth grade teachers this year, in her second year of teaching.

In only her second year of teaching, this will add significantly to her responsibilities. She said that everyone encouraged her, *stroked her ego*, said she was *so organized, energetic, enthusiastic, and on top of things*, but she really felt like they asked her because they did not want to do it themselves. *I am thinking, 'Bull hockey'*. It is not a task she would have volunteered for and she is glad that the job is on a *two-year rotation*. But, looking at it from the positive side, she said that every teacher has to *serve on a committee*, so this one will serve as hers. Ms.

Stewart says that it *ups the number of emails that she receives and has to respond to*, and she has the task of *passing along information* to the team, but it is just *a new challenge that I am taking on*.

Ms. Stewart was chosen as the team leader out of the eight fifth grade teachers. In looking at the experience level of those eight teachers, I found that: one has twenty years of experience, two teachers have five to ten years of experience, two were new to the school last year but have various years of previous experience, two have one year of experience (Ms. Stewart and Ms. Smith), and one teacher is new to the school this year, but she has teaching experience. We ended our conversation with me congratulating Ms. Stewart for taking on this new task. This committee may supply her with better communication.

Our first focus group was at Ms. Stewart's school on a teacher-planning day. We gathered around, ate some breakfast, and took a few minutes to get to know each other. When Ms. Stewart was asked to think about a topic she would want to talk about, she wrote down: *Colleges preparing teachers to deal with the real world*. She brings this topic in to the discussion during this focus group, and she and other participants bring this topic into several conversations during their individual interviews. Today, Ms. Adamson started the discussion and Ms. Stewart added her thoughts toward the end of the group time.

Ya'll were talking about the changes you have seen in education and how you are seeing more and more students that need specialized modification, and we are coming in to teaching and it is all put on our plate. We didn't have time to adjust to it. It was just kind of thrown at us, and it is not really something they tell you about. It is not like you have to differentiate and all that. But then they, college, make it sound so light and fluffy, and' this is what the perfect classroom looks like and you can do it.' But you get in there and you meet reality.

You are like, wow! What is this? It is very overwhelming. Going back to the documentation, as fifth grade teachers we rely a lot on the documentation that was done years before. I had a student who was in the school system up until the second grade and was taken out and taken to another county. There is nothing on him from third and fourth grade. And he has incredibly – he is very behind. We are talking—he is back to second grade level with math skills, and I don’t have a clue what to do with him, where to start, because there is nothing from third and fourth grade that was documented except for behavior things and he has no behavior problems.

I want to know his academic information, and it wasn’t documented. There is no documentation for that kind of stuff and we rely on that a lot. We go back to the folders and take a look at what was done. And I have a student that Ms. Adamson had a few years ago, a little red headed boy. Do you know who I am talking about? And I remember, I went and observed Ms. Adamson when I was doing one of my internships for a day. I watched how she worked with him, and I am thinking, wow, I don’t know if I could ever do that. And, here I have him. In reflection, Ms. Stewart wrote: Helpful. Enjoyed listening to perspectives of veteran teachers. Enjoyed veteran teachers discussing differences in teaching over 25+ years ago and now.

Ms. Stewart’s topic for the second focus group was: meeting all students’ needs and addressing parents’ concerns. We meet the day before the teachers and students were scheduled to have a few days off for Thanksgiving. Ms. Stewart started the discussion with her topic. I guess one of the things that recently has been brought up is making sure that parents concerns are addressed to their satisfaction, as well as ours.

I was in a meeting this morning with parents of a student I teach and when I came away from that meeting, I really wasn’t sure if I understood what the parents were asking for. I

originally thought they were coming in to discuss the student's math grade, why it was so low, but the main thing they focused on was keeping him organized for math. It wasn't about his 30 test grade or his 40 test grade that they wanted to address; it was keeping him organized. I just wasn't sure that things were addressed as well as they could have been. I was not sure what they were asking for. Because the things they are asking for were things we are already doing in the agenda, making sure all of his homework is written down. They wanted to add a checklist to the data, what he is supposed to turn in every week for homework. Well, that is what the agenda is for.

So, I am not really sure all of their concerns were addressed. I am not even sure I understood all of their concerns. I had a hard time breaking through that communication barrier and I just, there were two other teachers in there and all three of us came away with the same feeling. We weren't really sure what they wanted, it wasn't made very clear. I think they were having a hard time making themselves clear. We were having a hard time asking appropriate questions to help them be clearer. A veteran teacher responds and Ms. Stewart continues.

They are very intelligent people. This particular student had some mobility problems due to a medical condition he has and for the most part he has someone else write his homework down for him in his agenda. When he goes to the math specialist, there are some gaps. He is not getting that homework written down. He is not turning that in, and they just wanted to make sure that all of that is taken care of. But we were already doing that to the best of our ability, and he still wasn't getting his assignments turned in. I still don't really know what they were trying to say was the issue. Was it that we weren't staying on top of things? Was it that he wasn't doing what he needs to do to write it down? It just wasn't resolved. That was sort of the main thing.

In another conference, I had a parent come in and was concerned about what she considered was a low grade for her child, who was use to getting all A's. She had a B in science. 'Well, how can I help my child?' And for the quarter I am finished taking science grades. We teach science half of the quarter and social studies half the quarter because that is how our curriculum map works out. And, I don't give extra credit. So, she wanted to know, 'How can I help my child bring up her B?' I am thinking a B is wonderful. I would be happy with a B myself, but she wanted me to help her bring that grade up. So, I had to do some brainstorming. How can I help this child bring her grade up without doing something extra for her that I am not doing for other students? And, I am still brainstorming on that one. Another veteran teacher responded with thoughts on the grading system, other topics were discussed, and then Ms. Stewart had to leave to go to another meeting.

Her topic for our third focus group was: *Pyramids of Interventions (POI), which is interventions for students having difficulties; and utilizing materials efficiently.* The format for this focus group paired participants with common topics. Ms. Stewart was paired with Mr. White, since he had just come back from a conference on this topic.

We have sort of been thrown into doing Pyramids of Intervention. We came up with, over the summer, how we were going to document everything, but we don't have assessments to use. You are suppose to pick a specific skill to work on for that child. We don't have assessments in place, pre-assessments, and post-assessments, to see where they are starting and where they are going. We have to make it up as we go along. So, it is a frustration for us because it is hard for us to really determine that because our assessments are not researched-based assessments. They are not very good, and we are sort of guessing at how we are supposed to find them.

And we are sort of doing it as individual teachers instead of someone who is in charge of POI telling us how we can do those assessments and then have consistent interventions. For example, I have a student who is very behind and I moved him to Tier II and that was 3 school weeks ago, so this was back in December. But he was absent for a week before we left for Christmas Break and since then the person who is in charge of doing interventions with him has not been available because she has been pulled to substitute and do other things. He has only met with her once in the past 2 weeks and my goal was to see how he did in 4 weeks, but I don't have anything. So, I can't move him forward. He really needs to move on to Tier III and be screened. It is just very frustrating not being able to move through the process as much as I would like, knowing this is a fifth grade child who is very behind and needs to start getting services.

Mr. White spent time addressing Ms. Stewart's concerns and encouraged her to use whatever strategies and assessment tools she had available, CRCT scores or teacher-made tests and observations. He expanded on the fact that this process is flexible and teacher friendly instead of regimented with specific time frames, forms, interventions, and/or assessments. The important piece is the documentation. At this point, Mr. White had to go, and Ms. Stewart joined in on the conversation between Ms. Mountcastle and Ms. Jones on test anxiety.

I have no answers for that because I have test anxiety. That is the biggest deal in the world to me. As a child I had terrible testing anxiety from first grade to sixth grade. I mean, I would get deathly sick and everybody – teachers, my mama and daddy, it wasn't because I thought I was going to get in trouble, I just got, you know, nervous. And they would have everybody talk to me, and it went on and on. And so one day I just woke up and decided that I can't do this anymore, so I went from test anxiety to not giving a flying flip. You know, I went as

far to the other side as I could go. So, I always remember that. You know, you can't just say, well, just don't worry about it and just do the best that you can. You want to say that, but you want to make sure they don't do what I did, you know.

What I try to do is help, like with a math formula, they can see it. I always tell them you can use resources, even the study guides they have. If there is something on the wall that can help them, they can use what they can see, except on exams. Her reflection for our time together was: Enjoyed the pairing, but prefer the whole group discussions. I find it interesting that veteran teachers still struggle with the same concerns and issues that new teachers struggle with.

Our fourth focus group was formatted similar to the third. Ms. Stewart was paired with Ms. Adamson and her topic was: *being patient with troublesome students (tone and kind words) and helping students understand their academic situation.* Ms. Stewart started the conversation. *I have one student that frustrates me more than any other student because things don't register with him, when you are talking to him. When you are looking at him and he is right in front of you, you still can't get anything across to him. It is like he does not hear what you are saying. He doesn't look like he is even thinking about what you are saying. He is very immature. I find myself getting very frustrated. When I talk to him I – I find myself trying everything and I see that is not working. Every bone in my body is saying, 'Use your basic behavior modification techniques. Praise him for his good stuff.' But, all I seem to notice is the bad stuff. How do I get past that? I need an attitude adjustment. He has been screened. He was diagnosed, but his dad and mom took him off his medication.* Ms. Adamson talked with Ms. Stewart, made a lot of suggestions, and gave her strategies to consider using.

Then, Ms. Adamson discussed her topic, but ended their time together by asking if Ms. Stewart might need help with individualized instruction for students. *I remember last year I tried*

to do it, when I did my math centers. I tried to do my math centers specific to the group I was planning the center for. I had 5 different groups going on. It became very overwhelming. At the end of the group, this was Ms. Stewart's reflection: I have enjoyed these focus groups. As a new teacher, I value the experience that the veteran teachers have.

I appreciate any and all chances to pick the brain of someone who has already experienced something that I am currently experiencing. Thank you for this opportunity. Ms. Stewart's classroom was just as I remembered it, except the teacher in the room was a little more confident than when we first met in September. Her hair was a little longer and her gait a little more secure. Spring break was just around the corner and summer would not be far behind. I was anxious to hear about her experiences and see them through her eyes. She began by giving me her impressions of the focus groups.

Ms. Stewart thought the focus groups were interesting because it let her see that veteran teachers deal with problems, too. *They have the advantage of having so many years of experience and so many different solutions to draw upon and my solution pool is still relatively small. I know that I will gain those experiences and learn more of the tricks of the trade as I go, but they have more things available to them. I did find it interesting that they are still having trouble with some of the same issues that I have trouble with. It was just, I think it was pretty helpful because I got a lot of feedback from the older teachers who had more experience.*

Ms. Stewart liked having the teachers sitting around the table with years of experience to share. They mentioned strategies to try that she would not have thought to try. *There was one particular teacher who had a lot of good ideas for helping with some of the students that I was having trouble with, and it was just nice to hear some suggestions. Some of the things she said I never would have thought of in a million years by myself, and it is just nice to have those brains*

to pick. Ms. Stewart admits that very little time is given in a normal workday to spending time with other teachers for the purpose of asking questions. She said it sometimes happens, but they have so many meetings about other things that that sort of gets thrown on the back burner.

Ms. Stewart thought about her expectations she had as a teacher and decided that she had experienced some of them, but not all of them. *It was hard and difficult, with all the hours that I put in, I didn't have a whole lot of stuff going on out of school; mostly, because I was just too tired. I would get home and "zonk" out on the couch. My lesson plans didn't really have to be all that detailed.* Ms. Stewart had to turn in her lesson plans last year, but this year is easier because the unit plans are the only plans that have to be turned in. Her lesson plans each day end up being a jot list with page numbers and a little note written out beside it.

As far as my curriculum expectations, most of it is math. Math baffles me because there is so much for the kids to have to learn. It is not that I don't know how to do it because I do. What baffles me is that the kids are expected to do things like decimals and fractions and everything. As fifth graders, they are told by the state that they are supposed to be able to do certain skills, but it is really hard stuff. And they are told to remember it all and they can't because they are just kids and it is just too much. I just kind of want to go to those people and say, 'What are you thinking because you know when we were children we didn't have to know all this stuff?'

Thinking about support, *help wasn't always given. There is still a lot of guessing that I have to do on my part. There have been some behavior and discipline problems, not a whole lot. Not as many as I thought there would be.* One unexpected thing that happened last year and this year during the middle of spring semester is that things started bothering Ms. Stewart. *I think what surprised me was that when third quarter hit, late third quarter, I don't know if the behavior got worse or I just started being bothered by it more. Everyone's temperaments kind of*

– didn't change, but I noticed things a bit more and it started to bother me a little bit more. That child who never seemed to stop fiddling with his pencil is starting to bug me now. I'm spending a little too much time with the kids and needing a break from them. I am tired; they are tired; we are getting sick of each other. Time for a break and it is not for another few weeks.

Ms. Stewart's expectations for her students changed during the year, she noticed. You give them some leeway at the beginning of the year because they haven't learned all of your rules yet; they are still learning how things work. Then by the time, you know, late third quarter or fourth quarter hits, you realize they are going on to middle school and they need to be able to do these things that they are still not doing; responsibility being the main thing. You know sometime during the year they should start taking responsibility for themselves because they will be expected to keep up with their own things, their homework and assignments, that sort of thing, in middle school. They are not going to have someone that is going to baby them and tell them when things are due and give them new copies when they get lost. So this is the time of year when I realize I guess that the kids need to take responsibility for themselves and it gets harder.

Ms. Stewart has a heterogeneously grouped class. They are always together except for math. During math, the math specialist, Ms. Stewart, and another classroom teacher split the students into three groups, high, middle, and low according to test scores. Ms. Stewart has enjoyed the pace and the freedom that the lower students have exhibited by talking more. It has really worked pretty well for the kids. Those kids who wouldn't speak out because they were intimidated by the "smart kids" have a voice in that other class now, and they seem to enjoy it. It really helps to focus the class to the level of the students. You know if I need to go slower I can. It is not really a question of moving faster or slower because you go at the pace that they can go.

In comparing this year to last year, Ms. Stewart reflects *this year has gone very well. This is a very interesting group of kids. Temperamentally, they are all about the same. They are very mellow and laid back. They like to enjoy themselves, but they are also very willing to please you. They follow your directions. They do what you tell them to do because they know that is what is expected of them. So it has been easy. I don't have any discipline problems this year other than a couple of children who are exceptions, but they are not that difficult. They are just fidgety, but I don't have kids who back talk. I don't have students with mood swings, like I did last year. They are very respectful, and we have fun. It is a good atmosphere in here. We enjoy each other, and I have enjoyed them. Even Ms. Stewart's work goes faster and seems less difficult. I am still here until about 5:30, but it doesn't feel as difficult. I am use to it and I like staying here late because I get a lot of work done. I can spend my weekends doing what I want to do instead of going home and still taking stuff home on the weekends.*

Ms. Stewart is a second year teacher, but is the team leader for fifth grade. Teachers come to her with problems that she has not been at the school long enough to have answers for. *It has been different. You are the person in charge and it has been frustrating sometimes because people come to you expecting you to know answers to questions. A lot of them are on procedures, school procedures. Well, I don't know all the school procedures. There is not really a handbook on every procedure that we have got in the building and some of them have been here longer than I have and I have to wonder why they are asking me this question when they have been here longer; they should know. Those are some frustrating things because I don't always know the answer. Usually I am the one going and asking someone else what do I do for this? But it wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. I figured it would be one more thing to do and I would have all this responsibility, but it really isn't that big of a deal.*

Instead of this position serving a need for Ms. Stewart as a way to get information that she needed her first year or a place to ask questions, it really has not been run that way. *Once a month we sit and listen to our principal, who has gone to the board meeting. The board has passed information down to her and told her to pass it down to us, and then we pass it down to our fellow teachers. It is not really a meeting where we are able to ask questions about certain things. It is mostly a meeting telling us what the board wants us to know.*

One of Ms. Stewart's fellow teachers was excited that she was going to be on this committee because she felt like Ms. Stewart would ask questions. But, that has not been the type of committee Ms. Stewart has experienced. *I am a lone voice that interacts as best I can when the situation arises* She is one of the youngest teachers on the team. Yet, she says this when talking about the more experienced teachers, *it is almost like they are afraid to ask questions. They are afraid to say anything. There is sort of a mentality that we are just supposed to sit and listen. No one really tries to have any back and forth. They don't want to rock the boat. So, I don't want to cause problems and that is not what I am there for, but if I need to know something I want to feel free to ask questions. But, you don't always feel free to do that. I do try to offer suggestions when they ask for feedback on things.* Ms. Stewart asks the other fifth grade teachers for concerns that they want her to take to the meetings. One of their concerns has been that the intercom interrupting their classes too often and 'can the announcements wait until the end of the day?' So, Ms. Stewart expresses these concerns. *I am the note taker in the meetings, too, and I pass minutes down to everybody else in the meetings.*

The fifth grade teams have changed this year and the male teacher that taught beside her last year has moved to another county. Ms. Stewart feels like she has a better situation this year.

We are used to each other now. We have got a different team set-up this year than we did last year, so I am not on the same team as I was last year.

The math teacher that she team-teaches with is also the teacher that works with her on the language arts' units. So, the two of them *do a lot of back and forth with ideas*. This teacher has experience, but was new to the school last year. *She has been teaching for maybe ten to twenty years. I am not really sure how long, but she has a lot of information that I can draw from her. I always ask her for her opinion and for suggestions about certain situations. She is also familiar with my students, and she can help me with the little troubles that I am having with a particularly student, or she can give me feedback on how a child is doing with her and what we can do to try to help this child.*

Ms. Stewart feels like she asked for help last year, but did not know what questions to ask. *This year I am more aware of the kinds of questions I should be asking. It was frustrating last year because I didn't know when to go ask for help or when it was appropriate to do so.* Ms. Stewart mentioned again that she wished someone had anticipated the things she would need to know for her first year as a teacher and had given her a list. So, she is trying to do that for a friend of hers that is preparing to be a teacher. *She tries to anticipate what she will ask or what she needs to know based on her own experiences* and phones or emails her. She has also done this for her aunt who is student teaching.

Ms. Stewart sends ideas to the students who are training to become teachers that has to do with plans *for the first day of school*. She says that new teachers initially *panic* over getting through the first day with the students. Ms. Stewart has a folder with ideas in it and she kept *her lesson plans from those first days* last year. Then, she put in her folder ways to *get through the first week and how to structure lesson plans*. She is very *visual* and *assigns colors* to each topic.

Purple is for reading; my lesson plans are color-coded, too. That was one of the lesson plans I sent to my aunt. All of my files are in purple folders that have to do with reading. Social studies is blue. If I do a list of questions for my social studies class, it goes into the blue social studies folder. Her aunt found the color-coding helpful. It gave her a system. She didn't have one. I know a lot of people are not necessarily organized, and if they can have a system of organization that helps.

Ms. Stewart has had opportunities to share with other teachers in her own school. The Learning Specialist at her school uses the materials Ms. Stewart has designed as *a model for other team leaders and teachers*. Ms. Stewart was instrumental in creating the *format for the unit writing that the teachers are doing*. The format *lists the standards and the essential questions*. It has helped the teachers to understand *the procedures in planning a unit* and gives an example of *what a good unit would look like*. Ms. Stewart says that the Learning Specialist *even e-mails some of my materials to teachers in another county who needed help starting their unit writing*. *At the end of last year, I did the curriculum for the fifth grade in all the subject areas to use for this year. This also was passed along to the other team members. She and I do a lot of collaborating and she uses a lot of stuff that I give her as a resource for others.*

As far as the future goes, Ms. Stewart is just trying to *hold on to her job*. *With the economy like it is, not everybody got a contract this year. I was lucky enough to get one.* Ms. Stewart said that she doesn't think it was decided by the last teachers hired, she said that it may have been decided *by the way teachers were paid*, for example *by Title I funds*. She wasn't sure. *Last year I was one of the teachers paid through Title I, so I felt like I kind of lucked out this year. I did talk to the ones that didn't get a contract and they are just going back to school. I am still living with my parents, so it wasn't going to be a big deal having to pay rent somewhere*

to support myself. I was going back to school, if my contract had not been renewed. Her plan was to make herself available to small groups in the school to help with POI as a volunteer while she wasn't teaching. She was not planning to pursue teaching positions in other school systems. She thought the competition would be too steep, and she did not want to leave the area. She felt that by volunteering at this school, her face would be fresh on the administrator's mind when the time came to hire again. But, she is where she wants to be for next year, teaching fifth grade at this school.

Ms. Stewart feels like it is important that she really enjoys being a teacher. This is what I am supposed to do. It frustrates me when I don't know what to do for a particular student with problems. I wish I had more experiences. I wish I had more years under my belt, and I can't wait until I get to that point where I have more problem solving skills to draw from and more situations where I have done that in the past. I can think, 'Well, it worked that time, maybe I can try it again for this student.' Just having those years to draw from, experiences to draw from, I have only one and three-fourths years of experience, and that is the frustrating part for me. I want to be able to help these students, but at this point, I don't know what to do, yet. Eventually, I will know what to do hopefully, but I don't yet. I kind of want to fast forward and get to that point. Maybe I am not always going to know, but I will at least have the experiences to draw from. Ms. Stewart does say that the students still like her because she is young. But, it is obvious that she can't wait to be older. As I was walking out the door, I could not help but remember the moment toward the end of our first focus group that Ms. Stewart told Ms. Adamson she had observed her working with a student during a field experience in college. The boy had red hair. Then she told Ms. Adamson that now she is that same little boy's teacher.

CHAPTER 10

MS. SMITH



These frames were another example of ingenuity on the part of our ancestors for one type of frame did not fit all situations.

I first met Ms. Smith in the fall of 2008. She was young, and she looked at me with unsure eyes. This was a new experience for her. In August, she had attended my after-school meeting and agreed to tell me her story. Since signing the letter volunteering to participate in my study, this is the first time that I have seen her or been to her classroom. The students were still gathering their belongings when I walked in at the end of the day, and she worked at making sure each had their assignments and books. I helped to push the chairs in and straighten up the large, airy fifth grade classroom. I looked around, noticed the arrangement of the desks, the bulletin boards on the wall, and located a computer table to set my tape recorder on. Soon the last bell rang and Ms. Smith joined me. It wasn't long before she seemed at ease and began to smile and open up.

I graduated from high school in this county in 2003. I originally intended to be a computer specialist and took two semesters of computer classes and hated it. So I changed my

major to Early Childhood Education. When she changed her major, she signed on to be a substitute teacher in Jamison County where she lived and went to school. I worked primarily for the Primary School, as a substitute, for a year and a half. So, I had some experience in the classroom prior to doing my student teaching.

I still managed to get out of college in four years, somehow. I transferred twice and ended up in Piedmont. The subbing helped so much. I subbed up until I started student teaching, which was in the spring of 2006. Her student teaching assignment was in fourth grade at Jamison Elementary, the school she teaches in now. Six of the fourth graders that she taught while student teaching were in her class that first year of teaching. I thought that would be a good idea, but it turned out not to be such a good idea. I had the expectation; I had a lot of expectations from being a substitute as to how classroom behavior would be. I had only subbed in kindergarten through second grade. So I knew that age group, and I applied at both schools. But the job was offered for fifth grade. Ms. Smith accepted. I think I can relate better with older children. So a lot of my expectations were just based on things that I had already experienced being a substitute. The attitudes, I understood all that. I experienced a lot of that.

There is another new teacher across the hall from Ms. Smith named Ms. Stewart. They were in fifth grade together as young girls. *We actually were not friends in fifth grade, but now we are really good friends and colleagues. We graduated high school together in 2003 from Jamison High School and just happened to end up across the hall from one another. It has been a good experience to have grown up with someone from the age of five and now be coworkers. According to Ms. Smith, the two teachers have different teaching styles and personalities, which helps in keeping balanced and allows them to bounce ideas off each other.*

Last year Ms. Smith watched as Ms. Stewart was able to allow her students to do all kinds of *group projects*. But, Ms. Smith could not allow her students to work in groups, or there would be *fights and name-calling*. *So last year I came into this wanting to do all these fun, exciting, hands-on type lessons, and I couldn't because the kids just could not handle it. I went home every night just stressed. In college, they told us that by the time Christmas rolled around we would be wondering why we chose this profession. I really would go home and just literally cry, and be like, 'I have no idea why I do this.' It was not fun.*

I expected lots of grading, some attitude and back talking from students, and I expected to learn how to plan lessons. But, I expected it to be fun. I also expected it to be stressful, but enjoyable. I expected the opportunity to do what I wanted to do. But, as I said, my first year was nothing like that. I had a very challenging class last year. I had several students who had severe behavior disorders. I had every specialist they could bring in my class watching and observing. They were observing the students and trying to help me. Aside from that, I had students with different academic struggles, which is normal for all teachers, but it was very different than what I expected.

Ms. Smith's problem was *discipline*. The students were out of control. She was encouraged by the people observing her class and told that she was doing all she could for the students. She had the help of *the principal and assistant principal. I had a psychiatrist, they hired, and independent consultant to come in for behavior management. Everyone was trying to help. Everyone I talked to, this is not to pat myself on the back, but every person I talked to said, 'You are doing what you can for these kids. Their behaviors are so out of control that no one knows what to do.'* Ms. Smith said that her class was known as the worst class in the school.

I got very attached to my students because I was with them more than their families were with them, for the most part. So I became very attached and we had a very family-like community in our class. So when these kids would do the things that they did, and I had instances with some kids running away, stealing, and fighting, when all that stuff would happen, I carried it home with me. And, I had very troubled kids, talking about suicide and things like that. People would tell me, 'You have got to remove yourself from this. Leave it at school.' But, it was hard. One of my students I had during student teaching; I had been with her for a year and a half. Well, I never knew if she was coming back the next day. I didn't know if she was going to run away. I didn't know if she was going to try and kill herself that night. 'Where was she going to spend the night?' I took all that stuff home with me because I was attached to her. So, I understood what they were saying as far as 'remove yourself from situations,' but that is really easily said but not really easy to do.

Ms. Smith was one of eight fifth grade teachers. She was frustrated. I really truly wanted kids that I felt like I could have an impact on, and I don't feel like this was done intentionally to me. I just feel like it was just not a very thought out process for the kids to all be put in the same class because the dynamics of the classroom were just incredibly bad. It is just like they were growing up. They were hitting that puberty mark and their attitudes change, and the administration was not anticipating what happened. They put two students together, one was a two-year repeater, so he was almost 13, and the other one was a one-year repeater and she turned 12. Other than that, most of my students were 9, 10, and 11. These two were substantially older students. Substantially more mature. There were days I just wanted to go, 'Why do I have these kids?' But, no relief was given.

Honestly, they were trying to get these children removed from school. We filed juvenile complaints on these kids trying to get them into special camps. You know, like youth camps. It never would go through, so I was frustrated with our educational system. There was another frustration. I was upset that a child could have 25 write-ups at the end of the year and still remain in a regular education setting...even though I loved those two kids to death, I mean, I would have done anything for them. I feel like I got closer to them than anyone else because I wanted so badly to help them. They were helpless. They had hopeless home lives and everything that they did had an explanation to an extent because their lives were just horrible. But, I was frustrated that nothing was being done. Some days I felt depressed; some days I felt unimportant. But then some days the students would be suspended, and I would think that suspension wasn't the answer either. You know, we need to be looking out for the well being of the kids. We need to be looking for somewhere they can get help because they have problems. Like I said, I don't feel like it was done intentionally. I just feel like it wasn't a very thought through process...It got to the point that I called my Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE) representative to see what my options were. I just had to do something. I was at my wits end. I had to file charges on one of my students for theft and this was after several other instances of harassment, not towards me, per say. There was one instance in the beginning of the year where I was breaking up a fight, and I was inadvertently pushed away, but a student has no right to put their hands on a teacher. That was kind of swept under the rug, so I was at my wits in. So I called PAGE and I said that I needed to know what I could do. How I can get this kid out of my class because I feel like I am in danger? Some days I came to school, and I was really scared for my safety. I felt like this was not what I signed up for. I did not sign up to be a teacher to come to school and be scared.

I had a mentor who was the supervising teacher that I student taught with, and I could talk to her. She was an advocate for me, but everyone knew what was going on. Everyone knew and they were sorry, but nobody really helped. Honestly, the only thing that truly would have helped me, and would have helped the kids, was to find an alternate placement for them. And it wasn't because I wanted them out. I truly wanted them in my class. During the first few weeks, the administrators were trying to get them out of my class, and I was saying 'No, give me a shot. Let me see what I can do.' But after all of our possibilities had been exhausted, at that point I was like, 'Okay, we need to do something. We need to do something quick, because there are twenty-five kids and two kids are just having these extreme outbursts.' They weren't doing their work. They weren't making passing grades. They didn't care to be here. It just seemed like we had done everything we could do, and I didn't feel like I was helping them. I didn't feel like our school was helping them, but I was frustrated at the kids. I was frustrated at education in general. I was just stressed out because it was too much on top of all the grading, all the paper work, all the lesson planning, and all the meetings. By December, I was just ready to not come back.

But, Ms. Smith did come back in January. She said that she was *not a quitter*. The administrators kept emphasizing that *this is your first year and this is just one group of students*. One administrator in the school said that *more than likely I would never have, in my whole entire career of 30 years, another class equal to this one*. So, Ms. Smith stayed. *I knew things would get better. But, you know, it crossed my mind that if this doesn't get better, if this continues and I don't get any more support – it did cross my mind maybe to look elsewhere for a job. But I also knew that, you know, every school has problems and I really wanted to work here because this is where I live. This is where I grew up.*

During Ms. Smith's first year, *we had a lot of meetings where a lot of stuff was said, but it wasn't done. We never accomplished anything --and this still happens. We have these meetings, and everybody tells us what to do, but then nobody helps us. You know, 'You need to do this, this and this,' but here you go. And then we have been in a meeting for thirty minutes and then it is either you work on it here, or you take it home. And we are all tired. I know we all understand, and I understood this, too. That there was going to be a lot of stuff I had to take home. That definitely my job is not over when I leave at 4:00, really. When you are a first year teacher, you are getting stuff thrown at you that you don't even know what to do. I remember in the first few weeks of school, we had three new teachers and we would come into our room and just go, 'What are we supposed to do?' We didn't even know, and there was stuff that we were supposed to be doing that nobody was telling us to do, but then they were saying 'This is due.'* And we had no clue, you know.

Ms. Smith expected paper work, but not to this extent. *All the paper work. You would think in the age of the computer, we would have a lot more time. But, there is so much to fill out, so many forms.* The school did have a mentor program, but last year was the first year it was in place. Ms. Smith was lucky to have a good mentor, because that was not the case for everyone. They would meet together monthly. *My mentor was awesome.*

Because of the proximity of the classrooms on the fifth grade hall, four teachers work close together and the other four teachers work together. This just happened naturally. Plus, there are two teams with different planning times. *Four of us had the same planning time and then the other four had the same planning time. It became two separate groups of fifth grade teachers...I feel like it could be better, but it has just naturally happened. The four teachers here have become kind of a group that works together and those four have—just because of where our*

classrooms are located. I mean, I know it is only like 50 yards, but I never get to go down there. If we all had the same planning time, I think we could do a lot more together.

This has been a different year for Ms. Smith. My kids are much better. I have gotten to do groups, which made it so much easier. I want them to work in groups. I think they are going to learn better if they bounce some ideas off each other. They are much calmer. Their academics are a little bit lower than my group last year. But, I don't have any behavior problems. I have the occasional attitude, and it is not even really towards me. It has just been night and day. A lot of it is, and this is what I have learned from last year, is stability.

This year I have very stable routines. They know exactly what to do when they come in, in the morning. They know exactly what to do when they come back from lunch. So, you know, they are trained to do what they are supposed to do. I think that is what a lot of first year teachers and everybody does, is they don't get their kids in a routine, and you can't expect kids to do what they don't know to do. My kids know exactly what to do, and it is a lot less off task behavior. Plus, I know what to do.

I came in at the beginning of the year and I knew what to do and now I know where I am going and I know—my desk is 4000 times cleaner this year than it was last year. That use to drive me insane. I couldn't go home until I had everything in a stack. Well, then I would have to go through the stacks, and that took so much time that it frustrated me that not everything had a place. Well, this year everything has a place, and it is just—I have learned not to grade everything. Some stuff you just put a check on it and you send it home. I lot of stuff I did last year I was just trying, this year I know exactly what I want to do. Last year, there was a lot of swapping. I don't really like that. You have to when you are a first year teacher. You may not like every procedure that you are doing, and you have to change it in the middle of the year.

Well, that is not good on the kids, and I realize that a lot of it was my fault because I kept changing. Well, this year I know exactly what I want them to do and everything is just running a lot smoother. . . and, I go home a lot earlier.

When Ms. Smith thinks back to why she stayed for a second year, she said that when contracts came out last March, she *just signed it*. She knew that she *had to have a job*, and she thought she would just *give it another year to see if things got better*. But when thinking about why some new teachers don't stay, she said that one problem she feels is that the administration is just putting more and more pressure of their teachers. *I think a lot of times that they have been out of the classroom too long to where they forget what it is like to be a teacher, and they impose—and I know not everything comes from our administrators, but it seems like they are continually putting more and more pressure on us. Because they have a lot of pressure, but I think they forget what it is like to be a classroom teacher and on top of teaching they keep piling all these different things on us. I just think people get tired of that. I think people are looking for a break. Kind of like the grass is greener somewhere else. So, they leave the profession all together or they leave their schools for another.*

In reference to new teachers and their salary, Ms. Smith feels like she could make more money at a job that was less stressful, but she wouldn't enjoy it as much. She feels teachers *don't make enough money, especially with the economy the way it is right now. I mean, that is something that I would possibly have to consider. Right now I am single and I don't have any kids, but I can see leaving this profession just because I had to have more money. I could go and do some managing job and make a lot more. I know that is not a good reason, but when the economy gets bad it kind of forces your hand. So, I think that probably drives a lot of people, too. Granted, everybody says teachers have it easy, they get summers off, but you know, you have to*

go to professional development, you are planning your next year, so there are highs and lows in every job. I think new teachers might leave due to a lack of support, realizing that teaching is a stressful job, and money.

Ms. Smith feels like education is really good about keeping up with the times. The teachers are being encouraged to use technology. A lot of the older teachers don't like to do the technology, but I see where it is a good idea because I think the kids have got to grow up in this world and they have got to be able to perform.

She discussed her views on the current reforms and accountability. It seems like more and more they keep trying to throw everything on the teachers and that is one thing I noticed. I like the accountability that they have for kids. I am probably like all other teachers; I just wonder when the accountability is going to shift to the parents, as well. Last year I had kids and this year I have kids that won't do their work, and I can't force them to do it. You know, you call home and the parents don't care if the kids do the work. But yet they are trying to make it to where if those kids don't pass, it is my fault. Well, there are some things I can't do. I am not a miracle worker and I can't force them to do it. But, I agree the accountability is good because it keeps us on our toes. It keeps us doing the best we can do. Yet, we are always talking about differentiation of instruction; we are realizing that everybody is not the same, but then education is trying to tell us that everybody is the same. So, I do agree, we should be accountable and it should matter, but you just have to take in consideration the individual students we are working with.

Ms. Smith wants to tell new teachers that you just can't know what it is going to be like until you get there, and that is what she wished someone had told her. When you first set your foot into your first classroom and you start doing your work and you get your class, it is always going to be different. That is what she learned. And she wants to say to first year teachers, 'Don't

give up after your first year because it might get better, it might get worse, you know, every year is going to be different.'

Ms. Smith does wish that administrators could realize the stress levels of their educators. *I think sometimes they realize you have to keep teacher morale high or it affects the whole school and when you see that-- like one problem we had this year was that we have had meeting, after meeting, after meeting and we were all tired. It was just like they have to cut us a break. You can drive your people too hard to where you know it is counterproductive to what you are trying to do.*

In reflecting on working with parents, Ms. Smith *expected to have to deal with parents*, but she thinks *parents need to remember that ol' saying, 'I'll believe half of what they say happens at home if you'll believe half of what they say happens at school.'* *I think parents should really take that to heart, because a lot of parents tend to, and not just mine, from talking to everybody, tend to jump on teachers immediately when their kids are not doing well. I wish parents would realize that sometimes you have to look to your child and see who really is accountable for all these things, because I try my best to have a good relationship with all parents, because as soon as that relationship is broken that is when problems start happening. At that point, you have the kids trying to pit the parents against the teachers. Kids are smart. They know how to pit their parents to where they are going to go after the teacher and the teacher to where they are going to go after the parents. So, you know, that happens. I wish there was some way we could work to build that relationship. I think that would help a lot. I left that afternoon looking forward to having the new and veteran teachers around a table sharing their experiences.*

Our first focus group took place in October. Ms. Smith wrote down, *dealing with parents*, as a topic she would like to talk about. She doesn't take the opportunity to bring this topic up in our first focus group, but she does in the second. She watches and listens quietly the entire time and does not make any comments. These were her reflections: *I enjoyed hearing that even veteran teachers have struggles in their classrooms. Some of the most seasoned teachers don't have all the answers and have to troubleshoot.*

The second focus group takes place in November. Ms. Smith's topic is: *teacher expectations vs. parent expectations*. She listens to several of the teachers share their topics and Ms. Stewart, the new teacher across the hall from her, is one who asks for suggestions on working with parents with assignments and agendas. Then, Ms. Smith shares her topic. *Well, mine is related to the agendas as well. I have a parent – in my class I don't check agendas daily because I think as we are moving them towards middle school, they need to be responsible. I do block out a period of time for them to copy the agenda and homework for the week. I say, 'This is your time, this is what you need to do.' But I have a lot of kids who are not responsive, and they don't care. So, this teaches them responsibility because the next day they come to school; and they don't have their homework; and they stay in study hall, which is what they are going to have to do in middle school.*

But I have a parent whose daughter, I feel, is perfectly capable of doing this, but I feel like she is enabled at home to get away with things. Now, this parent wants me make sure I go behind her and make sure she copies everything down. I don't agree with that. So, that is my teacher expectations versus parent expectations, because I feel like I am just hurting her even more by enabling her, just like they are doing at home. I told her mom I would do it, but at some point I feel like I should cut it off.

I think, she is not one that would really have to be monitored, except for the fact that I think at home everything is really counterproductive. She could be a very good leader. My goal this year is to get her out of that and make her responsible for herself.

Her parents are the type that they want her to be all the things – I don't think they realize they are being counterproductive. This is an only child. The veteran teachers gave Ms. Smith assistance in ways to work with the parent and suggestions of things to say. After this conversation ended, Ms. Smith and several other teachers had to go to another meeting.

We had two focus groups before winter break and two after the participants returned. Ms. Smith got engaged in November and began to plan her wedding for the end of January, two months away. Ms. Smith missed the next two focus groups because of this special event on her life. We worked around her schedule diligently to try to include her, but the third focus group took place on a day that she was exhausted and sick. The fourth one took place on a day that the school system needed her to go and complete some paper work relating to changing her name. We missed her being a part of the last two focus groups. In our last interview she reflected on her experiences in these two focus groups.

In March, I walked in Ms. Smith's classroom to see several students waiting for the afternoon buses to be called. Ms. Smith was sitting with a group of girls. One was fixing her hair and another was rubbing her shoulders. The boys in the room were talking in a group of their own. Some of the students were not with either group. Ms. Smith smiled and said, *'Hello.'* The bell soon rang, and we were, once again, left alone to talk.

Many changes have taken place in Ms. Smith's life since we last saw each other before winter break. She has gotten engaged and married. She has moved from her parents' house to a home of her own. Ms. Smith seemed self-assured. More than her name has changed.

Ms. Smith began our time together by reflecting on the focus groups. *I thought the focus groups were very helpful in that we had time to sit with teachers not only from our school, but with teachers from the other schools. We never get to collaborate with those teachers, aside from this time. Most of those teachers, actually, I already knew from being in school. I didn't have any of them as teachers, but I was in the school system coming through when they were teaching. I also knew them because I was a substitute at that school. But, it did help getting to hear feedback from other people and understanding, you know, here is the problem I am experiencing and then having other people talk to you about it. You never get to do that in school.*

Ms. Smith spends most of her time with the teachers who are on the same level of experience as her. *I seem to gravitate to those who have the same problems, and those are the teachers that I talk to. I guess it is almost that when you are inexperienced you feel that people are judging you, for lack of a better word, when you have problems. It is almost like you don't want to go to them. If I ever went to a veteran teacher at my school, they would answer my question. But you don't want to look like you don't know something, or at least I don't. So it was easier when it is a part of a research study.*

This year Ms. Smith feels more isolated. *This year, things are strange, I don't know why but I don't see the teachers nearly as much as I did last year. The other new teacher and I still have lunch together. But the planning blocks changed. Last year, I had a different group of teachers that I had planning time with and this year we just don't get together. The teachers that are at the end of the hall that I have a lot to do with, we plan a unit together. We plan Social Studies together, so that is one reason why we actually do see each other. The new teacher down the hall, we team-taught for the first session of the year. Ms. Smith says that her administration encourages them to find ways to teach to their strengths. So, Ms. Smith taught social studies to*

her class and the class across the hall while the other teacher taught science. *It just didn't work for the second semester because there is more social studies curriculum than there is science. But overall, I just don't feel like we see each other as much.*

Ms. Smith discussed some of the differences between this year and last year that she discussed in our first interview, and adds her thoughts about lesson plans and being married. *This year I have actually improved on a lot of things. I have learned that you can't grade everything. If I try and grade everything for accuracy, I will never get my head above water. This year I haven't had any, I won't say any, very minimal attitude and back talking. I think that is because at the beginning of this year, I laid it out that it wasn't going to happen this year. There is still not much time. I have just learned there is never going to be enough time to plan the lessons the way I want them to be, because if I did plan lessons like I wanted to teach - there would not be enough time to teach them. So, I pull together what I can and then we just go from there.*

I make my lesson plans every week, but I never stick to them. It just never happens because of time constraints. I make them essentially just to turn in because it is a job responsibility. I teach better if I have what I want to do in front of me in the book and the worksheets that I want to do. And I can teach from the hip. I do better that way. I know a lot of teachers can never do that, but for me, I like to kind of pull out what kind of time I have, the atmosphere, who is here who is not here, to know what are the things I am going to do that day rather than have it on the calendar. It is a requirement to have it on the calendar so I do, but like I said, it is never what I really do.

This year is fun. But, it is definitely stressful and getting more stressful now that I am married. I have my own house, now. I have stuff to do here, and I have stuff to do there, and it is that balance of how long can I stay here, and I have to get home and get supper and do laundry

and things like that. This is something that I am learning. She says this year teaching is enjoyable most days and to some degree she gets to do what she wants to do. She says that for the most part, her experiences have been what she expected, just to different degrees for some of them.

This year has been a really good year for Ms. Smith. In comparison to last year, it has been an excellent year. My classroom runs very smoothly in my opinion. Kids do what they are supposed to do. If they don't when they are corrected there is no back talking. There is nothing, it is, 'Yes ma'am. I am sorry' and we are back on track. Which is what I think should happen in a classroom. There shouldn't be any arguing and things like that. The kids in my first classes are making progress, but there are a few that she has put through the Pyramids of Intervention (POI) system to try to get them help, and they are really frustrated with that.

Ms. Smith talked about one student she was working with through the POI system. I have been trying to get this student tested for Special Education, basically since we got into school, but each time the interventions work. But, they are interventions that should have been learned in third grade, so I am backing up and every time an intervention works, true it works but he still is behind, and I still think there may be some underlying issue to that, maybe it is motivation. I just can't get him tested because of the process.

His grades and the CRCT could hold him back, but his size might send him on to sixth grade. Then, another teacher will have to continue with interventions.

The economy has played a role in jobs this year. Since Ms. Smith is a second year teacher, she thought she might be one of the teachers who would not be offered a contract. She was offered a contract, and has signed it; but she said that the atmosphere has been stressful for every teacher without tenure. That was the most stressful part of my year.

The economy affected her husband's ability to move. They met last March and he started looking for a job in law enforcement in June. *He was in Virginia waiting to get a job before he re-located. Finally, he was able to transfer with Wal-Mart, and on November 19th he was finally able to move down here.*

Ms. Smith is already looking forward to next year. *I think next year will be much better.* She feels like she needs time to get her *house in order*. With containers and corners still crammed *with moving stuff*, she won't be comfortable until she is able to have a clean house. *I feel really cool, and if I can have some time to kind of get my personal life in order, I won't be thinking about it at school.*

Next year, Ms. Smith wants to teach fifth grade at this school, again. That is truly what she wants to do. However, down the road, after she gets a little older, her goal is to go back and get *certified for sixth through twelfth grades* and ultimately, teach in the high school. *When I am older, because I don't want to be that close to the age of the students, I would like to teach economics or social studies at the high school level. I know how I was when I was in school with teachers about my age. It is really hard to break that barrier. They expect you to be their friend because you are close to their age, so I had rather teacher the lower grades until I get into my 30's and then go and move to the high school.*

Ms. Smith loves teaching in the elementary school. *I just really have a passion for social studies, history, and even more than that, civics and economics.* She also likes this county. *This is the county I grew up in. I have no desire to leave. I think if I ever do leave it will be to go back to Virginia with my husband, if he ever wanted to go back. That is the only way I could leave. He misses his family, but he looks at it as an adventure, I guess. He really likes the people down*

here. . . and he has started coming to church with me, and so he is excited to get involved with a church. It wasn't really as hard of a transition as he thought it would be.

As our time was coming to an end Ms. Smith added, I think it is important just to take everything that we have all said, all seven participants, it is all valuable. I mean there are a lot of things we all agree on and a lot of things we don't agree on, and I know it would be hard in your position not to side with people, but you know, and I find that hard, if I am talking with somebody and – I am like, no my position is right, you know. But, I am learning that every teacher, no matter what their position, they know a right way to teach. When I first started this and I worked with teachers in college, I would think, 'No, that is totally wrong, that was not the way to run a classroom. I had one teacher in my practicum that talked so off the wall, and I was thinking, 'Wow, that is not how you do this.' But, I learned that everybody has their own way of doing things. It doesn't make it right and it doesn't make it wrong. Just that everybody is going to be different. The ultimate goal is to think that we all have a lot of similarities, but we are all different, too. The teacher across the hall, I told you from the get go we have very different teaching styles. But we still see eye to eye. This has been very beneficial to me. I have enjoyed the study because it has helped me see that one situation can have eight different possible outcomes.

A former professor asked Ms. Smith if she would come to her class and speak to the students preparing to be teachers. So she did and she told me what she shared. There is no preparation that is good enough for coming and doing this job. You have to go through it. You do. This is not for everybody. You have to figure out if you have a thick skin – mine is thick. After last year, I had to learn to leave it at school, to some degree. I come here; I go home; I come

back the next day and do it. I don't think college or anybody can do anything to prepare you to do it. You just have to live it.

CHAPTER 11

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS



The ends of the quilt would be basted or pinned to this cloth. When one section was completed the quilt could be rolled presenting a new section to be quilted.

Across the Cases

Now I offer the cross-case analysis written as a restorying, a composite of a rural teacher represented as *Ms. Jamison*. In response to this woven tale from the fabric of seven educator's lives, I will share my insight, understanding, and discovery with the intent of moving toward proposed judgments. According to Clandinin and Connelly,

In effect, stories are the closest we can come to experience as we and others tell of our experience. A story has a sense of being full, a sense of coming out of a personal and social history. . . . Stories such as these, lived and told, educate the self and others, including the young and those, such as researchers, who are new to their communities. (1994, p. 415)

Summary of the Expectations

Using a Venn diagram (Appendix F), I listed all of the new teachers' intersecting expectations in one circle, all of the veteran teachers' intersecting expectations in the other circle,

and compared them across experience levels looking for areas of overlap. I listed each intersecting expectation once. So, if one or more teachers had the same expectation, it would not be apparent when examining the Venn diagram. Therefore, designing a table became necessary in order to visualize the intersecting expectations of each experience level (new or veteran) and to be able to clearly see the overlapping expectations across cases. Interestingly, six sections of the table display gaps between the expectations of new and veteran teachers' expectations. Below, Table 3 gives a visual display of the intersections within each experience level and the overlap of expectations between all of the new and veteran teachers.

Overlap is defined as coinciding or corresponding in part with something in time, function, or purpose (Soukhanov, 2009). Based on the Venn diagram, there was support for the development of three overlapping themes, six themes without overlap, and other isolated expectations. All of the participants, except one, noted that they expected to receive support from the faculty and/or staff in the school. Three new teachers and one veteran teacher expected to have class management/discipline issues. This theme encompasses having discipline or behavior issues with students or classroom organizational issues. One new teacher and one veteran teacher expected autonomy, by listing that they wanted to *use their own ideas*. Even though only one theme had overwhelming evidence of overlap consisting of three new and three veteran teachers, and the other two themes' overlap consisted of only one veteran teacher, there is evidence that three themes had overlapping expectations.

There were six themes that did not overlap between new and veteran teachers. New teachers were more practical and realistic when listing their aspirations of being a teacher while veteran teachers had idealistic aspirations. New teachers worried about their new career being *hard, stressful, and challenging* while veteran teachers wanted to *change the world* and *be the*

Table 3

Visual Display of the Intersections within Each Experience Level and the Overlap of Expectations between the New and Veteran Teachers

Themes	New Teachers	Veteran Teachers
Aspirations (Realistic)	<p>to be hard and difficulty -and-* little to no life outside of school</p> <p>to be stressful</p> <p>to be a challenge</p>	
Aspirations (Idealistic)		<p>gain some fame in the teaching profession -and-* hoped to change the world</p> <p>give children a sense of self worth</p> <p>be the best teacher there ever was!</p>
Support	<p>help to be given by fellow teachers</p> <p>to learn a lot from other teachers</p> <p>receive support from other staff members</p>	<p>receive support from other staff members.</p> <p>have co-workers willing to help</p> <p>share and borrow other ideas from other teachers</p> <p>have supportive administrators</p>
Class Management/Discipline	<p>to deal with behavioral and discipline problems</p> <p>some attitude and back talking from students</p> <p>classroom management challenges</p>	<p>going to need help with management and discipline -and-* controlling the learning environment</p>
Autonomy	<p>the opportunity to do what I wanted to do</p>	<p>use my own ideas</p>
Student Motivation		<p>thought kids would be eager to learn</p> <p>having students who were motivated to learn</p> <p>be able to guide children to have a desire to learn</p>

Table 3 *continued*

Themes	New Teachers	Veteran Teachers
Teaching Reading/Math		be excited to teach reading and math be able to do one on one teaching teach children to read
Time Management	time management challenges lots of grading	
Curriculum/Lesson Plans	be baffled by curriculum expectations -and-* have to write detailed lesson plans expected to learn how to plan lessons	
Other expectations that did not overlap within or across cases	to be fun -and-* enjoyable	be able to implement play-to-learn strategies -and-* have a clear definition of students needs -and-* be support for other staff members have parents who wanted the same things for students pass my evaluations

*If (-and-) appears in the chart, that designates that the same teacher gave both expectations.

Expectations that intersected within the category of new teachers were:

- ⇒ Realistic Aspirations
- ⇒ Support
- ⇒ Class Management/Discipline
- ⇒ Time Management
- ⇒ Curriculum/Lesson Plans

Expectations that intersected within the category of veteran teachers were:

- ⇒ High Aspirations
- ⇒ Support
- ⇒ Student Motivation
- ⇒ Teaching Reading/Math

The overlap between the two major categories (new and veteran) were:

- ⇒ Support
- ⇒ Class Management/Discipline (Overlap between all new and one veteran)
- ⇒ Autonomy (Overlap between one new and one veteran teacher)

best they could be. The new teachers expected curriculum/lesson plans and time management challenges, including grading, while veteran teachers expected *motivated* students and wanted to be able to *teach reading and math.* These six themes give evidence to suggest a difference in expectations.

Summary of the Experiences

According to Neill (2005), John Dewey's theory is that "one's present experience is a function of the interaction between one's past experiences and the present situation" (p.1). With this in mind when approaching the data, each case was analyzed and experiences were extracted and displayed in an analytical chart for each participant (Appendix G). Key organizational themes emerged: places, people/culture, and other experiences.

Places. All participants in this study have taught only in Georgia. Five of the participants have teaching experience only in Jamison County Schools. Two of the veteran teachers have taught in other school systems in Georgia. One veteran taught seven years in a small rural school system nearby until she married and moved to Jamison County. The other veteran participant taught in more than five school systems, all of them in rural areas except for one school system on the coast. He moved here to retire. The two remaining veteran teachers and all three of the new teachers have taught in only one school system, Jamison County Schools. In the area of experiences of places, the overlap in the data presents an important distinction between the seven participants: schools in Georgia and specifically, Jamison County.

People/Culture. In the area of experiences of people and culture five areas overlapped: investment, support, perception, parents, and discipline issues. The new and veteran teachers in this study have made an investment in this community. It is their *background*, and they have *no desire to leave.* They know the people, grew up and went to school in the county, or moved here

after marrying to raise their family and/or retire. The participants, according to their experience levels, described the support they received from the teachers. The new teachers initially reflected that *more support was needed*, but did add that they have felt more comfortable and more camaraderie this year, their second year. The veteran teachers have felt a great deal of support from the faculty.

Other experiences. In analyzing for areas of overlap within experience levels, new teachers discussed most often: working with other teachers, discipline issues, being overwhelmed or challenged as a first year teacher, mentors and support, the comfort level of being a second year teacher, reforms, and expectations that have been met after almost two years of teaching. Discipline issues and working with other teachers intersected the most within the category of new teachers. Veteran teachers discussed most often: being a mentor, support, working with other teachers, reforms, what was important to them, their expectations that had been met over the years, changes in education, and what they had experienced in education that was unexpected. Mentoring, support, and working with other teachers intersected the most within the category of veteran teachers. All seven participants discussed their beginning experiences as a teacher and what was important. In the area of other experiences, the overlap that emerged between the participants were: reforms, mentors and support, working with other teachers, ‘achieved’ expectations, what is important, and beginning teaching experiences.

Summary of the Cross-Case Analysis

Two proposals emerged through analysis of the overlap of expectations in the Venn diagram and the overlap of the experiences of places, people, and ‘other’ experiences in the seven analytical charts.

1. *The new and veteran teachers' expectations of being a teacher were different.*

With the exception of support, the expectations listed by the new and veteran teachers had little in common. Six of the participants listed support as an expectation. All of the new teachers and one veteran teacher expected class management or discipline issues to occur, and one new teacher and one veteran teacher wanted to be able to use their own ideas. These were the only observed areas of overlap.

The aspirations were viewed as a difference since the new teachers were realistic and the veteran teachers were idealistic. The new teachers listed practical expectations. They discussed expectations that they encountered on a daily basis, e.g., grading, lesson plans and the curriculum, discipline and management issues, and needing more time and additional support. Instead of looking at tasks and responsibilities, the veteran teachers listed ideals, hopes, and dreams for themselves and students, e.g., gaining fame, changing the world, instilling self-esteem, teaching and motivating children. The differences have something to say to us about what these new teachers expect now, in the 21st Century, and what these veteran teachers expected in the 1970s. The one similarity that the majority of participants listed, also, has something to say to us; teachers needed support then, they need support now, and they will continue to need support from their first day in the classroom until the last.

2. *These rural teachers had a background with a rural community or an attachment to the rural community in which they taught; acknowledged the supportive and challenging characteristics of experiences with people in rural communities; and, talked about similar educational experiences.*

Background. The definition of background is the personal circumstances and experiences that shape somebody's life, for example, ethnic and social origins, upbringing, education, and

work experience; and attachment is defined as an emotional bond or tie (Soukhanov, 2009). Six of the seven participants in this study live in this community and have for many years. Ms. Mountcastle, Ms. Adamson, Ms. Jones, and Ms. Dixon have children that attend schools in the county or graduated from schools in the county. Ms. Smith and Ms. Stewart attended and graduated from the schools in this county. Ms. Smith said *I really wanted to work here because this is where I live. This is where I grew up*. Even though she was having a very stressful first year, Ms. Smith did not want to change to another school system. Ms. Stewart said she would *go back to school*, if her contract was not renewed because of the economy. Her plan was to *make herself available* and *volunteer*. She did not want to leave the area. Mr. White was the one participant who moved to the area to retire and did not raise his family in Jamison County, but he grew up in a rural community in Georgia and taught in many rural school systems. This consistent thread that runs between these seven educators, rural schools, and communities has something to say to us.

People. These rural teachers did not ‘turn a blind eye’ to the issues that occur in rural communities. The idiom ‘turning a blind eye’ is used to describe the process of ignoring inconvenient facts. These seven educators embraced and talked openly concerning caring about students, having difficulties with parents, receiving support from other teachers, not receiving enough support, the perception some have toward their rural community, discipline issues they have dealt with in the classroom, and the need to reinforce a positive self image.

Mr. White described the educators in this school system as *well-prepared, well-qualified, enthusiastic people with good leadership* but said that is not what he has found in all school systems. Ms. Mountcastle described her peers as her *extended family*, but she openly admitted that she has experienced a *lack of respect or professionalism from some veteran teachers*. Ms.

Adamson gave examples of some of the perceptions people have about a rural education when she discussed pre-school preparation, extended family members serving as caregivers, and student teachers. Ms. Jones expressed that teachers make an investment in the county. Most live here, have gone to school here, and/or have family here. In her interviews and in the focus groups Ms. Jones focused on the importance of developing self-esteem in her students.

The individual interviews were filled with stories of support, loving the students, and the desires of each participant's heart when discussing education past and present. However, the focus groups were where the teachers talked with each other about working with parents, curriculum issues with specific students, and motivating students to learn. This is where the new teachers enlisted the assistance of the veteran teachers and 'picked their brains' concerning issues dealing with parents and students. Teaching is a 'people' profession, and the case studies overlap with supportive and challenging 'people' experiences. And, when given the opportunity to spend time with other teachers, the participants focused on discussing information and ideas that they could use when dealing with people, grown and growing, in their classroom and in their profession.

Similar educational experiences. If the reader were to read these seven case studies without the advantage of knowing whether he or she was reading about a teacher who started teaching last year or thirty years ago, I do not think the reader could distinguish which one was which. Both the new and veteran teachers talked about their experiences in their first year of teaching, their experiences with support, changes, the opportunity to work with other teachers, educational reforms, and what was important.

First year teaching. Each teacher talked about his or her beginning teaching experience, and in reflecting on those discussions, I listed what stood out to me:

Mr. White – described the physical condition of the building; the students.

Ms. Mountcastle – described the misinterpretation of the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975)* and limited support.

Ms. Adamson – described the need to create materials for her gifted students.

Ms. Jones – described the make-up of the class, the lack of support, and the absence of teaching materials.

Ms. Dixon – seemed to have the least amount of concerns her first year, which she attributes to not having a homeroom, co-teaching, and having experience from being a substitute and para-pro.

Ms. Stewart – was challenged by finalizing a classroom management style, having moody students, and making materials.

Ms. Smith – had difficulty maintaining control with the variety of academic needs and disruptive behavioral issues exhibited by the students.

Three of the participants experienced difficult teaching situations their first year, Ms. Mountcastle, Ms. Jones, and Ms. Smith. Ms. Adamson and Ms. Dixon did not describe their first year as difficult, they just described the challenges they encountered. Mr. White's main concern was the condition of the building and the culture of the community, and Ms. Stewart had classroom management issues. All seven participants faced challenges their first year, some more than others.

Support. In searching through the new teachers' first year experiences, Ms. Dixon had the most support through co-teaching each period with different fourth grade teachers and through her mentor during her first year. Ms. Stewart said she could have especially used more help and support during pre-planning, and she was without a mentor for some of her first year of teaching.

Ms. Smith experienced support from her mentor, but expressed needing more administrative assistance. She brought up that new teachers tend to gravitate to other new teachers and those who teach closest to their classroom. In considering the support received after the participants' first years of teaching, it seemed to improve for the participants. From the veteran teachers' first year teaching experiences, only one veteran, Ms. Adamson, described a teacher who came in her room the first two weeks to give her a break and someone to lean on, the others did not receive support.

Changes. Many changes were discussed including more women administrators, increased responsibilities for teachers, and the modernization of school buildings. But there were two categories that emerged, new technology and curriculum changes were discussed most often.

Working with Other Teachers. The seven participants mentioned this topic throughout the study. They talked about working with other teachers when discussing peer teachers, teachers on their hall, team or grade level. They discussed being a mentor, having a mentor, planning with individual teachers, planning with grade levels and teams, the benefits from the focus groups and how much they valued each experience and what it meant to their practice.

Educational Reforms. The first legal policy that appeared in the data was the *Civil Rights Act (1964)*. Mr. White's first experience in schools occurred during a time of racial unrest. A Black principal and a White principal worked together to unite the school in that rural community.

Even though all of the participants experienced legal policies, Ms. Mountcastle was the next participant that I interviewed to mention an experience with a legal policy when as a first year teacher the school system misinterpreted the guidelines for her as the Special Education teacher under the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975)*. Since then, all of the

teachers in this study have been affected by this Act, and the Acts following in its footsteps, which states that the placement of a special education student will consist of the opportunity to be placed in the ‘least restrictive environment’ and details the steps to follow to identify a child to be tested for Special Education. For a classroom teacher, this process begins with the identification of a student needing additional assistance and documenting the strategies and assessments used throughout the process. This was discussed throughout the study as the Pyramids of Interventions (POI).

The three new teachers felt the impact of the *Nation At Risk (1983)* as recent high school graduates because it contained more stringent graduation requirements and college entrance exams. All seven of the teachers teach in a Title I school, teach a diverse student population, teach in schools that have applied for and received grants, adhere to time-on-task regulations, must be highly qualified, work in a safe and drug-free environment, have an obligation to keep all student records confidential, and must meet the requirements set forth by NCLB; therefore, all of the teachers have felt the effects of the *Civil Rights Act (1964)*, *Bilingual Education Act (1968)*, the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (1974)*, *Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975)*, *Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994)*, and *No Child Left Behind Act (2001)*.

The diversity of the students in the same classroom, the students learning English as their second language, the documentation being completed by the teachers through the Pyramids of Intervention (POI), and the increased emphasis on every child meeting his or her academic potential is the evidence this study provides to the reader that legal policies appear in each classroom everyday in a very palpable way.

What is important. Mr. White said, *You have to love the kids. You have got to love the work.* He ends the last interview by saying, *Take care of yourself, your relationship with God, your relationship with your children, your spouse, and the other people that are really important to you.*

Ms. Mountcastle said that she wanted to be relieved of so much testing and actually get to work with the children again in a variety of ways instead of just paper/pencil. She wanted to teach for mastery, instead of teaching just memorization. This reminded me of when Dewey (1915) stated, "There is very little place in the traditional schoolroom for the child to work" (p. 18). And a year later he wrote, "Why is it, in spite of the fact that teaching by pouring in, learning by passive absorption, are universally condemned, that they are still so entrenched in practice?" (1916, p. 23). Even though he said this almost a century ago, it seems fitting to ask that question again today.

Ms. Mountcastle ended our last interview by saying that collaboration is important to her.

Ms. Adamson said that the reading curriculum is very important. Then, she added that new teachers need to know that they have support. She continued by saying that veteran teachers need to know that things are going to change and they are going to have to change with them.

Ms. Jones said that a child's sense of self worth, and she explains that you teach self worth through *love*, is what's important. She talked about self worth and loving the students four times.

Ms. Dixon said that collaboration is important. Ms. Dixon ended the last interview by saying that teachers need to continue to adapt. She said, *I think it is good to adapt, be flexible, and change as your needs change.*

Ms. Stewart said that it needs to be understood that students learn at different rates and teachers need to be able to focus and just teach. She ended the last interview by saying, *I feel like it is important to really enjoy being a teacher.*

Ms. Smith said, *I think it is important just to take everything that we have all said – it is all valuable.*

All of the participants discussed at some point in their interview what was important to them. Many different answers were given. The topics that overlapped were: loving children, a child's sense of self worth, enjoying teaching, collaboration, adapting to change, and being able to teach.

I connected the cases together in such a way as to generate new understanding and insight through a reconstruction of experience using the overlap of the new and veteran teachers' expectations, places, people, and other experiences producing two propositions:

1. *The new and veteran teachers' expectations of being a teacher were different.*
2. *These rural teachers had a background with a rural community or an attachment to the rural community in which they taught; acknowledged the supportive and challenging characteristics of experiences with people in rural communities; and, talked about similar educational experiences.*

Narrative inquiry suggests that the most appropriate way to integrate findings and propositions is through story. Therefore, upon the realization that there were differences in the expectations and similarities between the participants' experiences such that the experience level ceased to be a defining difference, the idea of combining the cases into one story of a teacher, without labels of years, developed.

Polkinghorne (1995) described narrative as a type of discourse that “draws together diverse events, happenings, and actions of human lives” and integrates these happenings into a “thematic thread” (p. 5). Whatever the teachers had something to say about, in their case studies, has become the ‘thematic thread’ for the cross case analysis. “When happenings are configured or emplotted, they take on narrative meaning” (p. 5). Polkinghorne discussed “*narrative as story*” and uses the term *story* “to signify narratives that combine a succession of incidents into a unified episode” (p. 7). The result of the research that utilizes narrative analysis becomes an “emplotted narrative” in the form of a story (p. 15). In writing the story of *Ms. Jamison*, I used the ‘succession of incidents’ from the seven case studies to form the ‘unified episode.’

Schwandt (1994) suggested that researchers active in the research process should attempt to understand the “complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it” (p. 118). Schwandt described constructivist thinking by stating, “. . . we are all constructivists if we believe that the mind is active in the construction of knowledge. . . In this sense, constructivism means that human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as construct or make it” (p. 125). As researchers see again with new eyes what we have looked at many times before, we are invited to “approach the object in a radical spirit of openness to its potential for new or richer meaning. It is an invitation to reinterpretation” (Crotty, 1998, p. 51).

When writing the narrative case studies, I let the words of my participants speak for themselves to the ‘greatest degree possible.’ Once the idea was born and the cross-case narrative of *Ms. Jamison* came into existence, what to include and what to exclude became the decision. *Ms. Jamison* now provides the researched response to: What do new and veteran teachers have to **say** to us about their expectations and experiences in teaching? The overlap from the cross-case analysis of expectations and experiences address the question and offer us what teachers have to

say. In the narrative entitled *Ms. Jamison*, what teachers have to say to us will begin with the words: Teachers talk about... in order to alert the reader. But, much has been written previously in this study about what is important to include when analyzing, writing, and reading the final story in case study research.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) remind us “case studies are read, and lived, vicariously by others” (p. 8). It is up to the reader to ‘transfer’ the information gained to his or her own personal experiences. Hayes (2004) asked readers of case study research to use their own experiences to draw meaning from each case. So, as Merriam suggested, I have used detailed description of the study to illuminate a phenomenon I have discovered, the differences of these educator’s expectations and the similarities of their experiences. *Ms. Jamison* will be ‘important’ for what she can ‘reveal’ and ‘might represent’ and what she ‘tells’ us. I have ‘reassembled’ these seven stories as if joining together specific pieces of fabric that were too *important* to exclude. Stake defined case study as both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry (p. 444). This cross case analysis is the ‘product of that inquiry,’ a narrative re-presented in the form of *Ms. Jamison*. It is a reconstructed quilt of a rural educator presented as a case.



Ms. Jamison

I grew up in this small Georgia town and now I teach here. My family lives here. Not every teacher grew up here, some moved here after they married or moved here to retire, but most have only taught in this school system. I went to the university nearby, and I was really

excited about the idea of coming back and teaching here. I know the people here. This is. . . my background. I have no desire to leave.

Some people have the perception that this *is not the best school system just because we are in a rural community*. I have heard it said that folks think *children “come out of the yard” without preschool experience. We still have some, just like anywhere, that are raised by grandparents, so they might not have the most up-to-date bringing up*. And, we do have *students who don’t want to do their work and some who have difficult backgrounds at home*. Our teachers have experienced *students with discipline problems and issues when dealing with parents*.

I have even heard of *student teachers in the past that. . . felt like, ‘Well, we got stuck out here,’ but later they changed their way of thinking and said, ‘We are really glad we are out here.’*

Let me tell you a little about the teachers in our school system. They are *highly motivated, or highly caffeinated, or highly energized some kind of way, people that really go about their work with a zeal and care about the kids*. They are *well-prepared, well-qualified people with good leadership. Teachers don’t just close their doors and try to keep all of their knowledge inside so no one else will steal their thunder. Everybody wants to help everybody else*. I get *support from my colleagues. They are my extended family. . . my support group*. And the new teachers, they are *tough on the inside and willing to listen*. That is why we have low teacher turnover, because the teachers have made an *investment in the community. . . they live here or near here, and most of them either went to school here or their children do*. That is how most of the veteran teachers I work with experience support, but the new teachers feel like *more support is needed*.

As a new teacher in a rural community, I expected to *change the world*, be *the best teacher there ever was*, and hoped to *give children a sense of self worth*. I wanted to *teach children to read*, and perhaps, *gain some fame*. I thought the *students would be eager to learn*, and I thought the other teachers would give me *support*.

Now, I am a *mentor*, so I know a thing or two about new teachers. They have more realistic goals and expect this to be a *challenging* and *stressful* profession. They expect to have issues with *time and class management*. I admit that I, too, had my worries about *needing help with management and discipline*; and, just like I did, new teachers expect to be given *support* from the other teachers.

Teachers talk about their first and second year of teaching. My first year of teaching was a *very challenging and frightening year*. *I broke down in tears in the middle of the day the second or third week; I was just so overwhelmed by everything. The special education guidelines had been misinterpreted. I went home every day just stressed. At night I spent a lot of time in tears because I felt lost*. I wanted be able to *use my own ideas*. *I would go home and literally cry*. *I had several students who had severe behavior disorders and students with different academic struggles, which is normal for all teachers, but it was very different than what I expected*.

I felt depressed; I felt unimportant; I was at my wits end. But every school has problems, and I really wanted to work here because this is where I live. This is where I grew up. So, I stayed. And my advice to you is *don't give up after your first year* because every teacher that I have talked to says that the next year is better. . . easier. . . and not everyone has an overwhelming experience that first year. I know one teacher that was given a *class of homogeneously grouped first grade gifted students her first year of teaching*, and another teacher that said her first year *worked out fine because she only taught math and didn't have a*

homeroom. It seems like the school's expectations and the students or responsibilities assigned to each new teacher makes a difference in his or her first year experience.

It takes at least a year before new teachers feel *comfortable*, gain confidence, and have *more camaraderie with other teachers*. New teachers *gravitate more toward teachers with the same experience level*. It could be that *when you are inexperienced you feel like people are assessing you when you have problems...you don't want to go to them...you don't want to look like you don't know something* and it *can be frustrating because you don't know when to go ask for help*. Or, it could be that the mentor teachers feel like they are helping more than they are. When I talk with other teachers, they talk about how much help new teachers receive; but when I talk with new teachers, they seem to feel *overwhelmed* and need more direction...there seems to be a disconnect with either perception or expectations.

Teachers talk about support. For most new teachers support *waxes and wanes, help isn't always given, and they do not get as much support as they really need*. Sure there are some good mentors and programs for new teachers, but for the most part, you just need at least one other person so you can *bounce ideas off each other*. *I had support here because there was another teacher; there were two of us. The teacher across the hall was in her first year, as well, and it just so happened that we graduated from high school together and ended up across the hall from one another. It has been a good experience to have grown up with someone from the age of five and now be co-workers. So, we would get together and really sort of be on our own.*

Another teacher told me *one of the older teachers would come in her room every day during the first two weeks of school and just say, 'Go down to my room. There are some cookies and tea down there and punch. I am going to read your students a story; you just go take a break.'* Another said that even though *support was missing in her first year of teaching, during*

her second year she *had two very supportive teachers. The school didn't have a mentor protégée program, but they had that camaraderie with the three of them.* As a teacher, I feel supported and realize how *important it is to share frustrations and celebrations... and to gain a support system.* I guess I am trying to say that support can come from individuals reaching out and finding each other in addition to, or instead of, a program.

Working with other teachers and *taking time to share is a priority*, and it is another topic that teachers talk about. *It is good. . . to be able to sit down around a table with new teachers, as well as veteran teachers, because you know, even veteran teachers don't always see things the same way as other veteran teachers. And they certainly don't see things the way new teachers do. Teachers gain insight from seeing through somebody else's eyes or their perception of it, because you know, when you are – I should not generalize and say this, but when you are young you think you know everything. I did. I really did.* And, I especially think it is good for the new teachers to *talk about their experiences. . . to let them know they are not alone, and that they are going to have troubles.* We do a lot of *sharing and borrowing ideas from others, and believe it or not, a lot of the younger teachers have really good ideas. . . and, they do a good job of listening, too.*

It always seems like *anytime teachers can get together and share, good collaboration comes from that; and, collaboration is a positive thing. New teachers may be better at it because they need the guidance and they welcome collaboration, where the veteran teachers tend to resist it. Teachers, in general, resist change, not just veteran teachers; I am the same way; we get defensive.* Teachers see suggestions *to change* as an indication that they *were doing it wrong* and therefore, need to change.

Veteran teachers talk about changes. Some talk like the ‘old times’ were the ‘good times.’ Our culture has changed, but school facilities have improved. Let me tell you, I have heard about schools that were *old buildings with the windows falling out and floors that were wooden with cracks and holes and rats*. Also, *there was no air-conditioning* and students kept cool by *passing around a fan and handing out cups of ice*. Many changes have taken place. School buildings are *air conditioned* now with *bright, clean rooms*. We have *white boards* and *technology* in the classrooms. We have *more female administrators* and *higher expectations for students and teachers*, which include *Pyramids of Intervention (POI)* meetings and *paperwork*.

If you hang around teachers long enough these days in our county, a common topic that teachers talk about is past and present educational reforms. From those teachers who have weathered many storms, you may hear about the desegregation laws and the *Civil Rights Act (1964)* or the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975)*. You may even hear about the *America’s Choice reform (1991)*, which in 2001 became “Georgia’s Choice”. But, when talking about reforms, the conversation will always lead back to the *No Child Left Behind (2001)* legislation commonly known as NCLB.

I have *seen education improve*, and *NCLB has admirable goals*. The curriculum has *cut out the fluff*. The *expectations for children have increased academically*. But the *current expectation of NCLB that every child can fit the ‘cookie cutter mold’ and be at 100%* is very *unrealistic*. This *may come from the fact, or experiences, of having a background in special education, but it is very difficult to anticipate that by the year 2014, every child will be on grade level in the state of Georgia*. That just looks *good on paper*. The curriculum is *too fast paced and not enough practice is given*. Students are *expected, because of No Child Left Behind, to meet very high expectations and some of them are just not ready to do it*. It’s not because they can’t do

it, but because they just can't do it right now. Comparing a child on the lower end of the spectrum to a child who is in the accelerated gifted program is like comparing apples and oranges. They can't do the same things. It isn't fair to say 'you have to be able to do what that child can do.' We are always talking about differentiation of instruction; realizing that everybody is not the same, but then education reform is trying to tell us that everybody is the same. NCLB affects everything a teacher does. There is this idea of someone looking over your shoulder, and there is no connection to how we are expected to teach, especially in math, using hands-on learning and performance tasks and how we are expected to test and decide promotion, using a standardized multiple-choice test. We cannot choose to ignore reforms and pretend they will go away. So, all we can do is set our expectations high, set our goals high, and trust that we can do it and our students can do it.

When some of the new and veteran teachers got together recently, the new teachers found *it interesting that veteran teachers still struggle with the same concerns and issues that new teachers struggle with. They didn't have all the answers, and still have to troubleshoot. It frustrates the new teachers when they don't know what to do for a particular student with problems. They wish they had more experiences, more years under their belt, and can't wait until they get to that point where they have more problem solving skills to draw from.* One of the new teachers told me that she observed a veteran teacher in this school when she was *in college. She watched how that teacher worked with the student and thought, 'Wow, I don't know if I could ever do that.'* And, now, *she is that same student's teacher.* As we talked, it occurred to me that the new and veteran teachers were very similar. They teach the same students, in the same community, have the same duties, just with more or less experience.

Before our time together draws to an end, I want to tell you that my expectations of what being a teacher would be like have been met, and I want to share some important expectations, ‘un’expectations, and experiences that this rural southern teacher talks about when she finds someone willing to listen. For one thing, when I have a concern it usually seems to come down to specific students. In thinking back, *I have had three children that I felt like I just couldn’t teach to read*; I had discipline issues with *two students that were put together* my first year of teaching that should have been separated; and this past year, *I had one student* that I wanted to get help for...*so many things that I have done for just one child*. You need to know, that students may not always be eager to learn or be motivated, but *students will begin to want to learn once they have discovered something that they are interested in and are good at*. Of course, this applies to teachers, too. Next, *I expected to learn a lot from other teachers I would work with* and I have. *When you need help, raise your hand, or go ask for it. Don’t feel like you are stuck in that room...I don’t care how old you are. Teachers need support no matter how long they have been teaching*. Also, *I may not have changed the world, but hopefully I have made a difference and changed a piece of it*. Remember, *it is important that we continue to adapt, be flexible, and change as our needs change*. And, *time is always a problem* and teaching is stressful, but *I think that my teaching improved after just having one year of experience. I chose this as my career to last me until thirty years down the line*. It is important to *really enjoy* being a teacher. We need to *love the work. I have loved being here every day*.

CHAPTER 12

DISCUSSION



The world changed, yet much remained the same. People still embraced hand made crafts such as quilting. Quilters used the fabric at hand. Quilters wanted to make quilts like those made in the past.

Judy Anne Breneman, 2001

Constructing Judgments

And what remains will be “the commitment to study human experience. . . from the point of interacting individuals who, together and alone, make and live histories. . .”

N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (1994)

This study concludes with discussion about the *significance* of what was seen, heard, and felt during the process of data collection, analysis, and writing. The educators in this study had something to say to us, leading the field to have more to think about when considering teaching and mentoring. The central question supporting this study was, what do new and veteran teachers have to say to us about their expectations and experiences in teaching? Based on the understandings generated through this study, a key *judgment* was constructed: New and veteran

teachers in this study tell us that their expectations have changed, but their experiences in teaching have remained the same.

Dewey (1934) described criticism as judgment and said the “material out of which judgment grows is the work, the object, but it is this object as it enters into the experience of the critic by interaction with his own sensitivities and his knowledge and funded store from past experiences” (p. 310). Therefore, the content of judgments will vary with the “material that evokes them and that must sustain them if criticism is pertinent and valid” (p. 310). Dewey described judgment as having two functions: discrimination and unification. Discrimination (which is analysis) involves understanding the parts and unification (which is synthesis) involves understanding how the parts are related to each other and to the whole (p. 313). With an interest in the subject, and a rich, full experience of it, during the unifying phase the critic who judges gives insight. According to Dewey,

There are no rules. . . it is at this point that criticism becomes itself an art...analysis, discrimination, must result in unification. . . the critic must discover a unifying strand or pattern running through all the details. . . and bring it forth with such clearness that the reader has a new clue and guide in his own experience (1938, pp. 313-314).

Insights from this study accumulated through discriminations related to the unifying strands of expectations and experiences. These insights offer something more to say about, in terms of specific guidance for, a re-conceptualization of mentoring in education.

Expectations

In terms of developing expectations, it is particularly interesting to think more about the history of educational policy: What has changed in education between the time these four veteran

teachers started out with their idealistic expectations and two years ago when these three new teachers began teaching, bringing with them practical and realistic expectations?’ Starting with the impact of Sputnik, when the U.S government began to call on schools to think creatively and to emphasize certain courses of study, the emphasis on a quality education increased and demands were tied to public expectations. First came the *National Defense Education Act* (1958). This new reform (NDEA) was intended to promote knowledge specifically in the areas of science, math, and foreign languages, and increase the availability of college loans (Launch, 2002).

In the NDEA, Congress declared “that the security of the nation required the fullest development of the mental resources and technical skills of its young men and women. The present emergency demands that additional and more adequate educational opportunities be made available” (1958). In the General Provisions section of the NDEA, it listed the need for mastery of modern technology, the discovery and development of new and complex scientific principles with an emphasis on efforts to identify and educate our nation’s talented youth. No student with ability was to be denied an opportunity of receiving higher education because of financial need (1958). This was around the time that the four veteran teachers started elementary school.

Next came the *Civil Rights Act* (1964), the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (1965), *Title IX* (1972), the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (1974), *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* (1975), and many more legal and policy changes aimed at forging quality education in America. By that time, the veterans in this study had started teaching and had become part of the movement to desire, and aspire, for every student to benefit from a good

education. They wanted to *teach them to read*, improve special education, and *be the best teacher they could be*. That was the climate; that was the culture; that was their experience.

The reforms kept coming, the demands for better schools and highly qualified teachers increased during the years that the two youngest teachers in this study were attending grades kindergarten through eighth grade. Finally, we arrive at the most recent reform, *No Child Left Behind Act (2001)*. The impact of this reform reached the classrooms when these two new teachers started high school. They experienced, as high school students and then as college students, the increased curriculum demands, testing, and accountability put in place by *NCLB*. Their expectations reflected their own personal experiences in education and schools. The remaining new teacher experienced some of the latest reforms, but was not inundated by the changes brought forth by *NCLB* during her personal education; however, she experienced it through her children, her recent work in schools as a parent, and then as a para-pro.

Kagan's (1992) research found that pre-service teachers enter teacher education programs with images of good teachers, images of themselves as teachers, and memories of past educational experiences. Their own school experiences and beliefs contribute to their identity and expectations of what it means to them to be a teacher. Dewey stated, "I assume that amid all uncertainties there is one permanent frame of reference: namely, the organic connection between education and personal experience" (1938, p. 25). The data related to expectations in this study support a judgment that society, culture, community, educational policies, and personal educational experiences influence new and veteran teachers' expectations.

Experience

Despite differing expectations, the experiences of the new and veteran teachers in this study were unsettling in their similarities. In an effort to examine and understand the overlapping

educational experiences, I started thinking about an illustration Dewey (1938) gave us of children playing a game. He discussed the need for rules in order for the game to continue and said, “those playing the game have seen, perhaps, professional matches and they want to emulate their elders” (p. 53). He stated that the “element of the conventional is pretty strong” and that young people only change the rules “when the adult group to which they look for models have themselves made a change in the rules” (p. 53). This insight has been reflected between the new and veteran teachers in my study, veteran teachers being the ‘elders’ in this illustration, (the mentors and models) while the new teachers are viewed as the ‘children’ following their lead. Even though veteran teachers entered the profession with idealistic expectations to change the world, we need to think more about how those expectations were calmed through the actual experiences of teaching. New teachers, who seemed to begin their careers with a more day-to-day perspective, also integrated into the context with a sense of sameness. A construct of a quality teacher in this place at this time, Ms. Jamison, could stand in for a veteran or new teacher. New teachers seem to be emulating the teaching patterns of the veteran teachers and indeed seem to be blending into the existing setting of this rural educational community instead of setting themselves apart. In this study, Dewey’s insight was particularly powerful, “. . . the element of convention is strong” (Dewey, 1938, p, 53).

Something more to think about in this study was the draw to this community. Bauch (2001) described students who identify so strongly with their rural community that leaving it might be undesirable (p. 5). He discussed this feeling of having a ‘sense of place’ and the value of social capital in a small community. As far as teachers developing a ‘sense of place’ and continuing to stay, Collins (1999) discussed the fact that rural teachers who become involved in

the community are influenced to remain (p. 3). Like the element of convention, I think that the sense of place is strong.

Teachers in this study seemed to be walking well-worn paths, following in conventional footsteps framed by legal policies. Perhaps, initially, this could be considered a necessary step in the process of acquiring confidence as a teacher. However, could there be more examples of supported risk taking and bringing new ideas to the table? As a profession, we need to think more about mentoring. How could we influence quality teaching and student achievement if mentoring focused more on nurturing individual expectations instead of institutional expectations? Additionally, could support be given to overcome fears, face new challenges, and encourage risk taking? If this were to become the norm, we would not be able to construct a one-story version of teacher such as Ms. Jamison. The making of a teacher could be a work in progress, not a replica; and mentoring could become a process through which guidance and direction is given in order to discover one's uniqueness and strengths as an educator.

Vygotsky (1978) stated, "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). . . All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals" (p. 57). Applying this cultural development to learners of all ages, when new teachers get opportunities to learn and develop relationships with more experienced-skilled educators, they "internalize the tools required for creative problem solving" instead of restricting themselves to the "safe work," which they know will not jeopardize assessment results (Davis, 2000, p. 1).

According to Vygotsky's (1978) general genetic law of cultural development, learning to take appropriate curricular or instructional risks is first a function of

learning from someone more knowledgeable (e.g. through a professional development activity) and gradually internalizing knowledge about risk taking at a personal level. (McInerney, Etten, & Dowson, 2007, p. 18)

The mentoring or collaboration that can develop from this form of professional learning may serve to scaffold teachers to higher levels of thinking and performance—levels they may not otherwise reach by themselves (Reigeluth, 1983, p. 314). This is different from imitating or duplicating a specific set of behaviors (p. 314). This re-visioning of mentoring may lead to sustained risk-taking and meaningful innovation. In “Education as Engineering” (1922), Dewey encouraged teachers to be governed not by traditions, conventions or complacency, but by courageousness, imagination and experimentation. He proposed, “What they need above all else is the creatively courageous disposition. Fear, routine. . . are the enemies that now stand in the way of educational advance” (Dewey, 1983, p. 328). Simpson, Jackson, and Aycock (2005) stated that Dewey believed “school systems are dominated by traditions and are not adequately influenced by experimentation and application of the recently learned” (p. 88). He encouraged “out of the box” thinking and consideration; “we need to use our minds, imagination, and reflection as we experiment with different ways of educating” (p. 89).

The similar experiences in this study, despite the years of experience, require us to think more about ‘teacher’ as a role with very little variance. Teachers stay and learn from each other. Chimamanda Adichie, a young author who grew up in Nigeria and attended college in the United States, spoke about the ‘danger of a single story’. If a child grows up in a community, stays there to pursue a profession, and is assimilated by others with the same experience, then the story is “incomplete” and needs a “balance of story” (Adichie, 2009). She said, “Stories matter, many

stories matter.” Jamison County can become a single story for some educators, a single educational experience.

As educators and researchers, we have the opportunity to design and share narratives that capture the experiences of teachers in different contexts - to offer a balance of stories for us to think more about together.

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APPENDIX A

TIMELINE OF LEGAL AND POLICY ISSUES AFFECTING PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Timeline of Legal and Policy Issues Affecting Public Schools

Sputnik and the National Defense Education Act (1958) (P. L. 85-864)

If a veteran teacher started his or her career at 21 years of age and taught for thirty years, he or she would have been born the year that the incessant beeping of the world's first spacecraft was heard around the world.

According to Charles Freund (2002), the Soviet Union's Sputnik spacecraft was itself a "sphere of influence" (p. 3). He reminds us that the Cold War alarms caused by Sputnik and resultant consequences proves that there was, and continues to be, a "cultural reaction to catastrophe" (2002, p. 3).

America was put on high alert. It was not a direct threat to our country. It could not see or hear conversations in homes across America. It could only beep and fly. Sputnik contained a single transmitter that emitted a beeping sound while orbiting the earth once every 98 minutes (Launch, 2002). However because of Sputnik, a new warrior was called for from America's comfortable way of life, and this warrior would be armed with a slide rule (Freund, 2002).

This first lap of the Space race motivated reforms in schools across the nation. Similar to today, the U.S government began to call on schools to think creatively and to emphasize certain courses of study. From these concerns and from the increased demands tied to public expectations came the National Defense Education Act (1958). This new reform was intended to promote knowledge specifically in the areas of science, math, and foreign languages, and increase the availability of college loans (Launch, 2002).

In the NDEA, Congress declared "that the security of the nation required the fullest development of the mental resources and technical skills of its young men and women. The present emergency demands that additional and more adequate educational opportunities be

made available” (1958). In the General Provisions section of the NDEA, it listed the need for mastery of modern technology, the discovery and development of new and complex scientific principles with an emphasis on efforts to identify and educate our nation’s talented youth. No student with ability was to be denied an opportunity of receiving higher education because of financial need (1958).

This program did not last long enough to be judged as either a success or a failure because the U.S. space program quickly asserted itself with productive efforts to meet or exceed the accomplishments of the Soviet Union (Freund, 2002). However, Sputnik did leave its mark indirectly through technology that led to the founding and development of the Internet, and by instigating a permanent federal role in education (Freund, 2002).

While the impact of Sputnik, as a frame of reference, is largely lost on Generation Y. With mapping and geological missions to Mars now underway by comparatively massive space craft weighing tons, the importance of the launching of the 183-pound Sputnik satellite on October 4, 1957, will likely fade along with the Baby Boomer generation. However, the impact and influence of this Act will be far reaching.

Civil Rights Act (1964) (P. L. 88-352)

Six years after Sputnik, landmark legislation was passed that swept the under-acknowledged race of our nation into a violent and exciting whirlwind of opportunity. Some of the most profound changes occurred in education. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 for many prohibited segregation in U.S. schools and public places. The Civil Rights Act, which President Kennedy sent to Congress in June of 1963, included giving Americans of color equal access to public accommodations (Loevy, 1985). It provided for cutting off government aid to those states

or institutions that discriminated based on race and gave the U.S. Attorney General the power to sue state governments that operated segregated schools (Loevy, 1985).

Five days after the Kennedy assassination, Johnson “asked the Congress to adopt the civil rights bill” (Loevy, 1985, p. 4). The bill was strengthened with the addition of outlawing “discrimination on the basis of sex as well” (Loevy, 1985, p. 6). On July 2, 1964, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed into law. It was an important step of a long, arduous journey that continues to this day. The Civil Rights Act was significant in education because it was among the first in a series of acts and laws designed to achieve social parity and to increase federal funding for all American students.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) (P. L. 90-247)

Within a year of the signing of the Civil Rights Act, President Johnson continued his ‘war on poverty’ by enacting the largest comprehensive federal education law providing significant funds for students in kindergarten through twelve grades (ESEA, 2002). This act made funds available for “professional development, instructional materials, resources to support educational programs, and parental involvement promotion” (ESEA, 2002, p. 2). This law has been reauthorized every five years, but has gone through various name changes, alterations, and additions.

As part of this Act, “Title I Funding allocated 1 billion dollars a year to schools with a high concentration of low-income children” (Schugurensky, 2002, p. 1). Passed on April 9, 1965, this law offered the groundwork for several important programs that have assisted low income and bilingual children. Its goal was to better prepare students before entering school and to increase the number of high school graduates. President Johnson asserted, “There was no other single piece of legislation that could help so many for so little cost.” In our growing list of legal

and policy issues affecting public schools during the last fifty years, this Act will be reauthorized in the form of the Improving America's Schools Act in 1994 and the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001.

Bilingual Education Act (1968) (P. L. 90-247)

Title VII under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act or the Bilingual Education Act became the first federal legislation regarding minority language speakers in America.

Bilingual instruction has been taught in American schools since the 1800's. Such instruction has been provided for German, French, Spanish, Norwegian, Italian, Polish, Czech, and Cherokee speaking students (Rethinking, 1998). At the turn of the century, 600,000 or 4% of all American students were receiving part or all of their instruction in German (Rethinking, 1998). However, fears of loyalty, especially from German speaking Americans, brought about "English-only instruction laws" in the 1920's in an effort to "Americanize" these groups (Rethinking, 1998, p. 1). The civil rights movement and the growing amount of immigrants in the U.S. fueled the Bilingual Education Act. "The court's decision in the landmark *Lau v. Nichols* case required schools to take 'affirmative steps' to overcome language barriers impeding children's access to the curriculum" (Rethinking, 1998, p. 2). There was no specific methodology put in place for teaching students who spoke English as a second language; however, this Act does provide an equal opportunity for those students to be educated.

Title IX (1972) (P. L. 92-318)

Congresswoman Patsy T. Mink was the principal author of a law enacted on June 23, 1972, which allowed another group of Americans an equal opportunity: women (Kua, Altonn, and Leone, 2002). Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 states, "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the

benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (P.L. No.92-318, 86 Stat.373). Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 paved the way by including sexual discrimination in employment, seen by most as an afterthought, but Title IX applied sexual discrimination for the first time to education (Title IX, Education Amendments, 1972). This provision ensures equal treatment for both males and females in such areas as admissions, recruitment, financial aid, academic programs, marital and parental status, scholarships, housing, employment, sexual harassment, and athletics (Sadker, 2001). This successful amendment has given opportunities to women in the U.S. that were not available 35 years ago. With the majority of my participants being female, this Act has greatly affected their education, profession, and salary.

In 1992, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled that a plaintiff could receive monetary damages for sexual harassment, in *Franklin v. Gwinnett County*, under Title IX (NCWGE, 2008). Title IX has been debated and will continue to be challenged and changed, but opportunities that were denied to Representative Patsy Mink were offered to many females from Baby Boomers to Generation Y.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (1974) (P. L. 93-579)

Introduced by Carl Perkins, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 protects the privacy of student education records. Educators are to keep private student information in a secured location and to respect the rights of students’ medical and educational information. Parents have the right to inspect and review records maintained at the school on their child and to request that corrections be made to information that is inaccurate or misleading (FERPA, 1974).

Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975) (P. L. 94-142)

“The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) seeks to assure equal opportunity in education for all handicapped children between the ages of five and eighteen” (Woodward, 2001). Under the provisions of the Act, school districts were required to meet the needs of students qualifying for special services. Through a screening process and an individualized educational plan (IEP), students were recognized and educated accordingly (Woodward, 2001). The law entitled students to the necessary materials, personnel, and appeals process for both the school and the parents (Woodward, 2001). Once a student was identified, evaluated, and placed in the most appropriate educational environment, a student’s IEP was reviewed annually and each student was reevaluated every three years (Woodward, 2001).

Before 1975, only one out of five children with disabilities were educated in public schools, and many states had specific laws excluding mentally and physically handicapped children from receiving a public education (NCD, 2000). More than 1 million children with disabilities did not receive an education and 3.5 million did not receive appropriate services (NCD, 2000). Almost 200,000 children with mental or emotional disabilities were institutionalized (NCD, 2000).

Since the enactment of this legislation thirty-three years ago, more than 6 million children with disabilities between the ages of 3 to 21 have qualified for educational interventions (NCD, 2000). Most of these students are being educated in schools close to their homes. Some students qualify for assistive listening systems, Braille test books, talking computers, paraprofessional supports, and other accommodations that allow them to learn side-by-side their non-disabled peers (NCD, 2000).

In 1997 the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was revised, additions were made, and the name was changed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

According to the findings under this legislation, Congress noted the following:

Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities. (H.R. 5)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act is the newest revision and was enacted in 2004. The purpose of this legislation was to “bridge the gap between what children with disabilities learn and what is required in regular classrooms” (Real Choices, 1996-2008, p. 2).

According to the law, IDEA (2004) is to “ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living” (H.R. 1350). Early interventions, the discipline of a disabled student, the Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), and the alignment with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) are additional issues that were addressed under the first, second, and latest revision of IDEA.

Department of Education Organization Act (1980) (P. L. 96-88)

In 1980 several federal agencies were combined to form the Department of Education (ED). According to the U.S. Department of Education’s website, with a budget of \$68.6 billion the mission of the department is to promote student achievement, prepare students for global

competitiveness, foster excellence, and ensure equal access. The Department of Education has four major tasks: to establish policies related to federal aid, collect data and oversee research, identify major issues, and enforce federal statutes prohibiting discrimination (U.S. Dept. of Ed., 2007). The responsibility for the establishment of schools and setting the curriculum falls to the states and local school boards, not the federal government, because the constitution does not mention education.

Summary of Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994) (P. L. 103-227)

In an effort to assist all students reach their full potential, on March 31, 1994, the Goals 2000: Educate America Act was signed into law (P. L. 103-227). States were to submit applications describing the process by which the state would develop improvement plans, make grants to schools, and provide awards for professional development (P. L. 103-227). Once again, one criticism was the change in roles for the federal government in education.

The Act included goals for school readiness, school completion, student academic achievement, leadership in math and science, adult literacy, teacher professional development, parent participation, and safe and drug-free schools (Public Law 103-227). The goals were stated in a way that made the goals unattainable by year 2000. The National Education Goals set forth by President George Bush and the fifty governors in 1990 was signed into law by President Clinton in 1994, and then were re-evaluated and the funds were terminated in 2001, under President George W. Bush.

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (2001) (P. L. 107- 110)

The latest federal legislation, since Goals: 2000, is the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). This Act requires states to develop assessments of basic skills to be given to students at certain grades if those states are going to receive federal funding for schools. According to the

U.S. Department of Education website, NCBL is built on four pillars: stronger accountability for results, more freedom for states and communities, proven educational methods, and more choice for parents (U.S Dept. of Ed., 2004). The goal for stronger accountability aims at closing the achievement gap; more freedom for states is said to give unprecedented flexibility in how states distribute the federal funds; proven educational methods puts emphasis on research-based approaches; and more choice for parents indicates that opportunities will be given to parents of students who attend lower performing schools (U.S Dept. of Ed., 2004).

The loud voices of educators confirm the negative effects and the need for changes in No Child Left Behind; the positive effects are softly spoken but greatly felt. Under-served populations of students have now been identified and their needs have been addressed. It suddenly became just as important for the lowest achieving student in every classroom, not just the average and above, to pass the standardized test. Many issues have been highlighted and unforeseen repercussions have taken place, but education for all was given as the intent.

APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a qualitative study as part of my dissertation work in the elementary education department at the University of Georgia. For this study I will be completing open-ended interviews with novice teachers (i.e. in their first three years) and veteran teachers (i.e. with 10+ years in the profession), comparing lists made at the beginning and end of the school year, analyzing reflective writing and conducting focus groups that will include all of the participating teachers.

The purpose of this study is to gather data to be analyzed and used to inform educators about the expectations of new teachers and the experiences of veteran teachers. All information obtained will be treated confidentially.

For this study, we will discuss what your experiences have been, your needs, successes, frustrations, level of support, and thoughts about this changing profession. The interviews will not take more than an hour of your time and will be done at your convenience. The lists will be completed during pre- and post-planning. The focus groups will be scheduled at a time and place convenient to the participants involved.

Based on your request, I will contact you by phone or email. You will be offered a consent form to sign as your agreement to participate and be given a copy for your files. When we meet, I will ask you questions, listen, take notes, and audio tape our conversations. This information will be transcribed and kept confidential. I will change the name of the school and participant when transcribing the interview. At the point of dissertation completion, all identifying information will be destroyed.

You are free to withdraw your participation at any time should you become uncomfortable with it. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at 706-769-2225. I hope you will enjoy this opportunity to share your experiences and viewpoints with me and others. Thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely,

Tammye N. Berry

Signature of Researcher

Date

Signature of Participant

Date

Please sign both copies, keep one copy and return one to the researcher.

For questions or problems about your rights please call or write: Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANTS OVERLAPPING TIMELINES OVER THE LAST 35 YEARS

Years	Mr. White	Ms. Mountcastle	Ms. Jones	Ms. Adamson	Ms. Stewart	Ms. Smith	Ms. Dixon
Born:	Middle Georgia	Griffin, Georgia	Monroe, Georgia	Tifton, Georgia	Athens, Georgia	Winterville, Georgia	North Carolina
1974	college						
1975	Student taught	College	Graduated from H.S.	college			
1976	taught		College				
1977				Student taught			
1978		Student taught		Taught @Jamison			
1979	counselor	Taught @Jamison	Student taught				
1980-1984			Taught				
1985					Born	Born	College
1986							
1987			Taught @Jamison				
1988							
1989							Graduated
1990-1993	taught				Kindergarten @Jamison	Kindergarten @Jamison	
1994-1998	Pastor						
1999-2002	counselor						
2003					Graduated from H.S.	Graduated from H.S.	
2004	A.P.				college	college	Substituted @Jamison
2005							
2006	Counselor @Jamison					Substituted @Jamison	Received provisional certification
2007					Student taught	Student taught	Taught @Jamison
2008					Taught @Jamison	Taught @Jamison	
2009	29 th year teaching	31 st year teaching	29 th year teaching	Retired w/ 31 years teaching	2 nd year teaching	2 nd year teaching	2 nd year teaching

APPENDIX D

CATEGORIES AND TOPICS GENERATED FROM THE INITIAL ANALYSIS

Categories : Topics:	Becoming an Educator: Pre and Post	Responsibilities and Concerns of an Educator:	Blending of New and Veteran Teachers:	Society: Past and Present	What did learned and Conclusions
Topic 1	Expectations of being a Teacher	Discipline Concerns	Teacher Resistance/Buy in	This Community	What is Important?
Topic 2	Student Teaching	Paperwork	Feels respected or disrespected because of being at the beginning or end of career	Economy	What Veteran teachers and New teachers say about each other
Topic 3	First Year of Teaching	Working with Parents	Focus Groups	Changes in Education	Expectations of Being a Teacher and Whether They were Experienced
Topic 4	Mentors and Mentees	Frustrations/Stress	Team Teaching/ Co-Teaching/ Collaboration		
Topic 5	Support	Reforms, Accountability, and Testing	Creative Class Design and Scheduling/ Teachers Strengths Encouraged/ Surprises		
Topic 6	Retention of New Teachers	Individualized Differentiation of Instruction			

APPENDIX E

INDIVIDUAL LISTS OF EACH PARTICIPANTS EXPECTATIONS

Mr. White:

- ⇒ hoped to change the world
- ⇒ thought kids would be eager to learn
- ⇒ thought I would rise to be a professor and be a published author, and gain some fame in the teaching profession

Ms. Mountcastle:

- ⇒ be able to do one on one teaching
- ⇒ be able to implement play to learn strategies
- ⇒ have a clear definition of students needs
- ⇒ be support for other staff members
- ⇒ having students who were motivated to learn and were willing to except their limitations
- ⇒ receive support from other staff members.

Ms. Adamson:

- ⇒ to be excited to teacher reading and math
- ⇒ use my own ideas and not everything my college professor said I had to do
- ⇒ I knew I was going to need help with management and discipline
- ⇒ to be able to eventually control the learning environment
- ⇒ to pass my evaluations
- ⇒ to share and borrow other ideas from other teachers
- ⇒ to be the best teacher there ever was!

Ms. Jones:

- ⇒ to teach children to read
- ⇒ be able to help give children a sense of their own self worth
- ⇒ be able to guide the children to have a desire to learn
- ⇒ to have parents who wanted the same things: to learn and have self worth
- ⇒ have co-workers who would be willing to help me teach these children
- ⇒ have supportive administrators.

Ms. Dixon:

- ⇒ to be a challenge
- ⇒ classroom management challenges
- ⇒ time management challenges
- ⇒ to learn a lot from other teachers that I would work with

Ms. Stewart:

- ⇒ to be hard and difficulty
- ⇒ little to no life outside of school
- ⇒ have to write detailed lesson plans
- ⇒ help to be given by fellow teachers when I would not know what to do
- ⇒ be baffled by curriculum expectations
- ⇒ to possibly have to deal with behavioral and discipline problems

Ms. Smith:

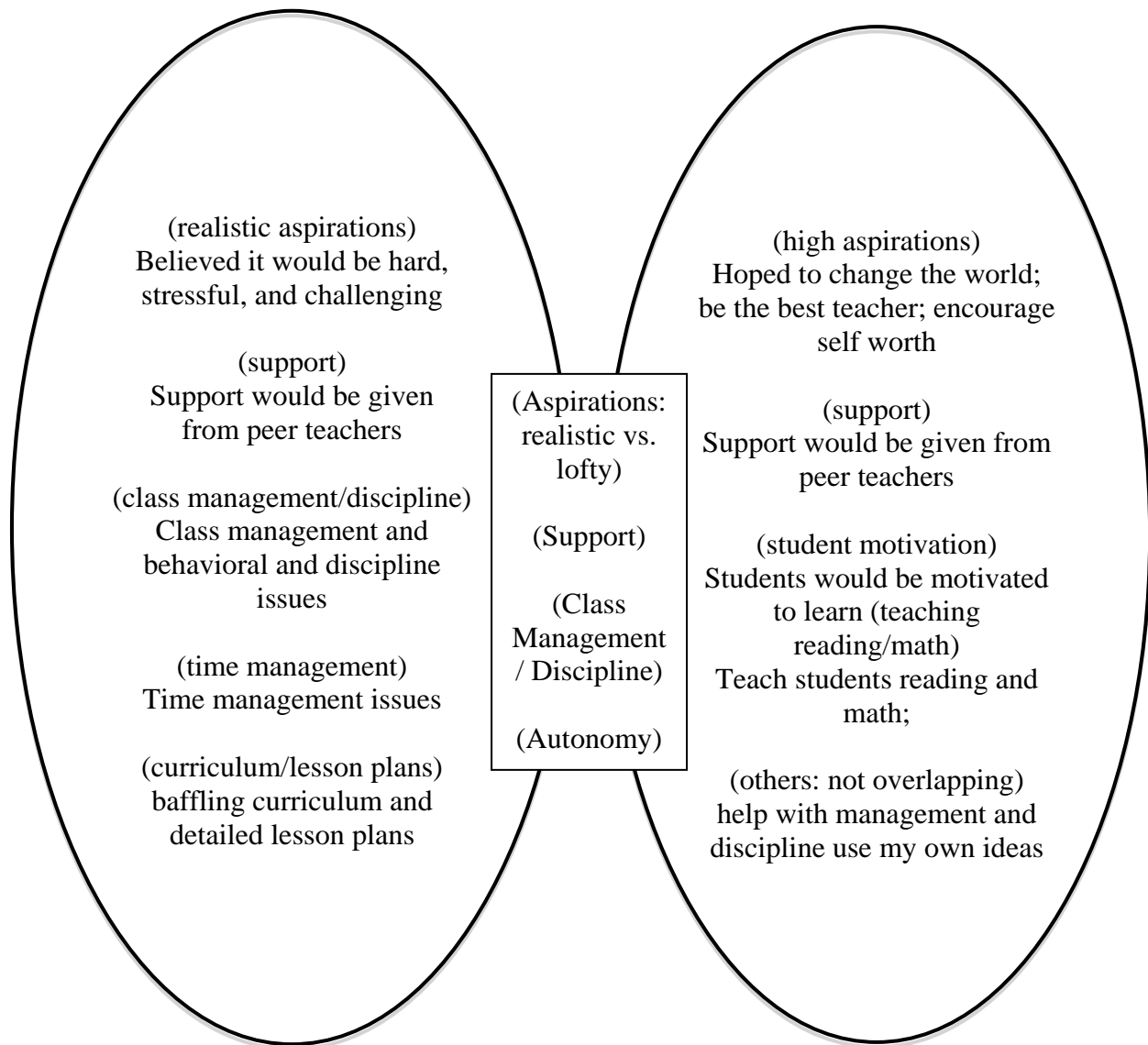
- ⇒ lots of grading
- ⇒ some attitude and back talking from students
- ⇒ expected to learn how to plan lessons
- ⇒ to be fun
- ⇒ to be stressful
- ⇒ enjoyable
- ⇒ the opportunity to do what I wanted to do

APPENDIX F

OVERLAPPING EXPECTATIONS AND THEIR INTERSECTIONS

New Teachers Overlapping Expectations

Veteran Teachers' Overlapping Expectations



APPENDIX G
THE ANALYTICAL CHART OF EXPERIENCES

Analytical Framework for Case 1, Mr. White

Experiences		
Places	People/Culture	Other
South Georgia school system where he student taught.	<p><i>co-principals: one Black and one White;</i></p> <p><i>rough neighborhoods called Korea and Vietnam;</i></p> <p>Expected teacher to guide him and turn class over gradually</p>	<p>teaching first day</p> <p>Desegregation Laws</p> <p><i>Civil Rights Act (1964)</i></p> <p><i>Love the work of teaching</i></p> <p><i>Love the kids</i></p>
First Public High School where he taught his first year.	<p><i>Redneck Culture;</i></p> <p><i>Discipline Problems;</i></p> <p>students only came to school because they had to;</p> <p>became a manager of people;</p>	<p><i>old building with the windows falling out, floor was wooden with cracks and holes, large rats; no air-conditioning;</i></p> <p>a student would hit the rats with a hammer; kept cool by passing around a fan and handing out cups of ice.</p> <p><i>Unless you really connected with them as a person, you weren't going to teach them anything.</i></p>
Went to a private school his second year, but came back to public education his third year to a Middle School in rural Georgia.	<p><i>Culture of tobacco farmers and hog farmers and chicken farmers;</i></p> <p><i>sleepy, hungry children with feathers on their clothes;</i></p> <p><i>large school; superstitions; living in swamps;</i></p> <p><i>poor background;</i></p> <p><i>talking the old way and living the old way; spousal abuse</i></p>	<p><i>flat land; air strips for drug dealers;</i></p> <p><i>not a lot of stuff to motivate students or for them to be involved in.</i></p>

Another move; he is now a counselor at a Public Junior High School.	<i>No-nonsense administrator.</i>	<i>air conditioning;</i>
Moved to Coastal area of Georgia.	<i>large urban multi-gang setting;</i> <i>They wanted him to stay.</i>	<i>Layers of bureaucracy;</i> <i>I managed to make a few changes for the better.</i> <i>He wanted to leave.</i>
Changed to a Private Christian School for four years.	<i>Parents pretty much run and operate the school.</i>	<i>A lot of positives.</i> <i>Two negatives:</i> <i>Always having fundraisers.</i> <i>Have to stay in good with the right people.</i>
Left 'teaching for preaching' for 5 years.	<i>Did not get respect from deacons.</i>	<i>Actually more stressful than education.</i>
Came back as a counselor and administrator.	<i>Good administrators</i>	<i>low test scores;</i> <i>America's Choice reforms.</i> <i>Administrator for two years;</i> <i>Budget cuts – counselor.</i> <i>Everybody got on board.</i> <i>Success.</i>
Ends up in Jamison County Schools nearing retirement. Starts at the Middle School and then is moved to the Primary School.	<i>motivated people;</i> <i>teachers work as teams;</i> <i>highly motivated, or highly caffeinated, highly energized some kind of way, people that really went about their work with a zeal and cared about the kids;</i> <i>Well-prepared, well-qualified with good leadership;</i>	<i>Best education experience;</i> <i>learning centered with professional learning communities;</i> <i>serves as a resource and support person;</i> <i>TV show and a few other things; enjoyed playing different characters.</i> <i>allowed me to be a free spirit;</i> <i>Already adopted reforms.</i> <i>He had a mentor.</i> <i>I guess I had certain expectations, and I figured that I would just come in and get in line with the rules and regulations and try to do what the last counselor did, but they allowed my own personality to come out, so I ran with it. And, I get a lot of</i>

	<p>As a counselor: deals with family dynamics like breakups and transitions, custody issues, restraining orders, parents, and grandparents</p> <p><i>New teachers now days seem to be pretty tough on the inside and can handle it; they seem willing to listen to advice where as you might think some people might be arrogant and know it alls, they are not like that.</i></p>	<p><i>positive feedback from teacher e-mails, and the administrators pretty much let me be me... It has been a good experience, a different experience. I guess I didn't fully know what to expect or how good it would be. When I came over here people from the other school I used to work at said, 'Are you okay? Are you okay?' 'Yeah, I am fine. They treat me like a rock star!'</i></p> <p><i>students will begin to want to learn once they have discovered something that they are interested in and are good at.</i></p> <p><i>Highly regimented and well run;</i></p> <p><i>He did not expect to be treated like a rock star.</i></p> <p><i>comfortable, appreciated, able to be creative.</i></p> <p><i>Did not change the world, but hopefully has made a difference;</i></p> <p><i>Time to share with other teachers is a priority.</i></p> <p><i>Family. Juggling work and family.</i></p> <p><i>It is good to meet with people that have had experiences and compare experiences; hear how new teachers are thinking and perceiving things and dealing with the things they encounter in the profession.</i></p> <p><i>Women administrators; technology; white boards, air-conditioning in bright and clean rooms.</i></p> <p><i>Deteriorated culture.</i></p> <p><i>More is being asked of teachers: more hours, paperwork, and meetings; POI</i></p>
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Analytical Framework for Case 2, Ms. Mountcastle

Experiences		
Places	People/Culture	Other
Jamison County High School	<p><i>served about 50 Special Ed children</i></p> <p><i>RESA instructor asked, 'How did you determine these reading groups?' And my answer was, "It was just a gut feeling."</i></p> <p><i>the person that mentored me was the person who would help if I had a fight in the classroom because, there were fights</i></p>	<p>First year – overwhelming</p> <p><i>School misinterpreted special education guidelines</i></p> <p><i>Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975)</i></p> <p><i>Special Ed files were a mess</i></p> <p><i>being organized; wrote 80 IEPs</i></p> <p>Evaluated 7 times with TPAI 1st year</p> <p>Second year - caseload capacity held to 25 students</p> <p>After third year, requested transfer</p>
<p>Jamison Primary School</p> <p>(it was called the elementary school then)</p>	<p><i>We have support from our colleagues, but also I consider the women and men that I work with here as part of my family. They are extended family. It is a support group.</i></p>	<p>K-5 Special Ed resource teacher for next 7 years</p> <p><i>Taught self-contained sp ed class for academic needs</i></p> <p><i>Unexpected discovery, I could teach the children other things besides reading and math.</i></p> <p>Had Masters in Inter-related Sp Ed, went back for Masters in ECE</p> <p><i>awesome experience - student taught after 10 yrs w/ teacher and 2 interns</i></p> <p>Taught 2nd grade for next 13 years</p> <p><i>Gifted endorsement/developed 'Environmental Zone' – science, health, and social studies program for all 2nd graders (7 years)</i></p> <p><i>pull out teacher for EIP and gifted</i></p> <p>all students have strengths and challenges that need to be enriched.</p> <p>Co-chaired TSS program for 8 yrs.</p>

	<p><i>The teachers that are brand new to this school system usually respect teachers that have a lot years of experience. And, the teachers that have been teaching 20+ years have a respect for experienced educators. But, there is a little group that has taught between 7 to 10 (or 15 years), who do not respect those that have a lot of years in the system.</i></p>	<p><i>the main reason given for new teachers leaving was that they felt like there was a lack of support and the expectations in the classroom were not the way they had been trained.</i></p> <p>She's seen a change in the expectations of student teachers and new teachers</p> <p>Sp Ed has not changed; <i>technology</i> has</p> <p><i>It may come from the fact, or experiences, of being a special education teacher...It is very difficult to anticipate that by the year 2014, every child will be perfect in the state of Georgia.</i></p> <p><i>NCLB Legislation</i></p> <p><i>current expectation of NCLB that every child can fit the cookie cutter mold and be at 100% level is very unrealistic.</i></p> <p>has taught all grades at her school</p> <p>has a desire to <i>teach for mastery instead of teaching to memorization</i></p> <p><i>Lack of respect or professionalism for veteran teachers.</i></p> <p><i>I enjoyed the opportunity to share, listen, and offer suggestions.</i></p> <p>Struggle with student motivation</p> <p><i>Giving children the opportunity to have ownership of their feelings and what is happening to them and that they have a voice and they can get help (Good touch/Bad Touch)</i></p> <p><i>Time management for classroom and TSS ability.</i></p> <p>Anxiety and stress over Standardized tests</p> <p>Teaching responsibilities, mentoring responsibilities, testing responsibilities.</p> <p>As a mentor: <i>I don't feel like I have had any contact with her either....</i></p> <p><i>I appreciate the time to have someone listen and offer suggestions.</i></p> <p><i>Math concerns for EIP students.</i></p> <p><i>It is important to share frustrations and celebrations... and to share verbally to gain a support system.</i></p> <p>the focus groups offered a <i>unique situation</i> for the teachers since they were <i>across grade levels</i> and included teachers from <i>two different schools</i>.</p>
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		<p><i>anytime that teachers can get together and share, good collaboration comes from that.</i></p> <p><i>Anytime that you can get another person's perspective about a concern that you have, that helps because sometimes we have blinders on, and we just keep seeing the same problems in one light. So, when someone offers a different view, then that might be a way we can come to work out a solution.</i></p> <p><i>so many budgetary concerns</i></p> <p>did not feel like she received support from other teachers until she transferred</p> <p>found at this school a support group that she considers <i>an extended family</i>.</p> <p>Unexpectedly, experienced feelings of disrespect from peer teachers at a specific experience level (between 7 to 15 years of experience).</p> <p><i>I expected that I would have students that were motivated to learn, but overall I would say that wasn't what I discovered</i></p> <p><i>I have seen a lot of educators that have stayed in too long</i></p> <p><i>Collaboration</i></p> <p><i>actively listen</i></p>
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Analytical Framework for Case 3, Ms. Adamson

Experiences		
Places	People/Culture	Other
Student taught in Jamison County at the same school she's in today		<p>always felt like first grade was <i>where everything came together for students</i></p> <p><i>actually student taught here in this building.</i></p> <p><i>was split with kindergarten half a day and 1st grade half a day.</i></p> <p><i>that was a terrible thing.</i></p> <p><i>I didn't get the gist of either grade</i></p> <p><i>What I did find out was there are other ways to do things that work just as well as what we were taught in college</i></p> <p><i>I remember thinking I am going to show them; I am going to do what I want to do and pull from the best of everything</i></p> <p><i>I did pass that year</i></p>
Teaching First Grade at Jamison Primary	<p><i>I hate to say it, but some people think about our little rural county as, you know, children that come out of the yard without preschool experience. But, you would be very surprised at the children in our county. We still have some, just like anywhere, that are reared or raised by grandparents, so they might not have the most up-to-date bringing up and may not be read to as much. Although, that, I think, is a real atrocity that people would believe that because I have a lot of dear grandparents that have taught their children well, probably more so than their mom or dad</i></p>	<p><i>one of the older teachers would come in every day during the first two weeks of school and just say, 'Go down to my room. There are some cookies and tea down there and punch. I am going to read them a story, you just go take a break.' She was a shoulder if I needed one to cry on or whatever, and she gave me breaks. So, I actually had a mentor built in there.</i></p> <p>She did centers and used the discipline system put in place school wide.</p> <p><i>In Jamison County, we all shared and borrowed and planned together, even back then, we planned together.</i></p> <p><i>Class of homogeneously grouped first grade gifted students my first year of teaching</i></p> <p><i>Superintendent's son in class; he visited the first week of school</i></p> <p>is still teaching first graders at the same school today, and this is her thirty-first year.</p> <p>Curriculum changes have taken place; <i>has gone full circle so many times</i></p> <p>thinks the way her school teaches now is the best</p>

<p>would, but I think a lot of people feel that way about our county.</p> <p>sometimes we feel like people think Jamison County is not the best school system just because we are rural</p> <p>I have student teachers in the past who, when they come I could tell that they were like, well, we got stuck out here. (Then they change their mind.)</p> <p>First principal told me, 'You're going to hear that there are better ways to do things than what you do and what you have learned, but trust in yourself ...and ask if you need help...and just do the best you can. I am always here for you...Reach out if you need it.</p> <p>His parents finally decided to have him tested individually with a private psychologist because of his failing grades on his progress report and then on the report card. So, that 'lit a fire under them.'</p> <p>We haven't even talked about parents, yet, and that is a whole other world: how to communicate best with parents, what to do in case you have parents</p>	<p>and you talk about some of those teachers not wanting to buy into that</p> <p>the curriculum has cut out the fluff</p> <p>cover those standards and mastered them - it took me a while to buy into it.</p> <p>has seen education improve</p> <p>Set your expectations high, set your goals high, and trust that you can do it and your students can do it.</p> <p>I have a very narrow viewpoint because I really haven't had a chance to go visit a lot of the other counties. We are given that opportunity, but I just -- I hate not being here.</p> <p>I love being here every day.</p> <p>If you have taught at least three years, you get in this easy pattern of 'Okay. I know what I am doing here. I figured this all out and this sounds really good and it seems to be working.' Then, along comes something new like the new GPSs coming down...</p> <p>So that is what I mean by 'back up against the wall' and 'buying into it'</p> <p>When you have a strong grade group like we have, and kindergarten teachers are very strong. We are a family, first grade is and second grade. We all work together. TSS and mentor program here now; Does a good job of pairing</p> <p>meet often to be sure they are on the right tract, that they get all the communication, that they understand everything thrown out at grade group meetings.</p> <p>because they are not going to raise their hand and say, 'Will somebody explain that to me?' ... because they don't want to seem like, well, that is something I should have learned in college, when really it may be something that we just use here.</p> <p>I think it is the best support system. See, I have only been here. I have never been to another school, so I don't really know how others do it.</p> <p>She's retiring... as a grandparent I hope to come back and mentor</p>
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	<p><i>that are angry or upset, or you have miscommunications.</i></p>	<p>Importance of <i>documentation</i></p> <p>Focus group reflection: <i>A veteran teacher asked for help with a special needs student. The experienced teachers gave helpful suggestions. I hope the new teachers received some useful information.</i></p> <p>Topic: <i>math curriculum changes</i></p> <p><i>Wanted to mention our math curriculum while I had two teachers from here and you guys that work with older children in math</i></p> <p>Topic: <i>When should grade placement screening take place?</i></p> <p>Reflection: <i>nice to talk one-on-one. Resolved an issue on testing a child, so thank you. I hoped I helped Ms. Dixon with her motivation issue.</i></p> <p>Topic: <i>Veteran teachers helping new teachers with individualized instruction.</i></p> <p><i>so many things that I have done for this one child</i></p> <p><i>it worries me to think about newer teachers... it took me years to figure out how to do that and we don't have a lot of time. We have our own classroom to go in and work. They need to learn how to manage a whole class, small groups, how to pace, keep up with struggle of teaching all the different subject areas and all that assessment...Need to have some in-service</i></p> <p>Resolution for a certain a student</p> <p><i>I immediately saw a different child.</i></p> <p><i>So that was a good goal to reach. This was a good experience.</i></p> <p><i>The focus groups gave us a chance to sit and just think about something that you are concerned about because we don't often have time to do that. It is like just fix it the quickest way you can and not really sit down and talk with another teacher about it and try to solve the problem. You know, or come up with different ways to try to solve the problems, so, I really enjoyed that time.</i></p> <p><i>She felt like it was especially good for the new teachers to talk about their experiences...to let them know they are not alone, and that they are going to have troubles.</i></p> <p><i>that is the most important thing, when you need help, raise your hand, go ask for it. Don't feel like you are stuck in that room... Ask for help. I don't care how old you are.</i></p> <p><i>Important for veterans: things are going to change and you are going to have to change with them.... It is okay to try something new.</i></p> <p>Economy. . . retiring. . . saving jobs</p>
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	<p>The student's mom died, but Ms. Adamson <i>taught her mom in first grade and taught her twirling. So I will be mentoring her... I will be around.</i></p>	<p>Ms. Adamson had set herself a goal to find help for this child before retiring. She met her goal.</p> <p>Ms. Adamson really does feel like she had the chance to experience the things she expected.</p> <p><i>I think the sharing and borrowing ideas from others, and believe it or not, a lot of the younger teachers have really, you might not think so, have really good ideas and I am thinking, 'Gosh, why didn't I ever think about that twenty years ago, you know?'</i></p> <p><i>But they do a good job of listening to us' oldie, goldie' veterans.</i></p> <p>The principal has also asked her to be a mentor to a student that lives with her grandparents.</p>
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Analytical Framework for Case 4, Ms. Jones

Experiences		
Places	People/Culture	Other
Student taught in a North Georgia school.	Supervising teacher was a veteran teacher, <i>good relationship, very supportive</i>	<i>She wasn't afraid to let me, you know, be my own person, but yet she was there to guide me through</i>
First teaching job in a rural county in NE Georgia	<i>The school didn't want me; the system didn't want the children or me.</i> <i>The co-worker part of it wasn't there</i>	<i>My first year was a very unique, very challenging, very frightening year.</i> <i>a transition first grade class</i> <i>they didn't have materials</i> <i>I spent a lot of time chasing those children down across the field and to the woods because they would run out the back door.</i> <i>I spent a lot of time in tears at night because I just felt lost.</i>
Moved to Jamison County Primary School	<i>I had two very supportive teachers</i> <i>had support here because there was another teacher; there were two of us.</i> <i>Supportive teachers And principal who helped make sure we had materials</i>	<i>Ms. Jones felt prepared when she left college, but this was not the experience that she was expecting.</i> <i>Ms. Jones stayed. The next year - moved to a second grade and taught there for seven years, and I loved that.</i> <i>I remember sitting there and listening to those ladies talking and thinking, if I could ever get to that point, you know, because they just seemed to have so much knowledge, and they had a hand on . . . seemed like everything. I just remember sitting there in awe of how they could discuss things and, oh, well this is how we are going to do this, and this would be a good way to do that, and they were very good mentors.</i> <i>been here ever since teaching in many different positions</i> <i>I had somebody to bounce ideas off of. Somebody that, you know, would just listen to me.</i> <i>a team teaching situation (4 years)</i> <i>I spent a lot of time trying to keep the parents from not being angry, not being so up in the air. I worked with her for two years, and then I changed and that was a wonderful experience</i>

		<p><i>I learned how, through her, to relate to Black children and to their families and it has helped me all the way through my career.</i></p> <p><i>As a Title I teacher, I worked with fourth, second, and finally became a SIA teacher and worked with first</i></p> <p><i>10 years ago we started the Academic Behavior Classroom, it is a self-contained</i></p>
	<p><i>My team-teacher had a really hard time relating to those children, and she had a hard time relating to their parents</i></p> <p><i>an older Black teacher taught me how to teach Black children.</i></p> <p>Has a para-pro that she is very close to and who has taught with for 10 years</p>	

	<p>Ms. Jones responded by supporting the teacher's efforts and encouraging her by complimenting her ability to work with students. <i>Ms. Adamson is such a great teacher.</i></p> <p><i>one of the hardest things for beginning teachers is working with parents</i></p> <p><i>Some years I have had parents that really had a desire for their children to better themselves, but within this classroom I have had years when I didn't have a single parent that was involved with their children.</i></p> <p><i>Actually, when he stepped off the bus this morning, I knew he had been at his dad's house this weekend</i></p> <p><i>I have been here twenty-two years now, and teachers don't just close their doors and try to keep all of their knowledge inside so no one else will steal their thunder, or whatever. Everybody wants to help everybody else.</i></p> <p>She feels like there is low teacher turnover in this county because the teachers have made an investment in the county. Most live there, have gone to school there, or have family there.</p>	<p><i>the most important thing to me is always the children and their sense of self worth... if you can build that within a child, then you can start to teach them. (Says four times during the year)</i></p> <p><i>you teach self worth through love</i></p> <p>Ms. Jones thinks that we expect too much of children too early.</p> <p>expectations for children academically have increased</p> <p><i>is too fast paced</i></p> <p><i>not enough practice given</i></p> <p><i>Different children need to go in different directions and learn in different ways</i></p> <p><i>Children learn so much through play.</i></p> <p><i>Children haven't had the opportunity to practice getting along with each other and with themselves, without direct intervention from adults.</i></p> <p><i>My voice is heard often here</i></p> <p>by giving support to new teachers through mentors, the turnover is low</p> <p><i>When I went to teach in that second grade setting my second year, we didn't have a mentor protégée program, but we had that camaraderie with the three of us, but it wasn't under an actual program.</i></p> <p>Daily direct reading instruction and math practice every day, too, a review</p> <p><i>Focus group topics: importance of mentors for beginning teachers, holidays affecting student behavior, Test anxiety for students, teachers, and parents.</i></p> <p><i>a big thing, the documentation: POI</i></p> <p><i>'building a case for the child,'</i></p> <p><i>holiday seasons affect children's behavior, especially children who come from either abusive homes or negligent homes</i></p> <p><i>It is kind of like we are being punished because we are sending them home.</i></p>
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		<p><i>we are just not teaching specific things... We skim the top of everything, but we are not getting down deep into much of anything anymore because we are trying to hit so many different things.</i></p> <p><i>It is always helpful to hear the opinion of other educators about concerns</i></p> <p><i>I wish we had more time to do this together as a group and even with those just in our school</i></p> <p><i>It is good as a veteran teacher to be able to sit down around a table with beginning teachers, as well as veteran teachers, because you know, even veteran teachers don't always see things the same way as other veteran teachers. And we certainly don't see things the way beginning teachers do, and they don't see things the way we do.</i></p> <p><i>Well, I just gained from their insight of seeing it through somebody else eyes or their perception of it, because you know, when you are – I should not generalize this and say that when you are young you think you know everything. I did. I really did. I thought when I started teaching I knew pretty much what I was doing, but the older you get the more you realize how much you didn't know.</i></p> <p><i>I guess the biggest thing is there are still people there that need support no matter how long you have been there. You will always need support.</i></p> <p><i>different children have different needs academically, behaviorally, emotionally, socially</i></p> <p><i>economy has changed her plans</i></p> <p><i>I have had maybe three children that I felt like I just couldn't teach them to read.</i></p> <p><i>Except for that first year, Ms. Jones has had supportive administrators and co-workers</i></p> <p><i>I feel like this is a calling</i></p>
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Analytical Framework for Case 5, Ms. Dixon

Experiences		
Places	People/Culture	Other
Jamison Primary		had been a <i>substitute teacher</i> for a year
Jamison Elementary		<i>worked as a parapro</i> for two years with fourth grade students
Jamison Elementary	regular classroom teachers were able to teach her through real-life examples, and she was able to learn a lot while working with them through on-the-job-training.	<p><i>Instead of student teaching, since I am already teaching, this whole year is considered an internship.</i></p> <p><i>worked out well for me to do it this way because I am only teaching math, so I don't have a homeroom.</i></p> <p><i>I didn't have just a load of kids dumped in my room. You know, I had somebody in there that could help me, and I learned a lot from those teachers last year. (Re: classroom management)</i></p> <p><i>Tried some grouping situations; But, mostly, Ms. Dixon teaches the whole class with another teacher. I love what I am doing. I really enjoy doing just math and working with the teachers.</i></p> <p>has a good relationship with all of the fourth grade teachers.</p> <p><i>mentor is another fourth grade teacher; worked with her as a parapro</i></p> <p><i>teachers have all been really good helping me with ideas for kids that I am having trouble with in the classroom, or about telling me what I should be including on my lesson plans, I have had a lot of support from all the fourth grade teachers.</i></p> <p>started second career at 40 years of age; before this she <i>worked on a farm</i> and raised her family.</p> <p><i>a lot more responsibility than parapro</i></p> <p><i>At first I didn't feel really like a first year teacher</i></p> <p><i>didn't seem as overwhelming</i></p> <p><i>that being a parent makes a difference</i></p> <p><i>I was not put with other new teachers; the school is separated by grade level</i></p> <p>felt like her first year <i>went pretty well</i></p>

		<p><i>time management - biggest frustration</i></p> <p><i>This year I feel a lot more prepared every day</i></p> <p><i>we plan together once a week</i></p> <p>grouping and creative scheduling</p> <p>Teaching and testing need to be better matched</p> <p>no connection to how they are expected to teach, using hands-on learning and performance tasks, and how they are expected to test and decide promotion.</p> <p>weakness 1st year - parent contacts</p> <p>Having another teacher with you: Pro – classroom management; support Con – always being observed; stressful</p> <p>Inclusion teachers – most helpful <i>bouncing off each other</i></p> <p><i>Collaboration is a positive thing</i></p> <p><i>new teachers may be better at it because they need the guidance, or they welcome collaboration, where the veteran teachers tend to resist it.</i></p> <p><i>They see collaboration as going against their independence - taking away their authority...going to take time to get everybody there</i></p> <p><i>teachers in general resist change, not just veteran teachers; I am the same way; we get defensive. Teachers see suggestions to change as an indication that they were doing it wrong and therefore, need to change.</i></p> <p>Topics for focus groups: <i>lack of student motivation; engaging lower performing students in a lesson</i></p> <p>Reflection (1): <i>I liked listening to veteran teachers share experiences. The new teachers seemed shy and quiet.</i></p> <p>Reflection (3): <i>New teachers are more vocal in pairs. It seems we all do have similar concerns, both new and veteran teachers. Even if we don't solve all of our problems, it helps to be able to talk about different ideas together. My concerns about motivation are really connected to the other topics: POI, Placement, and Test Anxiety.</i></p>
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		<p>Ms. Dixon brought up the fact that her students that Ms. Jones taught in second grade retained a lot of geometry vocabulary.</p> <p>Reflection (4): <i>teachers could use more opportunities to just observe each other's classrooms and have conversations about the educational process.</i></p> <p><i>being one of the new ones, it was very helpful to have that many different veteran teachers in one place together with just time to talk</i></p> <p>It was nice to not have an agenda</p> <p><i>You kind of have to go out of your way to do this. It doesn't seem like it happens.</i></p> <p><i>mentor program geared to homeroom teachers, meetings aren't helpful</i></p> <p>feels like more assistance is needed for new teachers in her school</p> <p>information is missing about how things are done in this particular school.</p> <p>Ms. Dixon's second year has been <i>similar</i> to her first; <i>having that one year behind us, we are more comfortable; it's better</i></p> <p><i>Time is always the problem</i></p> <p><i>I do think that my teaching has improved in that way, just having the experience of doing it one year.</i></p> <p><i>It is important that we continue to adapt, be flexible, and change as your needs change.</i></p> <p><i>what teachers do all the time; they adjust to different things and that is a good way of doing things</i></p> <p><i>Teachers need to be able to take the time to spend with other teachers, just talking about education without necessarily a specific agenda</i></p> <p><i>That collaborative discussion</i></p>
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Analytical Framework for Case 6, Ms. Stewart

Experiences		
Places	People/Culture	Other
First Practicum in College	<i>low-income neighborhood with a diverse economic class; language barriers; questionable neighborhood.</i>	<i>students were so inside of themselves because they didn't want to break out of their language, out of their comfort zone</i>
Second Practicum in College	<i>at another school in that county with a larger group of students, not quite as diverse</i>	<i>were more behavior problems in that room; mostly because it was largely an African American background. There were very few white students or Hispanic students, actually.</i> <i>There were a lot of white teachers, and there was sort of a tension between cultures there.</i>
Student teaching in College	<i>in another county</i>	<i>I wanted to be one of those teachers that had control, instead of the ones that didn't have control.</i> <i>I found in a lot of experiences, you learn what not to do more than you learn what to do.</i>
Jamison County Elementary School	<i>I went to the university nearby and was really brought up here and my family lives here.</i> <i>I was really excited about the idea of coming back and teaching here.</i> <i>The reason why I chose this school to work at is because of the community, and I knew people here. That is sort of my background.</i> <i>students who had difficult backgrounds at home</i>	<i>wasn't use to the long hours</i> <i>didn't have any materials</i> <i>started from scratch</i> <i>Another teacher across the hall was in her first year as well</i> <i>had to scrounge a lot for materials and make a lot of materials.</i> <i>did a lot of experimentation the first couple of months just because I really was not sure what I wanted to do and that to me was the most frustrating part</i> <i>but I didn't really have as bad of behavior problems as I thought I was going to</i> <i>without a mentor for a while</i>

	<p><i>also students who don't do their work</i></p> <p><i>We had four new teachers on the fifth grade hall last year, two that were first year teachers, so now we are more comfortable with each other.</i></p> <p><i>We are use to each other and that kind of helped as well having that camaraderie with the teachers.</i></p> <p><i>They come with baggage and you have to sort of be a counselor to them, and you may not understand what they are going through.</i></p> <p><i>felt like I needed to solve all the problems of these children, and I needed to do everything in one day</i></p>	<p><i>I had a teacher next door, but he wasn't really the most helpful. He had his own things to do</i></p> <p><i>paper work, I kind of drowned in paper work</i></p> <p><i>This year feels a lot better</i></p> <p><i>came in knowing exactly what I wanted to do based on last year</i></p> <p><i>learned from things that happened last year and mistakes that I made</i></p> <p><i>support waxes and wanes</i></p> <p><i>felt like I did not get as much support and as much help as I really should have be given</i></p> <p><i>I wish they had written a checklist of things new teachers needed to know at this school</i></p> <p><i>There was sort of this expectation that information would be passed down to me but it wasn't, and I didn't know that I was supposed to know certain things, and I would find out later</i></p> <p><i>But I chose this as my career to last me until thirty years down the line</i></p> <p><i>other new teacher, she and I would get together; really sort of own our own</i></p> <p><i>the fifth grade teachers are planning together more than last year; a little bit of resistance to the unit writing</i></p> <p><i>more confidence in her discipline plan this year</i></p> <p><i>I broke down in tears in the middle of the day the second or third week, of teaching my first year, just so overwhelmed by everything</i></p> <p><i>Ms. Stewart thinks whether new teachers leave the profession depends on the reason a person goes into teaching</i></p> <p><i>NCLB, affects everything a teacher does. There is the idea of someone looking over our shoulder.</i></p> <p><i>students are expected, because of No Child Left Behind, to meet very high expectations and some of them are just not ready to do it</i></p> <p><i>NCLB has admirable goals</i></p>
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		<p>(Opportunities to share w/ other teachers) we <i>have so many meetings about other things that that sort of gets thrown on the back burner.</i></p> <p><i>this year has gone very well</i></p> <p>Meeting her expectations: <i>It was hard and difficult,</i></p> <p><i>I didn't have a whole lot of stuff going on out of school</i></p> <p><i>My lesson plans didn't really have to be all that detailed.</i></p> <p><i>Math baffles me</i></p> <p><i>help wasn't always given</i></p> <p><i>There have been some behavior and discipline problems, not a whole lot. Not as many as I thought there would be.</i></p> <p><i>Students do what you tell them to do because they know that is what is expected of them.</i></p> <p>Needed Spring break</p> <p>Ms. Stewart's expectations for her students changed during the year</p> <p>Team meetings: <i>There is sort of a mentality that we are just supposed to sit and listen. The other teachers don't want to rock the boat.</i></p> <p><i>As team leader...it has been frustrating sometimes because people come to you expecting you to know answers to questions. But it wasn't as bad as I thought it would be.</i></p> <p>she team-teaches math with an experienced teacher...the two of them <i>do a lot of back and forth with ideas. she has a lot of information that I can draw from</i></p> <p><i>last year, I didn't know when to go ask for help or when it was appropriate</i></p> <p>She's trying to help other new teachers</p> <p>Learning Specialist at her school uses the materials Ms. Stewart has designed... <i>She and I do a lot of collaborating</i></p> <p><i>Economy; didn't want to leave the area</i></p> <p>is important that she <i>really enjoys</i> being a teacher</p>
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Analytical Framework for Case 7, Ms. Smith

Experiences		
Places	People/Culture	Other
Grew up In Jamison County and was a substitute teacher		<p><i>graduated from high school in this county in 2003.</i></p> <p><i>worked primarily for the Primary School</i></p> <p><i>The subbing helped so much. I subbed up until I started student teaching, which was in the spring of 2006</i></p>
Student taught at Jamison Elementary		<p>Student taught in 4th grade: 6 of those students were in her 5th grade class</p>
Teaching at Jamison Elementary	<p><i>I had every specialist they could bring in my class watching and observing. They were observing the students and trying to help me.</i></p> <p><i>had the help of the principal and assistant principal.</i></p> <p><i>I had a psychiatrist, they hired, and independent consultant to come in for behavior management. Everyone was trying to help.</i></p> <p><i>the administration was not anticipating what happened</i></p>	<p><i>New teacher across hall was in 5th grade w/Ms. Smith and graduated from high school with her and just happened to end up across the hall from one another. It has been a good experience to have grown up with someone from the age of five and now be coworkers.</i></p> <p><i>bounce ideas off each other</i></p> <p><i>went home every night just stressed</i></p> <p><i>I really would go home and just literally cry, and be like, 'I have no idea why I do this.' It was not fun.</i></p> <p><i>my first year was nothing like that. I had a very challenging class last year.</i></p> <p><i>several students who had severe behavior disorders</i></p> <p><i>I had students with different academic struggles, which is normal for all teachers, but it was very different than what I expected.</i></p> <p><i>Ms. Smith's problem was discipline. The students were out of control.</i></p> <p><i>every person I talked to said, 'You are doing what you can for these kids. Their behaviors are so out of control that no one knows what to do.' Ms. Smith said that her class was known as the worst class in the school.</i></p> <p><i>I had very troubled kids, talking about suicide and things like that.</i></p>

	<p><i>They were helpless. They had hopeless home lives and everything that they did had an explanation to an extent because their lives were just horrible.</i></p> <p><i>During the first few weeks, the administrators were trying to get them out of my class, and I was saying 'No, give me a shot. Let me see what I can do.'</i></p> <p><i>But after all of our possibilities had been exhausted, I was like, 'Okay, we need to do something. We need to do something quick, because there are twenty-five kids and two kids are just having these extreme outbursts.'</i></p> <p><i>The administrators kept emphasizing that this is your first year and this is just one group of students. One administrator said that more than likely I would never have, in my whole entire career of 30 years, another class equal to this</i></p> <p><i>Parents tend to jump on teachers immediately when their kids are not doing well.</i></p> <p><i>spends most of her time with the teachers who are on the same level of experience as her</i></p> <p><i>when you are inexperienced you feel that people are judging when you have</i></p>	<p><i>I understood what they were saying as far as 'remove yourself from situations,' but that is really easily said but not really easy to do.</i></p> <p><i>I just feel like it was just not a very thought out process for the kids to all be put in the same class because the dynamics of the classroom were just incredibly bad.</i></p> <p><i>They put two students together, one was a two-year repeater, so he was almost 13, and the other one was a one-year repeater and she turned 12. Other than that, most of my students were 9, 10, and 11. These two were substantially older students. Substantially more mature. There were days I just wanted to go, 'Why do I have these kids?'</i></p> <p><i>frustrated that nothing was being done</i></p> <p><i>I felt depressed; I felt unimportant</i></p> <p><i>called Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE) representative to hear my options at my wits end.</i></p> <p><i>They weren't doing their work. They weren't making passing grades. They didn't care to be here.</i></p> <p><i>I had to file charges on one of my students for theft and this was after several other instances of harassment,</i></p> <p><i>really scared for my safety; did not sign up to be a teacher to come to school and be scared</i></p> <p><i>had a mentor; She was my advocate.</i></p> <p><i>I was stressed out because it was too much on top of all the grading, all the paper work, all the lesson planning, and all the meetings. By December, I was just ready to not come back.</i></p> <p><i>Ms. Smith stayed; she wasn't a quitter.</i></p> <p><i>it crossed my mind that if this doesn't get better, if I don't get any more support – maybe to look elsewhere for a job. But every school has problems and I really wanted to work here because this is where I live. This is where I grew up.</i></p> <p><i>had a lot of meetings accomplished nothing; nobody helps us</i></p> <p><i>My mentor was awesome.</i></p> <p><i>expected paper work, but not to this extent. All the paper work. You would think in the age of the computer, we would have a lot more time.</i></p>
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	<p><i>problem...you don't want to go to them...you don't want to look like you don't know something, or at least I don't.</i></p> <p>likes this county.</p> <p><i>This is the county I grew up in. I have no desire to leave. I think if I ever do leave it will be to go back to Virginia with my husband, if he ever wanted to go back. That is the only way I could leave.</i></p>	<p>Plans with four teachers close to her</p> <p>This has been a different year; <i>kids are much better</i></p> <p><i>have gotten to do groups,</i></p> <p><i>I don't have any behavior problems.</i></p> <p><i>this is what I have learned from last year; have stable routines</i></p> <p><i>you can't expect kids to do what they don't know to do. My kids know exactly what to do, and it is a lot less off task behavior. Plus, I know what to do.</i></p> <p>some new teachers don't stay because the administration is just putting more and more pressure of their teachers</p> <p>teachers are being <i>encouraged to use technology. A lot of the older teachers don't like to do the technology,</i></p> <p><i>accountability for parents</i></p> <p><i>(teacher expectations versus parent expectations) parent wants me make sure I go behind and make sure student copies everything down. I don't agree with that.</i></p> <p><i>we are always talking about differentiation of instruction; realizing that everybody is not the same, but then education is trying to tell us that everybody is the same.</i></p> <p><i>'Don't give up after your first year'</i></p> <p>this year teaching is enjoyable most days and to some degree she gets to do what she wants to do</p> <p>Topics for focus groups: <i>dealing with parents; teacher expectations vs. parent expectations.</i></p> <p>Reflections: <i>I enjoyed hearing that even veteran teachers have struggles in their classrooms. Some of the most seasoned teachers don't have all the answers and have to troubleshoot.</i></p> <p><i>...we had time to sit with teachers not only from our school, but with teachers from the other schools. We never get to collaborate with those teachers, aside from this time. You could say... here is the problem I am experiencing and have other people talk to you about it. You never get to do that in school.</i></p> <p>Got married</p> <p><i>plan units together w/other teachers</i></p> <p>her administration encourages them to find ways to teach to strengths</p>
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		<p><i>team-taught science and soc. studies</i></p> <p>This year has been a <i>really good year</i> for Ms. Smith. <i>In comparison to last year, it has been an excellent year.</i></p> <p>(POI); frustrating</p> <p>economy</p> <p><i>I think it is important just to take everything that we have all said, all seven participants, it is all valuable.</i></p> <p><i>The ultimate goal is to think that we all have a lot of similarities, but we are all different, too.</i></p> <p><i>I have enjoyed the study because it has helped me see that one situation can have eight different possible outcomes.</i></p> <p><i>There is no preparation that is good enough for coming and doing this job. You have to go through it. You do. After last year, I had to learn to leave it at school, to some degree. I come here; I go home; I come back the next day and do it. I don't think college or anybody can do anything to prepare you to do it. You just have to live it.</i></p>
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APPENDIX H

DISCUSSION OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW ON NEW AND VETERAN TEACHERS

EMBEDDED IN THE DATA

The focus of this section is to discuss the findings in the study in the context of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The following discussion examines the findings from this study on the empirical research of new and veteran teachers and will be divided into two parts: new and veteran teachers.

What do new teachers have to say to us about their expectations and experiences in teaching?

The studies in the literature review on expectations of new teachers seemed to vibrate in my ears as I listened to the stories of my participants' first year teaching experiences, whether it was from thirty years ago or two years ago. The teachers in this study experienced the same student neediness, behavior problems, and need to be better prepared for handling disruptive students that the new teachers in Meister and Jenks's (2000) study and Meister and Melnick's internet survey (2003) described; in addition, they experienced the same feelings of being "overwhelmed by the workload" (p. 92). The transition that Leshem (2008) reported was continually experienced and expressed. Leshem's results indicated that new teachers did not anticipate how much time had to be devoted to administrative tasks, while also coping with cumulative teaching responsibilities and the emotional or physical consequences associated with 'the day's teaching' (p. 210). These findings were confirmed and expressed from the teachers in this study, along with the need for support.

Fry (2007) found that the new teachers had varied and inadequate forms of support during their first year. Each beginning teacher in this study had different needs and therefore induction needed to be individualized instead of using a "one size fits all" professional development program. Ms. Stewart told us that support *waxes and wanes* and Ms. Dixon said that *more support was needed*.

One specific result that Algozine et al. (2007) found and Smith and Ingersoll (2004) documented was that providing mentors from the same field, having the common planning, enjoying opportunities for collaboration with other teachers on instruction, and being a part of an external network of teachers were effective in reducing teacher turnover (p. 706). All of these components have a common strand, new teachers benefiting from the experiences they share with other teachers. All seven of the participants in this study discussed what a valuable experience the shared-time had been and discussed the importance of working with teachers. Andrews et al. summarized that the strategies new teachers most value relates to opportunities to collaborate with other teachers.

The research suggested that new teachers' expectations come from their own educational experiences and discussed the transition of how new teachers construct and reconstruct their identity. Dewey states, "I assume that amid all uncertainties there is one permanent frame of reference: namely, the organic connection between education and personal experience" (1938, p. 25). He uses the example of children playing a game or sport to illustrate social control in everyday life. This insight has been reflected between the new and veteran teachers in my study. New teachers seem to be emulating the teaching patterns of the veteran teachers and indeed seem to blend into the existing setting instead of standing out. Dewey was correct when he said, the 'element of convention is strong.'

According to Meister and Jenks (2000), for many of the participants in their study, this was their first job and their first experience in the adult world. They were, also, beginning other new phases of their life. Costigan's (2005) study found that first year teachers invested their own lives in the students. These experiences came to life through Ms. Smith's case study. Ms. Smith

felt isolated her first year, invested in her students' lives, and entered a new phase of her life during her second year by marrying in the winter.

Flores and Day (2005) reported when discussing their findings that the teachers continually referred to the gap between 'ideals' and the 'real world' of schools and classrooms, which could be viewed as new teachers' expectations when entering the classroom and their actual experiences (p. 7). McCann and Johannessen (2004) found that classroom management was a challenge for new teachers in their study (p. 139). The participants in this study also experienced challenges with classroom management; however, it did not seem to take more than a year for the seven participants to feel more comfortable and able to handle the demands placed on them by the profession.

Much like Ms. Dixon's experience, Herbert and Worthy (2001) followed a teacher through her first year who was familiar with the school, was a part of and involved in the culture of the school, and who did not experience problems with student behavior or class management. These factors are certainly not always possible, but can increase the chances for success for new teachers. Since Ms. Dixon had the easiest transition of the seven participants, one could attribute this to having other teachers in the classroom, working for two years previously in the same school and with the same grade and teachers, her age, prior life experiences, maturity, her lack of experiencing problems with student behavior and class management, and/or her position as a math teacher without a homeroom.

Gilbert found the following results from a survey put together by a focus group when asked what strategies new teachers valued the most:

- ⇒ Giving new teachers the opportunity to observe other teachers.
- ⇒ Assigning mentors to new teachers.

- ⇒ Providing new teachers with feedback based on classroom observations.
- ⇒ Providing new teachers with co-planning time with other teachers.
- ⇒ Assigning new teachers to smaller classes.

The focus groups in this study did not rank strategies valued most by new teachers, but the topics most discussed by this group of new and veteran teachers when given a choice to talk about their practice are listed below. While combining the results I realized that because the seven teachers had all this experience together around a table and could choose the topics to be discussed, they took advantage of this rare opportunity. The most discussed topics centered on the responsibilities and concerns of being an educator:

- ⇒ Paperwork/Documentation/POI-SST
- ⇒ Modifications – Individualized Instruction or Behavior
- ⇒ Parent Concerns and Working with Parents
- ⇒ Testing/CRCT/Accountability
- ⇒ Time Management/Stress/Frustration

It was frequently documented that the new and veteran teachers used these valuable moments to give suggestions and assistance to specific problems one or more teachers were having in the classroom. The written reflections expressed enjoyment and benefits to each teacher's practice.

What do veteran teachers have to say to us about their expectations and experiences in teaching?

In an effort to better understand what teachers are going through, Huberman (1993) lists five phases teachers may experience. Not every teacher goes through all the phases or at the same period in their career; however, I looked at the description of each phase and tried to image the best fit for each of my participants.

Fitting my participants into Huberman's phases. . .

Phase 1: beginnings - Ms. Stewart and Ms. Smith was still in this phase at the beginning of the study, which was the beginning of their second year of teaching.

Phase 2: stabilization and commitment – Ms. Dixon was in this stage at the beginning of the study, and then Ms. Stewart and Ms. Smith moved into this phase by the end of the study.

Phase 3: the “stock-taking” phase – Previously in his career, this stage was felt by Mr. White when he made the decision to enter into other careers, counseling and the ministry; Ms.

Mountcastle was experiencing stage three when she completed a second Masters to change from being a special education teacher to being a regular education teacher; and Ms. Dixon, when she entered into the field of education as a second career experienced this career stage. (Ms. Jones and Ms. Adamson went through these first three stages, as reflected by their experiences, but were in the next stage when this study took place.)

Phase 4: the serenity phase – The four veteran teachers were still very much engaged with their career and with their students and were most likely in this stage, if teachers can be labeled, during the time of the study.

Phase 5: the stage of disengagement – Mr. White was probably headed toward this stage if he had not found such a motivating and engaging environment at the Primary school, with the added enjoyment of being on the morning show, during his last years in education. And, the challenging classes and responsibilities of Ms. Mountcastle and Ms. Jones were keeping their plates full, and well, Ms. Adamson, she just always seems to have the energy level and desire to achieve that all of us long for to keep us motivated to teach children.

Case studies were included in the empirical research. Levin (2001) and Muchmore (2001) did case studies that delved into the lives of individual teachers. Their accounts gave us personal

insight into the minds and thoughts of these experienced teachers. In the same way, my participants offered stories that highlighted their educational experiences. In Levin's (2001) longitudinal case study of Rick, he found that teaching, learning, and sharing with his colleagues the "triumphs and tribulations" of his job changed his perspective and increased his job enjoyment (p. 33). Ms. Mountcastle expressed a similar sentiment when discussing colleagues by saying, *it is important to share frustrations and celebrations*.

In this search to understand why veteran teachers stay in the profession, it was encouraging to find studies reporting most teachers are satisfied in their occupation of choice, most would choose it again, and the satisfaction came from working with students. Many studies revealed that teachers found personal and professional satisfaction from working with children and support from other teachers.

The seven participants echoed these thoughts in each case study. Colleagues, support, working with other teachers was heard loud and strong in this study as if it were being shouted from the rooftops. Teachers need other teachers. Ms. Smith *bounced ideas off* the teacher across the hall. Ms. Adamson will never forget the friendly teacher giving her a break during her first two weeks of teaching. Ms. Mountcastle values the colleagues she works with and sees them as her *extended family*. Teachers, also, love their students. Mr. White wondered in college why his professor only said that you *have to love teaching*, he felt like you also have to *love the students*. Ms. Jones agrees; and, each one said they love or enjoy their job. These three characteristics: loving the students, loving the job, and valuing other teachers are evidenced through the research and the seven case studies as being important to new and veteran teachers.

In adding to the literature on veteran teachers persevering, a study by Brunetti (2006) and a study by Stanford (2001) reported resilience as the reason. Two themes that emerged were:

veteran urban teachers persevere because of finding deep meaning in their work and through their sources of support. Brunetti's (2006) study of inner city teachers found that the students and the personal and professional satisfaction gave the teachers the resilience to "stay the course" (p. 13). This resilience is a similarity found with the four veteran teachers in this study from a rural community. They, too, expressed the same commitment of 'staying the course' and valuing support.

The English Journal (1996) published an issue honoring veteran teachers. Two teacher-writers challenged veteran teachers to "hang out with the new kids on the block" by choosing a new teacher every year to meet and share ideas with (p. 54). Another veteran teacher left us with this reflection "teaching is a craft, learned by apprenticeship, improved by experience" (p. 33). Sit down, hang out, and be open to new teachers, this is the knowledge that veteran teachers can share with us through their stories.

Johnson & The Project of the Next Generation of Teachers, 2004, lets us know that teachers may start in education and leave to pursue other careers; however, we will also benefit from people who enter other professions and realize that they want to be a teacher. This describes two of the participants. Mr. White left to be a minister of a church for five years and returned; while Ms. Dixon pursued a career in agriculture before joining the teaching profession. Both brought knowledge and experiences with them to the classroom that will benefit the students.

The literature reviewing empirical research on new and veteran teachers is sprinkled in and out of the seven case studies. The literature documented the expectations of new teachers, the support they seek, the discipline issues they encounter, and what is involved mentally and emotionally for new teachers. The research suggested that there was a discrepancy between what

new teachers expected and their actual teaching experiences. I did not find that discrepancy between the expectations and experiences of the teachers in this study. I heard the words “This was not what I anticipated” or “I was not expecting this” occasionally, but the circumstances had to be considered. A college cannot prepare a teacher for everything, i.e. an unusual make-up of a class, misinterpretation of a law, or a mentor leaving in the middle of the school year. What did come through was that new teachers are being better prepared. Ms. Mountcastle has worked with new teachers for many years and she expressed this observation, in addition, I examined the lists of the three new teachers. The lists were realistic and the teachers experienced the majority of their expectations.

An encouraging comment that I received from the teachers was that their second year went better. Feelings of isolation, being overwhelmed with an overload of paperwork, and needing to be an expert on the very first day of teaching is echoed throughout the research; however, it did not seem to take more than a year for the seven participants in my study to feel more comfortable and able to handle the demands placed on them by the profession. The teachers had also found different forms of support.

A common strand that emerged from the literature and was appreciated and valued by the educators in this study was that teachers benefit from the experiences they share with other teachers. The research, and the seven participants, indicated that time spent in opportunities to share with other teachers was valuable to their practice.

Looking back at the literature reviewed for this study, several articles suggested bringing together new and veteran teachers. Johnson and Kardos (2005) tell us, “Bridging the generation gap among teachers can provide support for new teachers, leading to higher retention rates. Simultaneously, it can ensure that before they retire, experienced teachers bestow a legacy of

skills and knowledge on the schools and their successors” (p. 5). Alvy (2005) reminds us that when the veteran teachers retire, the balance, maturity, perspective, insight, and experience goes with them, and it is not easily replaced (p. 771). In this study, I brought together new and veteran teachers and confirmed some of the findings in the literature review, found some discrepancies, added to the knowledge by narrating the stories of the expectations and experiences of rural teachers, and through judgment proposed what I discovered rural teachers talk about.