THE IMAGINED AND LIVED EXPERIENCES OF NOVICE
GEORGIA ELEMENTARY ART EDUCATORS AS UNDERSTOOD
THROUGH THE USE OF NARRATIVE INQUIRY

by

LADONNA MOORE CANUP

(Under the Direction of Carole Henry)

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study was conducted using a narrative inquiry approach to build
upon research on mentoring and support for practicing art teachers. This research
advances how we think about retention since teachers leaving the profession early pose a
considerable burden to schools and students, and impact school effectiveness as a whole.
In this study three beginning elementary art educators from Georgia share stories of their
experiences lived during their first two years of teaching. Guided by the conceptual
framework of Dewey’s (1934) theory of experiences and Greene’s (1986) discussion of
social imagination, this study yields insight into the professional and personal
experiences of beginning teachers by listening to their individual and combined voices.
This study focused on the research questions: (1) What are the imagined and lived
experiences of beginning art teachers? (a) What were the most striking similarities
between beginning art teachers’ imagined experience and beginning art teachers’ actual
experience? (b) What were the most striking differences between beginning art teachers’
imagined experience and beginning art teachers’ actual experience? (2) What support
mechanisms were described to aid the new teachers who participated in this study? Data collection methods for this study included participant interviews, educator reflective journal entries, and researcher field observations. The findings from this study provide implications for those involved in pre-service teacher education, administration, and educational policy by informing significant ways to better understand beginning art educators’ first years in the classroom. This research will be beneficial in designing and implementing mentoring and induction programs targeted at better addressing the needs of in-service beginning art educators and helping to address issues of teacher attrition in order to build a strong foundation to support new educators and their unique needs.

INDEX WORDS: art teachers, attrition, beginning teachers, imagination, imagined experience, induction, lived experience, narrative, narrative inquiry, mentoring, retention, qualitative study
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As a newly hired beginning art educator, I felt inspired, educated, and prepared. Having come from a family with numerous educators, such as my mother and brother, I had spent many years in schools seeing behind the scenes and hearing about teaching experiences. During my undergraduate time, my professors worked hard to convey the realities of teaching art. I felt aware of the expectations required in a life of teaching art. I was ready to plant my roots and grow into an influential art educator who influences her students’ lives in powerful ways and drives students to love learning. However, I could not have imagined the dense forest of the public school setting with its vast complexities that awaited me....

My first years in the classroom were marked more with moments of disappointment, anger, and frustration rather than with the isolated instances of satisfaction, pleasure and contentment for which I had hoped. As an elementary art educator, who is typically the sole individual in my discipline at my school, I had no mentor to talk to who could understand or relate to my daily life. The induction program I was required to attend meant staying after school once a month for a meeting on a topic, such as insurance. It was poorly designed and not geared for those of us who were on the fringes of the school setting. What made the situation worse was that my story was not unique. I contacted other members of my graduating class during my first years of teaching and heard the same story I was telling but through different settings, voices, and
characters. Veterans in the field declared that all educators go through this process and either stick with it or leave it. Being asked to either give up a career teaching a subject I am passionate about or to continue to be subjected to my current situation left me with a dubious outlook for my future. For me, both options were out of the question, so instead of becoming what research calls a mover—one who changes teaching fields—or a leaver (Luekens, Lyter, Fox, & Chandler, 2004), I decided to use my situation as a motivator and enrolled in a doctoral program so that I could pursue further interests regarding this topic.

The field of art education research has been dominated with many pressing agendas over its history, such as striving to prove its worth in the school setting or determining which curriculum best meets the needs of students. While answers to those questions are extremely pertinent to the field of art education research, I feel that without more attention to the personal experiences of art educators, there may not be any educators left to teach this most needed subject, and those who are left may be so broken that they fall short of providing the quality art education all students deserve.

An individual’s thoughts and experiences are the stories of a life. My autobiographical story presented throughout this study provides a personal motivation for conducting this study and demonstrates the genesis of my personal and professional knowledge as well as insight into how reflection on experience is vital in understanding the needs of today’s art educators. As I considered a study that would include educators at the beginning of their profession, Dewey (1938) provided me 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” (p. 67).
Dewey’s reference to “learner” directly correlates with how my personal learning process has influenced and directed the course of this study.

Accordingly, this study begins with my interests based on my early teaching experience, which I wanted to know more about and wanted a chance to examine. As I started reading the literature on teacher attrition detailing that beginning educators are leaving the profession in the first five years (Darling-Hammond, 1999, 2007; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Johnson et al., 2005; Quality Counts, 2000; Smethem, 2007; Weiss, 1999) and reflecting on my personal experience as a new art educator, it became apparent that my study should include art teachers at the beginning of their career. The purpose of the study is to document the experiences and reflections of beginning art educators in order to understand the significance of what the art educators saw, heard, and felt. Dewey (1938) stated:

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, my study focused on allowing art educators to talk about the expectations they had imagined or held for their career in teaching as well as the experiences now lived. As a result, the beginning art educators were provided with an opportunity to reflect upon and articulate the experiences that had defined their initial years of teaching. The use of participant narrations of their experiences offer support that can better inform the field of art education in order to present a holistic picture of art teachers experiences in the current educational system.
Within the past decade, the field of education has undergone extraordinary changes brought on by political, cultural, technological, social, and economic factors. These changes have been identified as placing greater constraints and pressures on educators, who are finding it harder to survive as teachers and, therefore, are leaving the teaching profession earlier than their peers in other professional work fields, such as lawyers, engineers, or accountants (Dove, 2004). Yet, current international and national research indicates not a teacher shortage, as the past research of Darling–Hammond (1999) and Menter, Hutchings, and Ross (2002) suggested, but indicates a more important shortage of good (highly qualified) teachers who are willing to work in the educational setting (Ingersoll, 2001). The solutions of the past, which relied heavily on teacher recruitment as a primary strategy for improving schools and allowed excessive teacher attrition to continue, will no longer work.

In 1994, former U.S. Secretary of Education, Richard W. Riley, warned the nation that we would need to hire two million teachers within the next 10 years to offset Baby Boomer retirements (Carroll, 2007). Carroll reported that from 1994-2004 the United States hired approximately 2.25 million teachers, but during that same decade lost 2.7 million teachers, with over 2.1 million of them leaving before retirement. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that, in 1989, 5.6 % of teachers left the profession compared to 8 % of teachers leaving in 2009 (Keigher & Cross, 2010). Teachers with three years experience or less account for 9.1 % of the new teacher population and indicate the percentage of new teachers leaving. The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF) (2003) concluded that “the teacher shortages will never end and that quality teaching will not be achieved for every
child until we change the conditions that are driving teachers out of too many of our schools” (p.3). The increasing concern over high attrition rates among beginning teachers makes it crucial for a clearer understanding of the experiences new teachers face during the first years of teaching.

Educational research finds that novice teachers repeatedly cite their first years in the classroom as unsupportive and lonely, with feelings of isolation and of being overwhelmed contributing to the high percentage leaving the profession (Scherff, 2008). Based on such findings, one cannot help but imagine how much greater these feelings are for those teachers in specialized fields such as art. In fact, the research literature on arts education (e.g. visual art, music, dance, drama) portrays a profession with a history of burnout, job dissatisfaction, and teacher attrition (Cohen-Evron, 2002; Gordon, 2002; Heston, Dedrick, Rasckle, & Whitehead, 1996; Kreuger, 2000; Scheib, 2002) and points to the arts and music teachers as possibly being greatest at risk for leaving their current teaching positions.

Voluntary teacher attrition is a significant problem. Nevertheless, few researchers have focused on the issue within the field of art. While studies on teacher retention have consistently found a high rate of attrition among first and second year teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1999, 2007; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Johnson et al., 2005; Quality Counts, 2000; Smethem, 2007; Weiss, 1999), the majority of the research on teacher attrition focuses on the first five years of teaching. The studies within the field of art education (Cohen-Evron, 2002; Gordon, 2002; Heston et al., 1996; Kreuger, 2000, Scheib, 2006) describe the difficulties and conflicts found for arts teachers within the public school system that contribute to voluntary attrition and suggest that further research is needed to
explore significant issues experienced by beginning arts teachers. With few studies in art education focusing on theories for voluntary attrition and none primarily on first or second year teachers within the United States, I believe a need exists for research focusing on the similarities and differences between the imagined and lived experiences of beginning art teachers during their first and second years as classroom art teachers. By providing teachers with the opportunity to reflect on their imagined and lived experiences, I am attempting to gain a better understanding of how imagined experiences shape what we as educators “think” we need to know and how a lived experience may or may not align with those experiences previously held by the educator. This process will provide an understanding of how experiences shape and form the knowledge base from which each educator makes informed decisions.

There exists not only a need for research on this topic but, additionally, for research that depicts these experiences of beginning year art teachers from a narrative or personal point of view. A premise of narrative inquiry is that “individuals construct past events and actions in personal narratives to claim identities and construct lives” (Riessman, 1993, p.3). Under the same working conditions, individual teachers react in different ways and make different decisions. Without considering individual teachers’ values and meanings, we cannot fully understand the human variation in the teaching career. The absence of teachers’ voices from the literature on teaching (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1990) makes it fundamental to contribute research to our understanding of teaching from the perspective of the teachers. Although Lytle and Cochran-Smith made this observation over twenty years ago, it is interesting that this problem is still a concern within current education research that has not been adequately addressed.
The purpose of my research is to explore three, certified second year Georgia elementary school art educators’ imagined and lived experiences as classroom art teachers. The reason for selecting three participants for this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of my research participants’ experiences, which is indicative of a narrative inquiry study such as this (Creswell, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The analysis will take place through the use of narrative inquiry. By asking art educators about their experiences, researchers can better understand how to design induction programs that meet their needs as well as address educational policy to remedy the old and new problems negatively affecting teachers of the arts. In an effort to articulate the experiences of beginning art teachers the following questions will be addressed.

**Research Questions**

Specifically, this study investigates:

1. What are the imagined and lived experiences of beginning art teachers?
   
a. What were the most striking similarities between beginning art teachers’ imagined experience and beginning art teachers’ actual experience?
   
b. What were the most striking differences between beginning art teachers’ imagined experience and beginning art teachers’ actual experience?

2. What support mechanisms were described to aid the new teachers who participated in this study?
Key Terms and Constructs

Traditionally key terms are presented alphabetically within this section of a dissertation. However, key terms described throughout this section are organized in a manner that is conceptually linked. The reason for this adaptation is to inform the reader of key concepts in a way that builds knowledge and understanding in a more cohesive way in regards to this research study.

Attrition. For several decades, teacher attrition has been a pressing issue present in educational literature. The term teacher attrition does not lend itself to one precise, empirical definition. Therefore, it is important for a researcher to select a definition guided by the policy or research context in which the particular definition will be used. In this study, teacher attrition is described as both the premature and voluntary departure of teachers (Smithers, 1990). The data patterns reveal that voluntary attrition is the highest among beginning teachers. For that reason, I am interested in the significant issues that might result in the premature and voluntary departure of beginning art teachers.

Beginning teachers. It is important to explain that throughout this study, the term beginning teachers is referred to as those certified art teachers who have completed their first year of teaching and are in their second year of fulltime employment.

Imagination. As an interpretative study based in the discipline of art education, it is essential to not limit the interpretative process to only those experiences lived but to include those experiences that encourage visual thinking or the use of imagination so as to fully express each beginning art educator’s understanding of their first years. Imagination is a crucial term to this study since it is essential to the investigation of imagined experiences of beginning art teachers. While numerous researchers (Egan &
Nadaner; 1988; Freud, 1938; Greene, 1978,1995); McKeller, 1957; Rugg, 1963; Warnock, 1976) have sought to produce a clear description of imagination, it is the internal nature of the experience of imagination which makes it difficult to observe and even harder to describe. Efland (2004) defines imagination as:

…the act or power of forming mental images of what is not actually present to the senses, or what has not actually been experienced. It is also the power of creating new ideas or images through the combination and reorganization of images from previous experiences (p. 771).

In this sense, imagination is the attempt to bridge the relation between the world as an individual believes it or lives it and the world the individual desires or imagines. While memory does come into play when describing imagination, it is important to distinguish the difference between memory, which provides one with the ability to recall past experiences and imagination, where new ideas are produced. An individual’s use of imagination is at the core of any truly educational experience. Imagination provides people with the capacity to disengage from reality so as to think about events and experiences that have not actually occurred and might never occur (Egan & Nadaner, 1988). In this study, all participants will have imagined experiences that influence an experience that has already begun since they are all currently working in the teaching profession. When discussing imagination, I am referring to the individual knowledge acquired prior to experience coming to fruition. In this context, imagination functions to create empathy (Greene, 1995) so as to provide an individual with ability to develop understanding of experiences one may or may not experience personally and also acts as a way to imagine possibilities of what might be (Greene, 1995).
**Imagined experience.** The imaginative process enables individuals to make sense of the world around them and provides coherence or rational stability for the individual, since every experience is in a different context. In a new environment, whether one has been through a similar experience or not, an individual’s imagination fills in likely circumstances. New art educators enter the classroom full of imagined experiences of what they anticipate and expect their careers as teachers will be. What an individual experiences either lives up to or deviates from what she imagined. Greene (1995) offers an explanation of the term imagined experience as a person’s ability to “become freed to glimpse what might be, to form notions of what should be and what is not yet” (p.19). Building on Greene’s (1995) definition, I will be using the term imagined experience to refer to the beginning art educators’ expectations held towards the career of teaching art.

**Lived experience.** Although my research is coming from a narrative inquiry stance, phenomenologist van Manen (1990) provides a working definition for lived experience in which he describes “our immediate, pre-reflective consciousness of life: a reflexive or self-given awareness which is, as awareness, unaware of itself” (p. 35). In this way, van Manen provides a framework to understand the term lived experience that will be used throughout this study. Lived experience resides in a recollected nature where an experience is already passed or lived through. The meaning of a lived experience cannot be grasped in its present state, but, by reflecting on a lived experience, the depth of the experience can be understood. Specifically, when using the term lived experience, I am referring to the concept of the participant’s experiences lived during their first or second year as an elementary art educator. For the outcome of this study, it
is necessary for the beginning art teachers to reflect upon their current lived experiences. By doing so, the imagined experience comes into play during this form of reflective thinking and allows an individual to create structure between the imagined, present, and future role of the event. This form of reflective appropriation of the experience connects a lived experience to the whole life of the individual.

**Narrative.** Connelly and Clandinin’s (1988) definition of narrative refers to the making of meaning through personal experience, an interpretative reconstruction, by the way of the process of reflection based on the story of the teacher’s personal experience. Polanyi (1985) further describes the term narrative to signify a discourse where a precise timeline is established through the telling of moments at which events take place and privilege the reordering of past events (flashbacks, flashforwards) as well as the future, wished-for unrealized occurrences, reports, and stories (Cortazzi, 1993). Since the purpose of this study is to provide stories of beginning teachers’ experiences, both imagined and lived, it is necessary that both definitions be used to direct this study.

**Mentoring.** Whereas mentorship and induction are a similar topic, the terms cannot be used interchangeably. Therefore, it is necessary to provide readers with a definition of mentoring in addition to induction. During this study, mentoring is referring to when an individual (who is a more experienced teacher and typically has worked several years in a specific school setting) serves the basic function of helping a new teacher by addressing the common challenges associated with being a new teacher, for instance, managing a classroom and getting to know district policy and procedures. It is important to note that mentors are only one part of the induction process.
**Induction.** Induction is another concept relevant to this study. Within the field of education, induction can be described as “a comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process that is organized by a school district to train, support, and retain new teachers, which then seamlessly progresses them into a lifelong learning program” (Wong, 2005, p. 43). In this study, the term induction will refer to programs aligned with a district’s vision, mission, and structure that are put in place to assist the beginning teachers with daily workplace preparation.

**Educational Relevance**

Obtaining the firsthand accounts of art teachers will provide the researcher with the ability to identify conditions directly affecting the beginning years of teaching for art educators. As such, this study will garner implications as to what can be done to support and improve a beginning art teacher’s experiences. The findings from this study will inform teacher educators, school administrators, and beginning art educators by demonstrating to them significant ways of understanding beginning art educators’ first years in the classroom. The documentation of beginning art educators’ experiences will contribute to other research in art and general education that has sought to examine the conditions resulting in the voluntary attrition of beginning teachers. In particular, this research will be beneficial in designing and implementing induction programs targeted to better meet the needs of in-service beginning art educators.
CHAPTER 2
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of my investigation was to research the real life experiences of
beginning art teachers in Georgia public elementary schools. Within the vast literature
and methodological options, the tenets of narrative theory provided the most useful
framework through which to conduct my research. Since narrative theory follows
Dewey’s (1938) position concerning the importance of experience and its power in
education, the tools of narrative theorists, including Dewey, provided me with direction
as I interpreted the experiences of beginning art teachers.

Dewey’s Impact on Narrative Theory

Although narrative is relatively new in the realm of theoretical and philosophical
positions, it can be traced back to Greek philosophers through Dewey (1938). Since
Dewey greatly impacted the development of ideas concerning experience, he is
considered the starting point for the development of narrative theory. It is important to
point out, however, that it took many years after Dewey’s contributions before narrative
was considered a creditable method of research. However, theorists across a broad
spectrum of disciplines have offered their ideas and support for accessing the practical
understanding entrenched in the experiences of research participants based on Dewey’s
ideas of narrative inquiry.

Greene (1978), an existentialist philosopher in support of narrative theory, paved
the way for other narrative researchers. She encouraged building relationships with
others and focused on fostering students’ imaginations in order to develop understanding and appreciation for all humanity, which aids in developing one’s story. According to Greene (1995), “Story can help students to realize their deep connection to and responsibility for not only their own individual expression, but also for other human beings who share their world” (p. 28). This principle is a major component of narrative theory. By sharing other teachers’ experiences, we can become connoisseurs of our own practice.

Noddings (1992) stressed the importance of connections between humans, especially teachers and students. Her work emphasized that, as connections are made with others, one can come to know oneself better. This improved understanding allows each story to become more relevant and assists in the transference of meaning to countless other human beings. Likewise, many scholars within curriculum studies such as Schön (1992) and van Manen (1990) have helped lead the way in emphasizing the importance of teachers’ voices and experiences as a means of revolutionizing education. Polkinghorne (1988) is another leader in narrative inquiry who has contributed a wealth of resources and guidance to the field. His work encourages researchers to explore the social and cultural environment in order to understand the importance of stories of experience and life in general.

From the field of education, Connelly and Clandinin (1988) are considered the leading researchers in the field of narrative inquiry. They stressed the significance of story for generating valuable educational knowledge. Building upon the beliefs of Dewey, Connelly and Clandinin (2006) viewed stories as influential to one’s daily life. They felt that, “stories offered a portal through which a person entered the world and by
which their experience of the world was interpreted and made personally meaningful” (p.375). From their articles, books, and lectures on narrative inquiry, beginning and expert researchers can draw the tools needed to hone their investigations. In addition, Eisner (1998), from the field of art education, stressed the necessity of exploring “qualities—not only those we can see, but those we experience through any of our senses,” since it is through both the content of the world and the content of our imagination that we can find meaning within our “intimate social relations and those that constitute complex social institutions, such as schools” (p. 1). These theorists inspired me to develop an experiential or enlightened eye (Eisner, 1998) for exploring my research in a way that allowed for the participants’ experiences to lay bare the context of their lives as teachers.

Dewey (1938) laid the groundwork for narrative inquiry to find its way into educational research through his conception of the importance of experience in education. In turn, his theories are fundamental to the course of my research. This view of experience is rooted in Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience where he conceived of experience as one’s conception of the world derived from a continuous stream of human thought interacting with a person’s personal, social, and material environment. Because experience is only achieved through interaction between the self and the world, I find it is necessary in researching teachers to address the transactional state of the lived or physical state and the imagined or mental state.

**Dewey’s Theory of Experience**

Dewey (1938) described experience as arising from the interaction of two principles—*continuity and interaction*. *Continuity*, or the experiential continuum, is the
idea that each experience a person has will influence his or her future, for better or for worse, whereas interaction refers to the situational influence on one’s experience. In other words, one’s present experience is a function of the interaction between one’s past experiences and the present situation. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) found that: experiences grow out of other experiences, and experiences lead to further experiences. Wherever one positions oneself in that continuum—the imagined now, some imagined past, or some imagined future—each point has a past experiential base and leads to an experiential future. (p. 2)

Since an experience is understood in its present state based on the influence of the value found from an individual’s past experience, it is evident that the individual’s ability to imagine is required for the mind to provide meaning and value to experience.

I believe that individuals approach and experience their present situations based on what they imagined the situation to entail. Individuals’ prior knowledge, beliefs, and experiences serve as a filter through which they make sense of their lives. As human beings, we are caught up in our biological/cultural customs and our interaction through our environment. Teachers’ careers and lives are generated through their interactions within a school setting. These interactions are experienced in a deeply personal manner. Even though life is known to be full of opposition, strife, and conflict, which can make a person want to withdraw, one must transition and expand in order for life to continue. This necessity has implications for the need to focus on the aspects of a new art teacher’s career that are hostile and conflicting in order to know how to better prepare and understand these conflicting conditions. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) contended that “by explaining past human experience, undertaken through time, one can trace the
consequences of these choices in the whole of an individual’s lived experience” (p. 40). Within an interpretive framework, individual narratives are the most appropriate form of representation based on their descriptions of human experience as unfolding through time.

Imagination is a fundamental tool through which people make sense of the world, and it serves as a key process for learning. The imagined, whether acknowledged or not, is always present in one’s lived state. As such, it is valuable to deliberately approach research on human experiences through the imagined in order to gain access to the fullness of present experience. It is imperative to bear in mind that no experience has a preordained value. For example, when regarding the experiences of new art teachers in the classroom, what may be a rewarding experience for one new art teacher could be a harmful experience for another. Therefore, approaching teachers’ experiences from a personal, introspective viewpoint enabled me to present the value of the experience as judged by the effect that experience has on teachers’ present and future.

**Dewey’s Influence on Greene’s Theory of Social Imagination**

At the core of Greene’s theory of social imagination is the belief that if consciousness is divided into the sphere of private as opposed to joined with the social, then the self can never truly be actualized no matter how extraordinary those experiences may be, and surely not ideal of the teacher’s self (Greene, 1986). In this sense, our lives would strike us as mainly meaningless if we fail to maintain the connectedness that is required. Therefore, in order to grasp beyond the present, one must reflect on her imagination to experience what might or might not be. This connectedness links each person to a web of awareness of the unpredictable, the possible through which those lived
situations throughout our lives. This connectedness also makes examining the lives of teachers, as students, beginning teachers, and educators of the future something to pursue and valuable in its importance on the imaginative voice of beginning art teachers and the actualities of their practice.

It is argued our lack of imagination is a problem in the current educational realm (Dewey, 1934/1938; Greene, 2005). For Dewey and Greene, the experience of the present cannot be separated from the past or the future, since each informs the other. For my research, the combination of merging: (1) Dewey’s (1939/1960) theory of experience, (2) Eisner’s (2002) concept of making new things and new ideas as artists, and (3) Greene’s (1986/2000) theory of social imagination that imagination and learning can become actualized when evaluating the imagined and lived experiences of beginning art educators.

Dewey’s (1934/1938) conception of imagination is defined as a gateway through which meaning is derived from prior experiences, which find their way into the present and make past experiences more conscious. Without imagination, without consciousness, he explains, “there is only reoccurrence, complete uniformity, the resulting always routine and mechanical…” (Dewey, 1934, p. 272). This study aims to further inform the field of art education by moving past the recurrence of old topics and by opening up the conscious experience in order to reveal the uncertain and yet to be.

Crippled by our fear of speculative ideas, the result is the inability to link imagination to possibility, a requirement for opening a dialogue which enables us to understand the fullness of our experiences. If we are to extend the grasp of consciousness, we must bridge the gap between Dewey’s theory of experience and
Greene’s theory of social imagination. There are no single views of the possible as described by Greene (2005) or ways of measuring what it signifies in anyone’s imagination. “Imagination summons up visions of a better state of things, an illumination of the deficiencies in existing situations, a connection to the education of feeling, and a part of intelligence” (Warnock, 1976, p. 202). By opening spaces for dialogue, we experience a transition from passive understanding of what others are feeling and become moved into a shared present where individuals feel they are living a mutually lived present. It is through open communication that we are able to link our imagination and/or experiences and formulate a level of consciousness to examine lives as they reach a deeper level of understanding. To ponder the future, one must explore such moments derived from instances that are energized by the hopes, memories, and expectations informing the discovery of an expanding conversation where more meanings emerge (Greene, 2000).

To experience another’s inner thoughts, beliefs, and feelings through empathy is to come in touch with a reality deeper than the mundane routine of daily life. In doing so, we come in contact with the underlying depths fueling the ongoing becoming of self. The beginning educator must be aware, critical, and, in a sense, open to the world. In these modern times, it is both an honor and responsibility to be a teacher and to imagine what could be. Even more so, to act on what we imagine and what we believe ought at least to be is the test of the future that is happening in the present (Greene, 2005). Greene (2005) contends that “the new educator can be an initiator of new beginnings; and to act at a beginning is to move towards possibilities, to live and teach in a world of incompleteness of what we all are but are not yet” (p. 80). This form of reflective
research will create a praxis encouraging others, be they politicians, school administrators, teacher educators, veteran teachers or beginning teachers, to enter and contribute to the discussion, thereby transforming the commonplace.

**Literature Review**

The vast literature on teacher attrition and burnout has explored almost every aspect relating to these issues, from low pay to bureaucracy to public perception to isolation. It is obvious there is an attrition problem for public school teachers in the United States. While reasons and solutions have been proposed to answer this growing problem, the root of the problem still exists. The obstacles that cause teacher attrition and burnout remain. Solutions originating in improved academic projects, more and better curricula and textbooks, induction and mentorship programs, and even higher salaries have all failed to address the needs specific to individual districts, schools, and teachers. If solutions are to be found, they may arise from the personal experiences of teachers who carry the load for the nation of educating and nurturing the next generation. The information found in numbers concerning teacher attrition, burnout, and teacher retention do not reveal the whole picture of what happens or does not happen to each individual who enters the classroom, burns out and leaves the profession in search of something better. There are those teachers who maintain their conviction for teaching in spite of the passion-quenching conditions they face (Ellett, 2011). These findings prompt the question, what aspects of a new teacher’s life impact her decision to remain or voluntarily leave her career as an art educator? The answers to this question require a close look at those lived experiences that negatively impacted a new art educator’s career expectations. How one’s imagined experiences hold up to the lived ones will reveal
hidden components that provide experts a close look at the missing pieces within the literature on teacher attrition.

**Attrition**

Given the large body of literature on teacher attrition, there are identified factors placing greater constraints and pressures that influence teachers’ decisions to leave the profession. Many researchers have noted the primary factors for teacher attrition to be lack of professional support, poor working conditions, poor school leadership, and low salaries (NCTAF, 2003). Today in many school settings, beginning teachers find themselves working alone in self-contained classrooms where they are bound to the teaching practices of the past as opposed to working in conditions matching the college education that students received. Novice teachers repeatedly cite their first years in the classroom as unsupportive and lonely, with feelings of isolation and being overwhelmed contributing to the high percentage leaving the profession (Krueger, 2000; Scherff, 2008).

In support of this claim, in 2004 the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) released evidence from data collected during the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 school years that indicates arts and music teachers possibly being greatest at risk for leaving their current teaching positions (Luekens, Lyter, Fox, & Chandler, 2004). The data was comprised of surveys classifying teachers (56, 860 public school teachers, 10,760 private school teachers, and 4,438 public charter school teachers were selected) using the key terms, leavers, movers, or stayers. Under the parameters of this study: leavers referred to those individuals who do not continue in education at all; movers referred to those individuals who move to another school setting; and stayers referred to those individuals who continue to work at the same school setting for continuous years.
With 11.5 percent of music and arts teachers reporting leaving one position for another, the NCES found this group (movers) to be highest of all assignment areas of teachers moving from one teaching position to another. The majority (69.8 percent) reported leaving for the opportunity for a better teaching assignment. Special education was the nearest assignment field at 10.2 percent. Additionally, music and arts teachers were in a close fourth place (8.1 percent) behind math, social studies, and special education teachers for teachers who left the profession altogether. A more favorable occupation or other career opportunities was the highest reported percentage of response from music and arts teachers leaving the profession. These statistics illustrate the impact of teacher attrition on arts education. It would be beneficial to revisit this study by isolating the survey based on new teachers (10,763 new teachers out of 72,058 total). With the problem of attrition confirmed in regard to the field of arts education, it is necessary to focus research on new art teachers and the reasons they may or may not be leaving the field in order to gain a better understanding of the factors that cause attrition in the field of art education.

In 2009, the NCES conducted a follow-up survey reporting 7.5 percent of music and arts teachers report leaving one position for another, a decrease from the 2004 study (Keigher & Cross, 2010). Additionally, music and arts teachers represented the lowest percentage of teachers leaving the profession. While the findings appear to portray a better outlook for the attrition of arts teachers as a whole, it must be duly noted that people who have jobs, especially those in specialized fields, are inclined to retain those due to the current economic climate. This issue proposes topics that are divergent to the focus of this study. Furthermore, the 2009 study fails to provide the same detailed
information as found in the 2004 study (e.g. reasons reported by teachers when leaving job assignments). For the purposes of my study, the 2004 data is more beneficial to the context of my study.

When looking at the literature on new teacher attrition, the following studies present an indication of the issues specific to arts education. In Israel, Cohen-Evron (2002) developed an extended study that included a group of 28 former student-teachers focusing on how art teachers, with four or more years of experience, negotiated their own teaching identity and beliefs within the public school setting. Through questionnaires, formal and informal interviews, school visits, class observations, and personal communication, the study revealed how good art teachers (described as holding high expectations and powerful agendas of their roles as art educators) in many cases experience more powerful conflict when compared with those teachers who hold a lower standard for ideals within arts education. In particular, the factors of isolation, having to negotiate the status of art, and role conflicts with the educational system were identified as the major challenges art teachers face. The findings suggest that the conditions for retaining good art teachers seem to be the same as for other educational disciplines. Therefore, changing the teaching profession to become a more collaborative enterprise will provide conditions that can positively influence teachers of any subject.

Along the same line, Scheib’s (2002) case study narrowed in on the role of stress in attrition by examining the typically marginalized lives of arts teachers. A direct connection was shown between stress associated with too many responsibilities and stress caused from responsibilities that were “unwanted or tedious” (p.135). The documented stress resulted in role conflict (two or more incompatible roles which may include
personal and/or professional/administrative responsibilities causing role overload) for every participant. Schieb (2006) followed up this earlier study with an article focused on policy implications for art teacher retention. As reported in Schieb’s (2002) study, the importance of his findings are the recognition of how role conflict and stress appear to be at the heart of job dissatisfaction issues and occupational stress for arts teachers. Schieb (2006) contends that when dealing with incompatible role expectations, there may be two types of solutions: change the role (identity, expectations) or change the reality (context). Since little professional development exists that focuses on the needs of practicing arts teachers, further exploration of these issues could provide a means of meeting the needs of beginning arts teachers with the tools necessary for a successful long-term career.

The studies by Luekens et al., (2004), Cohen-Evron (2002), and Schieb (2002/2006) document how the issue of attrition is adversely affecting the field of art education; however, the participant’s voice is not privileged in these studies in the manner in which I sought to enable through the use of narrative inquiry. Narratives are rooted in personality, experience, context, and access. They require a participant’s journey into the deepest recesses of self-awareness. It is a premise of narrative research that the researcher invites readers to go beyond the text. The following studies provided glimpses into the obscured real world of the classroom through the illuminated direct quotations from teachers.

In approaching the experience of teaching art, Anderson (2000) obtained a reflexive and individualistic account of the process of teaching art. The resulting analysis was a single day snapshot of six art teachers based primarily on interviews, with the addition of field observations. In an effort to get as clear a picture as possible, Anderson
allowed the text to consist primarily of the participants’ own words. Care was taken in educating readers on his efforts to remain objective, unobtrusive, and aware of how his voice and presentation impacted the interactions with participants and the data. The result was a realistic image of what life as an art teacher is like. Similarly, Stout (2002) provided an extensive arts-based narrative account of 30 art teachers in an attempt to offer a collective story of what it means to be an art teacher after more than a quarter of a century in the art classroom. Stout utilized sections of narrative text to present the most insightful material in an authentic manner, true to the participants’ experiences.

Anderson and Stout offer excellent exemplar texts, but these texts are a decade old, and more current educational issues, such as educational policy issues such as RTI (Response to Intervention) are not addressed. Ellett (2011) provided a current national study on nine K-12 art educators that used both narrative and phenomenology methodologies to gain understanding of why exceptional teachers, with more than 20 years of experience, choose to stay in the art room. The significance of this study was the knowledge acquired about the kinds of professional and personal experiences that motivated good teachers to stay in the classroom. Relevant to both art education and general education, Ellett’s study indicated the problems and challenges all teachers face daily through the use of art teachers’ narratives. It is evident that the use of individualistic accounts can provide a better understanding of the experiences of arts teachers and offer researchers insight into the factors, which may result in the attrition of arts educators and a greater understanding of how to support all teachers in meaningful ways.

The complicated interplay of factors that influence attrition rates and the many challenges of being new to teaching make new teachers far more likely to leave their jobs
than their more experienced counterparts (Johnson et al., 2004). Based on these findings, it is no surprise that policymakers have recognized the importance of assisting novice teachers. Arts advocates are asserting the need for arts teacher inclusion in district or local school professional development programs as well as the assurance that the programs provide arts teachers with meaningful experiences that reflect the needs of arts teachers in both design and content. A widely embraced solution to this problem is the creation of teacher induction programming.

**Induction Education Programs**

In the 1990s, 40% of new United States teachers reported participation in formal induction programs, but by 1999-2000 participation rates had doubled to 80% (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). The recommendations of the 2003 *No Dream Denied* report (NCTAF), have led school systems in the United States to design and employ a variety of methods to retain their teachers. Induction programs have become a valued approach to retain and support new teachers. Most induction programs are a combination of a mentor or supportive, experienced teacher, professional staff development, and opportunities to collaborate with and observe other teachers, as well as occasions to be observed and receive feedback. While a common increase in induction measures have been taken, there remains a great variety within and across states as to the instrumentation and goals of induction. This variety is largely due to the anticipated tension, well-established in the policy implementation literature, between centralized authority and location discretion due to the broad gap existing between the centralized policy maker and implementer as well as the inability of centralized policy makers to potentially anticipate all the possible
necessary local variations needed to achieve local goals (Clune, 1993; Elmore, 1979/1980).

Focused on addressing the formation and implementation of new teacher induction policy, Bartlett and Johnson (2010) examined the new teacher induction programs in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Ohio, whose programs span from no induction to a fully-funded and mandated induction program. Data reveals that movement across the continuum is possible to all states with a degree of specificity. To accomplish this goal, adequate funding in state policy is necessary so that local districts can make informed decisions regarding induction programs. Bartlett and Johnson (2010) identified the following categories that policy induction mandates must address in the future for induction programs to maintain both quality and quantity: (1) the operationalization of induction programs, (2) the definitions of induction components, (3) curriculum and instructional approaches to meet learning needs of new teachers, (4) the variety, length, focus, and even enactment of induction programs, and (5) attention to the preparation of new teachers for cultural and linguistic diversity as well as those with special needs. Seeing as the new teacher turnover rates decrease, which reduces the cost of hiring and supporting new teachers, when effective induction programs are mounted in districts (Bartlett & Johnson, 2010), it is important to look at the data on induction from the perspectives of the beginning teachers.

More closely related to my research is Fry’s (2007) study, which looked at the highs and lows of induction from the point of view of four first year teachers through the use of case studies. Fry found that new teachers had varied and inadequate forms of support during their first year. Each beginning teacher had different needs, and,
therefore, induction programs needed to be individualized instead of generalized, such as is often the case in the typical professional development program. For example, one participant was strong in classroom management and would have benefited more from a class on teaching guided reading groups as opposed to the mandated class on classroom management. Overall, the four participants’ perceptions of their induction programs were that they were ineffective. More recently, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) reviewed research on beginning teacher induction and mentoring programs, consisting of the critical examining of 15 empirical studies conducted since the 1980s, and concluded that support and assistance for beginning teachers has a positive impact on teacher retention and commitment, teacher classroom instructional practices, and student achievement.

Algozzine et al. (2007) purposely focused on 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 included data from approximately 52,000 elementary and secondary teachers. Algozzine et al. (2007) found that a connection between matching beginning teachers with mentors from the same subject area, such as arts teachers with arts teachers and providing common planning times, were likely to produce positive outcomes related to the retention of beginning teachers. Additionally, Smith and Ingersoll (2004) supported these findings when they examined whether induction programs had positive effects on teacher retention. One common thread uniting these studies took into account the impact of time spent with mentors from the same subject area, which is a valuable component of the induction program.
Mentoring

Podsen and Denmark (2000), Farber (2010), and Gilbert (2005) viewed support through mentoring as critical to new teachers’ professional growth by explaining that new teachers placed great value on the support they received in the form of mentors. Gilbert (2005) worked with six Georgia school districts in 2003 and 2004 that partnered in the Georgia Systemic Teacher Education Program (GSTEP) and engaged in various teacher induction activities, including a survey conducted with new teachers. In 2006, Andrews, Gilbert, and Martin used the same survey but expanded it by administering the survey in two areas of the state. This time the survey was given to administrators to compare what support administrators thought new teachers received. 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. These results are as follows:

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 survey was then administered in 2004, to 222 teachers responding and listing the same five strategies, but in a slightly different order (Gilbert, 2005). Andrews et al. (2006) used the same survey, and the results indicated that administrators thought more support was being offered, but only 50% of new teachers were receiving the four highly
valued supports. Andrews et al. (2006) summarized that the strategies new teachers valued most related to opportunities to collaborate with other teachers.

Induction programs, such as the GSTEP program, are designed to provide beginning teachers with support, such as an experienced teacher who will mentor the beginning teacher during the critical first year of teaching. While the principal sets the tone and expectations for a building, it is the staff that maintains it. Within an appropriate and successful mentor relationship, these small gestures of support can make a difference in the daily life of a new teacher. Gilbert (2005) found that during their first years, new teachers reported how the school culture “assumes the amount of information you know even though you have never taught before” (p. 37). Having another teacher on whom a new teacher can rely can mean living out of isolation and feeling more a part of a family of educators who stand united with them to sustain the challenges they face.

Implications of Induction and Mentoring Programs for Art Education

Like most teachers surveyed during the GSTEP initial and follow up evaluations of 2003 and 2004, I would not have listed mentoring as the most valued support strategy I needed during my first year of teaching when I was already pressed for time to get everything accomplished. While I would have ranked mentoring in the top three, meeting with a mentor, particularly a mentor that teaches a different discipline, would have seemed like one more strain on my already taxed schedule. Technically, meeting with a mentor in my situation would have additionally required me to stay after school or meet during lunch in order for it to be useful at my school setting, since my teaching schedule provided no break in the day except for lunch. Therefore, induction programs must be created in a manner that fits the day-to-day life of a teacher in a beneficial and
productive way. The GSTEP evaluations revealed that while most teachers thought mentoring sounded like a good idea, it was not always useful in practice, given the stories of successful and unsuccessful mentor matchups (Gilbert, 2005). Arts teachers are often in a specialized position of being the sole teacher of their discipline in their workplace. This situation complicates the typical induction format found in United States schools and leaves many art teachers without any mentor or only an inadequate mentor to rely on. Through a survey of 211 beginning and experienced music teachers in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, Delorenzo (1992) examined the perceived problems of beginning music teachers and the usefulness of the professional assistance offered during the first year of teaching. She referenced isolation from other music teachers and from resource people as a frequent problem for many beginning music teachers and stated that the most effective assistance was reported to have come from mentor teachers. As with any discipline, new art teachers need to talk about their work; however, they often lack access to resource people in art with whom to discuss their practice on a daily basis.

In the GSTEP planning process, representative curriculum teams from teacher education, arts and sciences, and preK-12 schools worked together in every aspect to effect meaningful programmatic changes. Core to the GSTEP initiative was the redefinition of teacher preparation to include the beginning of the student’s college experience, and extending through the first several years of teaching. Among the focus of such efforts is the long-term retention of teachers. One measure extended to beginning teachers was a mentoring program. Henry and Lazzari (2007) described the supported inclusion of the arts within the broader structure of the GSTEP initiative as a move towards sustainable and institutionalized change.
My research was beneficial in that it provided a teacher perspective of the initiatives GSTEP sought to provide. The concept of mentorship was one topic that I foresaw being described by research participants who participated in this study as being useful. My research provided the perspective of the classroom elementary art teacher and informs future initiatives to support teacher retention in arts education.

Sabol and Art Education Professional Development

In the current educational setting influenced by the No Child Left Behind Act (a predominant educational initiative enacted in 2001), several art researchers (Chapman, 2005/2007; Sabol, 2006/2010; Spohn, 2008) have dedicated their research to understanding the effect of NCLB on art education. Sabol (2010) documented the effects NCLB has had on professional development and curriculum for non-academic educators. His research indicates that some art education programs have experienced significant barriers in areas such as scheduling, increased workloads, and reduction in funding. Art teachers credit these factors to the restructuring of educational priorities brought about by NCLB. Sabol reported that teachers working with increased workloads, growing enrollments, as well as staff reductions, must be provided with professional development that will expand their knowledge and skills for providing a quality education in the visual arts.

Numerous problems have been documented as limiting the usefulness, quality, and availability of the professional development activities to teachers of the arts. In particular, general practitioners have had little say in the planning process (Borko, 2004), and most activities offered are largely geared towards traditional academic subject teachers, ignoring the different and sometimes unique needs of arts educators (Conway,
Hibbard, Albert, & Hourigan, 2005). As a result, most schools have difficulty providing the content-based professional development arts educators require. Hourigan (2011) found that much of the recent professional development opportunities as part of the Race to the Top or commonly referred to as RTTT (a 2009 public education grant initiative that attempts to retain the aspects of NCLB considered acceptable in reform efforts) focused on improving test scores to meet AYP (Annual Yearly Progress Goals measured by standardized test scores and established under the NCLB Act).

Nevertheless, art teachers continue to demonstrate professional responsibility in providing students with quality visual arts education regardless of the constraints they face. While one hopes that art teachers will continue to maintain such zeal regardless of the challenges presented to them, it is imperative that art programs, as programs in all disciplines, be provided with needed resources to support learning and teaching. Inadequate resources, such as mentorship, professional development, and sufficient funding, brought about through NCLB as well as the current RTTT initiatives, place art programs in a marginalized or lower tier of importance (Sabol, 2010). The diminished status of art education ultimately contributes to denying students an education in the visual arts they deserve and expect. It is feared that this may create environments where art teachers find themselves continually having to justify their place in the system (Hourigan, 2011). This need for justification may result in beginning art teachers becoming quickly disenchanted due to the pressures upon them and the lack of support from which to pull in such times as these.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Theoretical Perspective

Relying on inherent demographic characteristics themselves as well as external school contexts is inadequate in explaining how art teachers perceive their experience as beginning art teachers. Therefore, in order to find a methodology best suited for a research study focused on the expectations and experiences of beginning art teachers and dedicated to the individual voice, this study was conducted through the use of narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry researchers usually find direction in their participants’ stories and, as a result, provide a multifaceted view of what has already been articulated (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008). Through this methodology, art teachers’ accounts provide insight into the mental and physical conditions beginning art teachers are experiencing. Under the same working conditions, individual teachers react in different ways and make different decisions. It is argued that in order to improve educational systems, curriculum reforms, and classroom practice, more knowledge must be obtained about teachers’ actual experiences and perspectives (Cortazzi, 1993). The use of a narrative inquiry methodology functioned to provide insight into the individual teachers’ perceptions of themselves and the teaching profession.

Guided by the interpretivist framework, the data collection was founded on the conceptual framework of Dewey’s (1934) focus on experience as a means to understand and interpret the experiences of others and articulate these narratives. Therefore,
narrative inquiry was the key component that provided the means by which all data was collected and analyzed. The research methods that were used included: open ended interviews, researcher field observations and educator’s reflective journal entries. These methods were used as a means to better understand the research questions that this study sought to address.

**Research Questions**

Specifically, this study investigated:

1. What are the imagined and lived experiences of beginning art teachers?
   a. What were the most striking similarities between beginning art teachers’ imagined experience and beginning art teachers’ actual experience?
   b. What were the most striking differences between beginning art teachers’ imagined experience and beginning art teachers’ actual experience?

2. What support mechanisms were described to aid the new teachers who participated in this study?

**Narrative Inquiry Research Design**

The research began February of 2012 and concluded in June of that same year. By allowing five months worth of data to be collected, this data should substantiate the claims by these participants and this study in general. This timeframe was significant because it began at the second half of the public education system’s academic school year, therefore, providing the account of teachers who had then been in the system long enough to be able to process and more fully articulate their concerns/realities in the
classroom and their interactions with the expectations they held at the onset of teaching compared to those at the end of the school year. When looking at the individual professional lives of three, second year, Georgia elementary art teachers it was necessary to acknowledge the multiple roles individuals play in their professional and personal lives and how those impact the professional lives of individuals.

**Sampling Procedure/Participants**

After obtaining IRB approval, this research was performed using three voluntary second year certified art educators from Georgia public elementary schools (see Table 3.1 for a general overview of participants). It is my hope that through the incorporation of three different participants’ accounts, I was able to articulate more accurately the concerns and challenges that beginning art teachers face to provide a more holistic understanding of what these individuals experience as beginning teachers.

**Table 3.1**

*General Overview of the Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Major &amp; Degrees</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>School context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Callie</td>
<td>B.F.A. in Art Education Currently working on M.Ed in Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Full time employment: .5/.5 at 2 schools for both years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layla</td>
<td>B.F.A in Art Education Currently working on M.A.Ed in Art Education</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1st year of teaching: part time at two schools 2nd year of teaching: full time at one of the two schools previous taught at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stacy</td>
<td>B.F.A. in Art Education</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Full time at one school for both years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Criterion based convenience sampling was used for this study in which social networking [the use of a Georgia Art Educators Association (GAEA) new teacher list-serv was used as a means to acquire research participants who were certified entry-level
art educators (see Appendix A). Two of the participants responded back after reading the ad pertaining to this study that communicated the purposes of the study located on the GAEA new teacher list-serv. The third participant was recruited through the recommendation of one of the other participants who had already agreed to participate. As a result, the participants were acquired through the snowballing technique of sampling. The overall response from seeking out participants for this study resulted in three candidates qualifying for participation in this study. Although this may seem like a limited response, the candidates that responded were well suited (demonstrated a passion for the field, Georgia second year elementary art educators) for the needs of this study, therefore no additional participants were sought out.

The participants in the study were three, second year art educators from Georgia elementary schools. By using this means of identifying research participants (a voluntary art educators’ association), it was my hope that quality (those dedicated to the profession as demonstrated by their voluntary membership and active participation in professional associations) and serious new professionals would take part in this research study. The quality of these participants was vital to obtaining a holistic understanding of the experiences of motivated and passionate professionals in the field of art education. The use of small samples is typical for qualitative research (Creswell, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) and provided each teacher with the amount of time sufficient to tell their story. The results were more vivid and detailed descriptions in which participants engaged in unfolding the stories they share. Participation in the study was strictly voluntary and participants were able to withdraw at any time during the study.
Data Collection Methods

For this research study, I focused on qualitative methods that offered flexibility in design and the opportunity to listen, honor, and explore teachers’ opinions of their experiences when selecting the data collection methods. Using primarily an interpretivist approach in order to better understand beginning art teachers’ interpretations, meanings, and understandings throughout the research study, I incorporated the following methods for data collection: open-ended interviews, researcher field observations, and educator’s reflective journals. Since researchers using interpretivist approaches may sometimes misrepresent participants’ perspectives, multiple methods were used to explore the topic from different angles. By using multiple data sources to triangulate the data (see Table 3.2 in the Data Collection and Analysis section), I was able to make comparable assumptions as to what understandably represented knowledge or evidence in the study.

Open-ended interviewing. I conducted three, one-hour open-ended interviews with each participant at the beginning, middle, and end of the study using seven week intervals for the time frame of these interviews (framework used is located in Appendix B) and conducted these interviews at the personal homes of the participants and at public locations chosen by the participant. These interviews provided a means to gather information about how the teachers experienced their first or second year of teaching. 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 interview questions provided insight into each participant’s experiences, perspectives, and reactions. As the interviews progressed, the participants became increasingly comfortable sharing their stories, which allows for a more open
rapport between the researcher and participant. The uniqueness of each interview allowed for each participant’s story to stand out as candid narrative glimpses into that participant’s experience. During the interactive process of interviewing, I took the position of the learner and guided the conversation so as to enable the participants to do most of the talking. This position allowed the participants to share their experiences and past memories in order to add knowledge and insight to this study. The participants were considered the experts who, having lived the story, informed me through the interview conversations. Given the narrative methods this study entailed, it was necessary that I establish a close bond with the participants in my study. Doing so hopefully made them feel that their stories were important and that they were truly heard (Creswell, 2008). Conducting the interviews in a less structured format aided me in transcending the boundaries between interviewer and interviewee. As a result, the data I received was more in-depth and authentic to the participants who shared these experiences.

Approaching the interviews from the understanding that the participants and I co-constructed the generation of situated accountings and possible ways of talking about research topics was imperative to this study.

The interviews lasted approximately one hour, and I recorded answers to the interview questions via audio device as well as via note taking. These measures enabled me to transcribe the data without misrepresenting my participants’ responses. However, this is something that could still have occurred so, throughout the initial writing of the transcriptions, follow-up conversations via phone or e-mail took place as needed to provide clarification.
**Researcher field observations.** To gather valuable information about the participants in their everyday work setting, it was necessary that I conduct one, four hour observation of each participant’s art classes. This observation allowed me to fully “describe in detail the setting or context in which the participant experiences the majority of the central phenomenon” or the place where the story primarily occurred (Creswell, 2008, p.522). Approval from the school district of each research participant and the principal at each respective art teachers’ school setting was obtained prior to any field observations being performed (Appendix D). During each field observation, I sat and observed without participation in the classroom dynamic. Observations were recorded through notes taken in a field observation journal at the time of the observation of each participant. Questions for clarification were asked during breaks between classes (never while students were being instructed to prevent classroom distractions). These measures were taken by the researcher in an attempt to gain an authentic picture of the participant’s classroom or daily setting.

**Educators’ reflective journal entries.** Because teacher experiences happen in a continuum, as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain, inward inquiry responses (personally relevant questions) were effectively revealed through journal writing. Therefore, participants documented their teaching through the use of writing prompts, open-ended questions, and situations to reflect on in an effort to access those elusive memories or current experiences (Appendix C). Participants responded to these prompts sent through email on Mondays and the participants had until Friday to respond to the researcher (not all participants adhered to this timeline, but did turn in the response prior to the next entry). Each participant received two prompts per month resulting in eleven
total responses requested throughout the study (Callie completed nine, Stacy and Layla completed all 11).

**Data Analysis: Narrative Thematic Analysis**

The analysis for this study consisted of narrative analysis. Riessman (2008) defined narrative analysis as “a family of methods for interpreting texts that have in common a storied form” (p.11). Narrative analysis is only one form of qualitative analysis used in the broader field of narrative inquiry research. Narrative analysts may use one of four common approaches to narrative analysis including thematic, structural, dialogic/performance, and visual.

For the objectives of this research, I incorporated the narrative thematic analysis approach, one of the most common methods of narrative analysis where content is the primary focus. Using this method, a researcher identifies “common thematic elements across research participants and the events they report” (Riessman, 2008, p.74). Thematic analysis was used within each individual participant’s data collection as well as comparative thematic analysis across all research data including all participants.

Organizing narratives according to a common theme allows the researcher to create a typology of narratives that can be presented to the reader. Additionally, a key distinguishing feature of thematic narrative analysis is focus on keeping the story in intact. For the purposes of this study, I used narrative thematic analysis for two main reasons. First, my research objective was to look for themes or patterns within the narratives where my focus was the content within the text, thus thematic analysis was most appropriate (Riessman, 2008). Second, the systematic and clear approach to
analyzing data made possible through narrative thematic analysis was attractive to me as a novice qualitative researcher.

**Narrative thematic analysis process.** Narrative thematic analysis approach was used in order to accurately address the research questions of this study. During the data analysis process, the participants were described and, common themes across participants were identified. Next, the narratives were organized and presented as themes emerged (Riessman, 1993). Measures were taken to keep the story intact and analyzed as a whole (Riessman, 2008). Throughout the process, I adhered to the methodological guidelines suggested by qualitative researchers (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Wolcott, 1994) for the process of continual analysis in order to avoid an exorbitant amount of data. Analysis took place in four stages: (1) organization and preparation of the data, (2) the coding process, (3) categories or themes established, and (4) interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2008; Patton, 2002).

Table 3.2 demonstrates how data collected was analyzed in relation to the research questions this study sought to address.
### Table 3.2
*Research Questions Aligned with Corresponding Data Collection and Analysis Methods*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Data Collection Methods</th>
<th>Analysis Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the imagined and lived experiences of beginning art teachers?</td>
<td>Participants (second year certified art teachers from Georgia public elementary schools)</td>
<td>Open-ended interviews (Appendix A)</td>
<td>Thematic coding of transcription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher field observation</td>
<td>Thematic coding &amp; categorization of field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Educator reflective journal entries (Appendix B)</td>
<td>Thematic coding &amp; categorization of journal entries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were the most striking similarities between beginning art teachers’ imagined experience and beginning art teachers’ actual experience?</td>
<td>Participants (second year certified art teachers from Georgia public elementary schools)</td>
<td>Open-ended interviews</td>
<td>Thematic coding of transcription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher field observation</td>
<td>Thematic coding &amp; categorization of field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Educator reflective journal entries</td>
<td>Thematic coding &amp; categorization of journal entries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were the most striking differences between beginning art teachers’ imagined experience and beginning art teachers’ actual experience?</td>
<td>Participants (second year certified art teachers from Georgia public elementary schools)</td>
<td>Open-ended interviews</td>
<td>Thematic coding of transcription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher field observation</td>
<td>Thematic coding &amp; categorization of field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Educator reflective journal entries</td>
<td>Thematic coding &amp; categorization of journal entries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What support mechanisms were described to aid the new teachers who participated in this study?</td>
<td>Participants (second year certified art teachers from Georgia public elementary schools), field observation document analysis</td>
<td>Open-ended interviews</td>
<td>Thematic coding of transcription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher field observation</td>
<td>Thematic coding &amp; categorization of field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Educator reflective journal entries</td>
<td>Thematic coding &amp; categorization of journal entries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Organization and Preparation of the Data

The organization and preparation of the data stage began with the transcribing of audiotapes directly after each interview was completed. Reading of the transcriptions allowed me to become more acquainted with the data as well as prepare follow-up
questions for the upcoming interviews. The data for each participant was carefully 
organized using the three interview transcriptions. These documents were then grouped 
according to participant. During this phase, participants were given pseudonyms and any 
participant identifiers (e.g., names, locations) were replaced or removed as well as non-
narrative lines, such as casual conversation.

**Coding Process**

Coding throughout the research study allowed me to identify patterns and themes 
that became apparent in the data collected from each participant. During the transcription 
of the first sessions of interviews, basic codes were generated and noted in the transcript 
margins. This process was repeated following the second and third interviews during 
which additional codes were generated and additionally noted. After the transcriptions 
were completed, I re-read through the transcripts as well as the field observation notes 
and the educator’ reflective journals in order to identify patterns, connections, or themes 
that become emergent. Once the recurring words or ideas were identified, they were used 
as a code (Patton, 2002). Since I coded the data manually, it was necessary that I 
construct a classification system that was manageable and applicable to my study (Patton, 
2002). The method of indexing codes as they were identified aided in classifying data 
into categories and subcategories as these became evident.

Table 3.3 is an example of initial codes, which were later revisited and revised as 
main categories became clear and subcategories emerged as themes.
Table 3.3  
*Coding Index used for Margin Analysis for: Open-ended Interviews, Researcher Field Observations, and Educators’ Reflective Journal Entries.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shorthand Code</th>
<th>Code Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IE</td>
<td>(Imagined experience referenced)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LE</td>
<td>(Lived experience referenced)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RC</td>
<td>(Role conflict/discussion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI</td>
<td>(Personal identity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>(Emotions referenced)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>(Curriculum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>(Respect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>(School culture)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMI</td>
<td>(Support/mentors and/or induction referenced)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Categories or Themes**

Since my preliminary master code list contained a substantial number of codes, I worked to reduce the number by removing any duplicated or overlapping themes. After this process was complete, I placed the codes into logical categories. The categories selected were guided by Creswell’s (2008) recommendation that categories should reflect the themes that become apparent and represent the major findings of the study. The codes were grouped into major categories or themes (unknown prior to data collection).

**Interpretation of the Data**

The final stage in the narrative thematic analysis of my data was the interpretation of the data where, put simply, meaning was made from the data (Creswell, 2008). While this process was separated, it is important to point out that this research actually began during the coding stage of data analysis. By studying the categories and their corresponding codes as described by Riessman (2008), I was able to determine overarching themes or theories that provided knowledge on the expectations and experiences of beginning art teachers.
How Standards for Quality of Qualitative Data were met

**Data management.** This study required me to manage documents such as field notes from participant observations, audio (digitally recorded) files, and transcriptions from interviews. These items as well as a flash drive that contains a back-up copy of all electronic data remained in a locked file cabinet. All other data was stored electronically on my personal password protected computer. I used word processing software, like Word and Excel, for my data management and analysis.

**Dependability.** The dependability of the data was strengthened in several ways:

- As narrative studies have shown, “Narrative researchers are a crucial part of the data they collect; their presence is imprinted upon all that they do” (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2008, p. 17). This imprinting makes it necessary that researchers account for themselves in their work. This factor, as well as others, makes narrative inquiry a varied and complex field of scholarship that requires extensive thought into the design of narrative inquiries.

- Being social constructions, narratives cannot be independent of their contexts since they arise out of, are associated with, and locate narratives within specific cultural and social environments. These added dimensions require narrative researchers to cautiously attend to the choices made during analysis.

- Extensive descriptions of the manner in which the research was performed were used throughout this study.
• A comprehensive literature review corroborating how the research on the topic informed research decisions is provided.

• Methods used for coding data were applied to all data collection responses that were open-ended.

• As themes emerge, different coding indexes were used within the individual data types: open-ended interviews, researcher field observations, educator’ reflective journal entries.

• At all times during the data collection and analysis process, measures were taken by the researcher to account for the evolving context within which the research occurred.

**Credibility or trustworthiness/confirmability.** In regard to validity or trustworthiness in narrative research, there are two levels to attend to according to Riessman (2008), “The story told by a research participant and the validity of the analysis, or the story told by the researcher” (p. 184). The following measures ensured that the credibility and confirmability of the data were adequate:

• Measures such as openly accounting for one’s voice, providing thick description, and using multiple methods served to strengthen research and make findings more accessible.

• Additionally, in relation to assessing narrative research, care was taken to consider whether the participants’ stories of their world are told as they lived it, whether the researcher has permission to share it, and if the participants’ voices are lost within this narrative.
• The triangulation of multiple sources of data collection for each research question were used.

• The participants that were involved in the study were voluntary members of the Georgia Art Educators new teacher list-serve and voluntarily chose to participate in this study.

• The five-month span provided the researcher with a holistic understanding of the topic under study by allowing for close observation of participants over an extended period of time.

• A field observation journal was used to document observations in the classroom for each participant and was used in conjunction with other data collection methods to recall and present an accurate account of the school setting where the participant interacted on a daily basis.

• Since narrative relies heavily on the ability of the teller and the researcher to communicate clearly to each other, the narratives were limited to reconstructions based on my access to teachers’ beliefs. To ensure authenticity and accurately depict the participants’ experiences and perceptions throughout the course of the study, my interpretation of the art teachers’ narrations were shared with them as member checks where the participant looked over the data and identified any inconsistencies.

• Data was collected the same way for all participants in the study (for example the same interview guide was used for each participant’s initial interview, and the same journal prompts were given to each participant).
Since the purpose of this qualitative study was to describe or understand the expectations and experiences from the perspective of the teacher, I ensured that data was collected with considerable participant input and reflection.

Transferability. As a beginning narrative inquirer, it was important for me to consider ethical issues that permeate this kind of work because I was asking my participants for access to their time and emotions. These issues require a researcher to get informed consent, show respect to participants, and demonstrate empathic listening. The personal nature of the information our participants’ share requires a researcher to take seriously issues of confidentiality and doing no harm through awareness of the privacy of the participants.

To strengthen transferability, the following measures were taken:

- Carrying out an extensive and thorough approach to the study and fully explaining the research context so that the text appeared to be a fair representation of the events or experiences described.
- The basis for assumptions central to this research topic were clearly articulated.
- While narrative researchers support the small sample size my research consisted of, this limits the transferability of my results (Creswell, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Through rich description provided by extensive time spent in the field, my research might be found applicable in another setting. Also, the fact that my study was based solely in Georgia did not
allow me the opportunity to know whether the results were isolated to a particular geographic area.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

**Current risk.** No risk to the participants was anticipated. Pseudonyms will be used in any ensuing publications. Results of analysis are available to participants upon request. The researcher let participants know that they could request that the interview and observations be stopped at anytime.

**Future risk.** To ensure that the identity of participants remains confidential, all reports and publications will have any identifying elements removed (such as school or personal names) from transcript excerpts and educator’s reflective journal entries used. All transcripts and audiotapes were labeled with pseudonyms. Also, pseudonyms will be used in any ensuing publications.

**Benefits to participant.** The participants received no direct benefit from participating in the research, other than being able to reflect on their expectations and experiences as beginning art teachers with someone who wanted to listen to their stories and appreciated their views (participants will have access to publications and reports upon request).

**Benefits to humankind.** Obtaining the firsthand accounts of art teachers provided me the ability to identify conditions affecting the beginning years of teaching for art educators. As such, this study garnered implications as to what can be done to support and improve a beginning art teacher’s experiences. The findings from this study can inform teacher educators, administrators, educational policy makers, and beginning art educators by presenting them significant ways to understand beginning art educators’
first years in the classroom. The documentation of beginning art educators’ experiences contributes to other work in art and general education that has sought to examine the conditions resulting in the voluntary attrition of beginning teachers. In particular, this research is beneficial in designing and implementing mentorship and induction programs targeted to meet the needs of in-service beginning art educators.

**Subjectivities statement.** Peshkin (1988) explains that a qualitative researcher’s worldview is shaped by societal and humanistic contacts and bears influence during any study conducted. As a result, researchers are called to reveal their subjectivities, that means specifically the preconceived notions and beliefs I held as the researcher and primary instrument for gathering and analyzing the data. As a human instrument, I was limited by my mistakes, missed opportunities, and interference of personal biases. Therefore, my observations and analysis were ultimately filtered through my values and perspectives. Developing and maintaining awareness of the subjectivities that influenced both the responses I received and how I perceived and interpreted those responses was necessary at all phases of my research.

While it is necessary for researchers to account for themselves in their research, Elliot Eisner, in *The Arts and the Creation of the Mind* (2002), stated,

There are infinite ways in which something may be described. The idea that there is a way to capture the ‘real’ way something is presupposes that one can come to the world with a mind empty of all the prior experiences that might color or bias one’s view; all perception has its bias, that is, its angle of refraction. Yet a mind empty of what culture and experience have provided, that is, empty of bias would see nothing. (p. 213)
Eisner’s discussion is significant in that it shows that a researcher’s subjectivity can be relied upon as an investigative tool. Narrative inquiry seeks to extend the boundaries of understanding primarily by acknowledging and, where fitting, privileging subjectivities as well as the place of the affect and emotion in all aspects of social life (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Therefore, I acknowledge my subjectivity and believe that it was used as a tool with respect to my data analysis, interpretation, and representation as well as a tool to inform readers as to the direction of my study.

In reflecting upon my personal and professional involvement in new art teacher attrition, I see that my own experiences as a Georgia public elementary art teacher as having afforded me opportunities to observe and experience firsthand the daily life and issues pertinent to this population. While my art teacher background might be perceived as a bias, I believe my experiences were suitable for working with this specific group of participants. Nevertheless, my story in which I reflect on my imagined and lived experiences as a beginning art teacher (Appendix E) illustrates the issue of the marginalization of arts education in public schools. (This issue will be further addressed in Chapter 8 of the dissertation.) As a result, this was a primary bias I brought to this study.

My experiences and standpoints obviously impacted how I heard and interpreted what was said in the interviews. I felt my positionality enabled me to better hear, understand, and contextualize the experiences that the participants shared with me. Not only did my experiences allow me to feel comfortable working with this population of teachers, but also provided the participants with a level of comfort as well. As both a current art teacher and researcher interested in hearing their story, it was my belief that I
received a more sincere and authentic response from my participants. However, I did not let my past experience keep me from allowing the teachers to narrate the story of their experiences aside from the fact that they may have been different or similar to my own story.

While I was similar to my participants in that I was an elementary art teacher, I was also a graduate student researcher. As such, I attempted to ensure that this did not result in my participants feeling uncomfortable with sharing their experiences with me. Acknowledging how my expectations and desire for a coherent story required me to maintain an awareness of myself as the researcher within the interview context. Also, it emphasized the need to remain attentive present in the interview in order to hear what the participants were trying to tell me in their own words. Constantly developing new ways of listening enabled me to hear the evolving understandings and efforts of my participants to make meaning of their experiences. Reflexivity makes self-knowledge and self-reflection necessary for researchers as they interact in participant relationships as well as when reporting findings and implications for future knowledge to the academic community as a scholar.

In addition to being an art teacher and doctoral researcher, there were many factors (e.g., age) that made me different from my participants. As a qualitative researcher, the following two measures minimized my biases so as not to affect my data analysis and interpretation of results. First, I clarified my predispositions thereby acknowledging my direction in this study (Patton, 2002). Second, I used systematic data analysis approaches throughout my study, such as continually reflecting on the theoretical perspective that guided this study during fulfillment of an outline of stages for the
analysis process. Additionally, I actively searched for conflicting patterns, alternative themes, and competing explanations while performing data analysis, which allowed me to obtain a deeper look into the data (Patton, 2002).

**Conclusion**

In regards to data collection methods, it was my hope that the use of data types provided a more holistic understanding of what factors became evident through the reflections of second year elementary art educators. These methods of data collection can inform the field of arts education and provide a better understanding of what factors may or may not influence new teacher attrition.
CHAPTER 4

PARTICIPANT NARRATIVES WITHIN THE RESEARCH STUDY

Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed like a new fawn, I set out experiencing my beginning years of teaching with excitement and anticipation at the endless possibilities that I imagined it entailing. Like most beginning teachers, I held firm to the idea that I was going to make all things right regardless of the situations faced. Slowly, the experiences began to chip away at my optimism and bliss. The prospect of rectifying all wrongs and waging my own battle on behalf of the arts filled my hope for all that could be with disappointment and complete exhaustion. It was such a hard blow to the fragile identity I held of myself as an art teacher. The view of my role by those around me did not align with my own. Learning along the way, I began to ask, when do I compromise or readjust, maybe alter, my expectations, or just make new ones? When does it all become too much and I feel like I must leave a profession to which I have devoted so much? On the other hand, what are those qualities that would compel me to stay? It is a lot to have to figure out when you are just making your way....

As I begin writing this, I think back to the emotional discussion I had just yesterday with the music teacher and physical education teacher. The physical education teacher is having her paraprofessional taken away from her this next school year due to continued budget cuts stemming from the economic recession that has been plaguing our nation since 2007. In all of her 23 years of teaching, she has never been without a paraprofessional in her classroom. She is distraught. The music teacher informed us
that the principal had asked to talk with her right before lunch and that she is possibly going to be on a cart next year, with no physical classroom of her own. I sat trying to comfort and provide support for my dear friends, who are my own support system, and thought to myself: what can we learn from the experiences of these beginning art teachers? Will sharing their experiences in this study give their voices wings so they might travel through time and provide a means towards personal growth and development for the individual teachers and the field of art education as a whole in the years to come? As I prepared myself to meet with each participant, I stilled that small voice questioning if this will all be valuable in the end and focused instead on knowing that, at least, I will hear and show them I care. Then, I can share and let others hear. In some small way, I know it will make a difference. I know that I wished someone had been there to listen to me…

**Across the Cases**

This study employed a qualitative narrative inquiry approach to collect the data of three beginning art educators from public elementary schools in Georgia. Narrative thematic analysis was used to provide the opportunity to study each of the three educators individually and across the cases, while providing the reader a portal through which to see the unique storied life experiences of each educator. Each of us has our own uniqueness, those qualities that set us apart from the vast multitude of others. The women in this study were interested and passionate enough about the field of art education and the issues facing beginning art teachers to speak with me. They gifted me with their time and remote memories, beliefs and expectations for their life and career, as well as a glimpse into their day-to-day experiences, while they sailed out the mapped
course of their lives up until their second year as public elementary art teachers. Through our discussions, I was able to feel the wind of experiences that had filled their sails, the experiences that had kept them on course and others that had quickly blown them off course. At times, those experiences even tore into the fabric of their lives. The honest emotions I witnessed allowed me to share the emotional journey of beginning one’s life as an art teacher: the emotions of laughter, frustration, joy, and anger. It was as though I was at sea with them.

Each participant discussed at length the path they traveled to become an art teacher, the expectations they held for their career, and the career experiences they had lived thus far, experiences that were unique and yet similar in the living classroom and school context issues addressed. The best way to convey the uniqueness of the participants as individuals is to present, as best I can, a picture that reveals something about each teacher’s background, character, and life from within her classroom. Each participant portrait or profile is based on my interactions with the individual and the participant’s reflective journal entries and interviews, which will be discussed in the background section of Chapters 5-7. The use of researcher conducted field observations provides the reader the ability to have a description of the setting or context in which the participant lived the majority of the experiences that occurred (Creswell, 2008). The participant profiles are intended to give readers the same entrance into the life of each individual that I was given.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994/2000) 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 cobbled together stories…” (p. 584). As living histories made through the interaction of individuals, the following chapters are cobbled together from data that I have interpreted from a narrative inquiry approach, and I hope that you will make your interpretations as you read this text. Chapters 5-7 contain individual narratives shared in single chapters as well as a thematic analysis of each participant’s data on a case-by-case basis, which will be further analyzed in Chapter 8. The chapters are provided below in alphabetical order by the pseudonym each participant chose for herself. Quotations from the transcribed interview texts are often taken out of sequence but remain the individual voices of the three art teachers. Chapter 8 brings the data analysis together through the informed eye of the researcher as a cross-case analysis. The individual reflections shared in this study provide an exemplar text for considerations regarding teacher preparation, retention, and how we think about mentoring beginning teachers.
I feel very discouraged often. I feel like there’s not a lot of support. I feel like I’m swimming along in the ocean and there’s no buoy around to help keep me from drowning. Some mornings I’m really excited about coming to work, but then, there are times when I am so overwhelmed.

Background

Like many beginning art teachers, Callie was young, having just turned 26 years old when we began our interviews. She was petite and most often when we met, she wore slacks and a casual top, with her brunette hair tied back in a ponytail. When I first met with Callie, she gave me the impression of being well-spoken, reflective, and brutally transparent in her opinions and experiences. She had a very strong personality and the purposeful air of a much older school administrator or perhaps a state education superintendent, both positions which she mentioned as future career aspirations. I felt that she quickly and elaborately communicated her experiences in enough detail for me to feel a part of her story as a beginning art teacher.

Callie did not initially set out to be an art teacher. Over the course of her college years, she had a several different majors: starting with early childhood, then biology, next interior design, and last, art education. The jump to art education was the result of her father’s illness, which had led her to move back home to help care for him. During that
semester off from college caring for her father, she had volunteered at the nearby elementary school her sister attended. She decided at that point to go back to college in order to get her degree in art education, since she had an art background and had always enjoyed art. She completed her student teaching at a high school placement, which she described as an experience she hated, and earned her Bachelors in Art Education. Upon graduation, she searched for two years for a position teaching art and did a few long term substituting positions, always in the early childhood classroom setting, before she obtained the job she currently holds.

**Educational Setting**

For the past two years, Callie has been a traveling elementary art teacher split halftime between two, Title 1, K-5 elementary schools about fifteen minutes apart in the rural north Georgia mountains. While she was unfamiliar with the county, it was her newlywed husband’s hometown, which she described as having been her motivation to take the position. At one school (school A), her classroom was located in a trailer behind the school, while at the other school (school B) she had a mid-size classroom within the building. Both were small schools with an average population of around 200 students, located in very tight knit communities, which resulted in the schools having a very community-like feeling.

Callie described the two school settings (school A and school B) as having a completely different dynamic from one another. Callie stated that, school A has some of the richest and the poorest families in our county, even some homeless kids. Both groups don’t have the things they need in their home lives: character education, love, and support. Callie attributed behavior problems in the classroom to these issues.
described the student body of school B as composed of students of a fairly low socioeconomic background. However, in comparison to school A, she felt the students at school B were overall very respectful and had good manners. In further comparison, school A failed to have a school-wide discipline plan, so there were no consequences for students’ actions, resulting in what Callie felt was an environment where the students did not really care if they got in trouble. This was not the case with school B with its well-established discipline plan. A distinction Callie made about school A was that it had a high special education population and a lack of adequate staff to meet the population’s unique needs. Through inclusion-style format classes, Callie described often seeing several special education inclusion students within her art classes without additional help each day. When asked how that worked out, she described some days as having been “perfect” and others as having made her feel “scared” because of not knowing what was going to happen next. She further explained that, you get used to the good days and then a bad day happens where the child is a danger to himself or herself as well as the whole class.

At both schools, Callie was expected to maintain a rotating schedule that is best understood using Callie’s own description:

I am at school A on Monday’s and Tuesday’s always. I’m at the school B Thursday’s and Friday’s always. The first and third nine weeks of the year, I’m at the first A on Wednesday’s. The second and forth nine weeks I’m at the second school on Wednesday’s. Our Wednesday’s are a repeat of another day. So like right now, I’m at school A on Wednesday’s, so this week I’m going Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. And then next week, I’ll go Monday, Tuesday, only at
school A, which is a disaster to plan for because the schools are never on the same project schedule because of missed days like holidays. In table 4.1, I have created a table to help clarify Callie’s weekly schedule.

Table 4.1
Callie’s Two School Work Schedule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st 9 weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td>School A</td>
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<tr>
<td>School B</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd 9 weeks</td>
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<td>School A</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>School B</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd 9 weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td>School A</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>School B</td>
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<td>4th 9 weeks</td>
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<td>School A</td>
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<td>School B</td>
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<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: x is used as an indicator for each day of the week to show Callie’s location during the school year.

Callie color-coded a calendar, which she described as being obsessive compulsive about in order to try and not get lost. For her entire first year, Callie never had the online grading system explained to her within the two schools, yet she was expected to maintain two separate grading accounts. She recalled that, at the beginning of her first year, no one had told her when grades were due. As a result, both schools went ahead and printed out report cards showing all students with zeros in art. After this incident, the administration came to her wanting answers, and she described the situation as having made her feel stupid and worried that everybody wanted to fire me.

The faculty of each of Callie’s schools consisted of: two early childhood teachers per grade level, one principal, and one secretary, while a special education teacher, academic coach, media specialist, school nurse, music teacher, physical education
teacher, and art teacher were shared between the two. The teachers at school A, with the exception of three, had all been teaching there for an average of fifteen to twenty years, whereas school B had a larger variety of teachers both in age and teaching experience. Overall, Callie got along with all the teachers, but described school A as having had an age/experience barrier that made it difficult to connect with other teachers. She commented that, even though I tried to branch out at both schools, aside from maybe three teachers at School B, it doesn’t really work because it’s a closed door kind of thing.

On top of her art teaching responsibilities and duties, Callie was required to start each morning at both schools teaching math to a forty-minute Response to Intervention (RTI) group of 4th graders. At school A, Callie had been observed once with no feedback provided, while at school B she had numerous observations and feedback provided within fifteen minutes. Callie felt the hardest part of her job was the “transition thing,” from having been split between two school settings with different kids, principals, and environments. This experience made her feel as if she were constantly shifting gears, and thereby made it hard for her to ever get her bearings. During the course of this study, Callie was working on her Masters in Early Childhood Education, which included gifted endorsement added to her certification.

**Stepping into the Participant’s Classroom**

As one enters Callie’s classroom, the first thing one might notice would be the absence of a clock, a tool heavily depended upon for the running and organizing the school day. She recalled that ironically, it (the clock) was missing from both of my classrooms, and I suppose the previous art teacher had bought her own and taken them with her. Despite requests to her administration, she had yet to receive one at either of
the schools. In true make-it-work fashion, Callie created an arrangement where both the students and she relied on her smartphone’s alarm to keep them on schedule. At the sounding of the alarm, students instantly respond by getting up and moving about the room for clean up.

A large table was located on the back wall opposite the door that erupted like a volcano with scrap paper, which had spilled onto the floor. As students filed in, an instant buzz of energy was felt throughout the room. Brightly colored bulletin board displays and neon green, chevron stripe painted cabinets filled the walls. Callie’s voice rose in tone as she directed kindergarten students to their seats and commanded their attention. Following a brief lesson introduction and step-by-step demonstration on how to trace template shapes in order to complete a large flower, students were dismissed to start working on their spring-themed art project. As the students worked on their artworks independently, Callie moved through the room assisting students as needed. During the idle time spent waiting for art materials, students began chattering among themselves. As a result, Callie had to redirect students who were getting off task with comments such as, “Don’t let me catch you doing that again.” Soon questions from students began echoing around the room, such as “where are the pencils?” and “why did I get only one stencil?” Callie quickly provided answers. A student, obviously unclear of the correct step to follow, glued down his template circle using a glue stick he found in the supply tray on his table. Callie laughed it off and remained calm as she responded, “Oh Sam, we’re not using glue yet. Let me show you.” In another snapshot, Callie patiently held a piece of paper for a student who was having difficulty cutting on the line, while at the same time talking with another student about his project. This scene depicts
a delicate balance between meeting the needs of both students simultaneously as well as actively keeping an ear attuned to the class as a whole.

As students began to finish their flowers, Callie urged them to add details such as butterflies and bees to their artwork. Having an obvious variety in skill levels as well as working paces, some students finished before class time was up and started to get rowdy. When the noise level became too loud, Callie instructed the students to get out large puzzles from the bookcase and to work in groups to put them together. This routine appeared familiar and was a real crowd pleaser as students eagerly moved to the floor to work until the alarm indicated that it was time to leave. As students filed out of the room with smiles on their faces, it was obvious that they enjoyed art and that Callie enjoyed the kids as well. However, as she began to pick up her room and reassess her plan for the next class, the stress of it all, which she described as overwhelming, was visible on her face.

Callie’s intent for her curriculum was to have a little bit of every medium to provide a variety of exposure in skill and knowledge. However, her experiences in the classroom made her focus shift from what she described as actual art things, like teaching about artists and more towards basic skills, like cutting correctly. Callie’s desire to have a good relationship with the majority of her students was evident. Knowing that I really care about them (the students) is important because it makes me think I am doing something right, she explained. The beginning of Callie’s career could be classified as rough and a wide awakening for herself based on the dynamics of her teaching position and her lived experiences thus far in her career. Callie has been offered a kindergarten position at School B and stated that:
I find myself seriously considering it, although I wonder if teaching is even the thing I want to do forever. I just wonder if there’s any resolution ever in this situation. I’ve been a waitress and that was less stressful than this.

I feel for her and what the future will hold for her, and concern was the obvious overtone in all of our discussions.

**Emergent Themes through Data Collection**

As part of the analysis of Callie’s data collection, the following major themes emerged regarding imagined and lived experiences and support mechanisms. These themes will be further discussed in the following sections to better understand Callie’s perceptions of her second year of teaching based upon her initial expectations and the evolution of those as she lived them. This data is derived, as described in Chapter 3, from data collected using the following methods: interviews and reflective journal entries.

**Imagined experiences.** On numerous occasions throughout the course of the study, Callie referenced what she had expected or imagined in regard to various aspects of her career. She shared a myriad of situations that generated a variety of emotions. Overall, Callie’s discussions evoked a sense of having held conflicting aspirations for her career and what she imagined it to entail. She stated that:

*I had expectations, but every school I was in during my student teaching and when long-term substituting showed me different settings. So, I knew what I wanted (for my career), but I also knew that you never really knew what to expect.

I do know that my experiences there (college and substituting) didn’t quite*
prepare me for what this (her current teaching position) was going to be like. This was not in any way what I had expected.

The following sections presented below reflect areas Callie indicated as recurring themes based on her imagined experiences and expectations: curriculum design and lesson plans and student motivation.

**Curriculum design and lesson plans.** During the course of the study, Callie indicated curriculum as a recurring theme. In her discussions on curriculum, Callie first described how her expectations for designing her lesson plans were constructed based on her college preparation. Second, she discussed how she imagined her administration to have specific expectations for her teaching.

In discussing her college preparation, Callie stated that:

*I don’t feel the education I got in college was a very authentic picture of what I do now. We did a lot of elements and principles and color theory and that I use, but we don’t use them in the in-depth way in which I spent the majority of my classes dwelling on primarily.*

Callie furthered this discussion by reflecting on how, when she had created her curriculum, she had not been prepared for the reality she faced. She stated that:

*I stressed myself out trying to come up with these awesome detailed lesson plans, like I did in college and with checking off the standards and trying to think of ways to implement classroom standards. Then I started teaching and realized that, at best, I see the kids 50 minutes a week. Do you really want to teach, say a kindergartener, the elements and principles of art and complete an art critique? No, you want them to build skills. You want them to learn about important aspects*
of skills, terms, and so forth. But, you have to make it work within the time frame you see them, and sometimes, it’s even less because of interruptions as well as in constraints of the setting in which you are in. I have found myself having to do skills remediation, like how to use scissors properly, with fourth and fifth graders. My ideal lesson plans were shot up with holes after the first month.

In addition, Callie detailed that she had anticipated more curriculum requirements or expectations for her by the school administration. She listed these as expectations towards meeting certain standards or goals as well as being expected to follow specific curriculum guidelines to show student achievement. Mainly, she had just anticipated a clear picture presented to her of what administration wanted her to accomplish. She found this not to be the case. She stated that:

Here there’s no dead set expectations, like a curriculum map, aside from the state standards. I thought there would be more expectations or requirements, like they would actually have an idea of what they want me to accomplish. I worried over my lesson planning at the beginning. In the end, nobody seemed to care.

Callie described the lack of expectations as having provided what she felt was a freedom she enjoyed. The freedom she felt made her a little less stressed out about everything because I know that it is one less thing on my plate. She described herself as having goals of providing a variety of experiences with materials and lessons that broaden student’s horizons, all while following the state standards set forth for my curriculum. Overall, Callie found that with experience you figure out what you are good at doing and what you think is most important. She commented that she had learned that more experience lets you know the better you will become.
Student motivation. During course of the study, Callie indicated student motivation as a recurring theme. She described how she had expected all kids to love art based on her own school experiences and interactions with other children. She stated that:

I really was surprised by some of the kids’ attitudes because when I was a kid everybody loved art. It didn’t matter if you were good at it or not, everybody loved it. I have kids at both schools that are like “This is stupid. This is boring.” They act like we are pulling their toes off when it’s something they should be having fun with. I was not expecting that honestly. Especially in the number of students I have witnessed with that attitude. That was unexpected, their lack of excitement or their lack of motivation.

Lack of student motivation was something Callie identified as an issue she was still struggling with in her second year of teaching art. She expressed that student motivation, in instances when students were not excited about art projects regardless of her efforts, affected the attitudes of the other students and her own enthusiasm. Most frustrating to her personally was when a student refused to try or just wasted materials by putting no effort into their project. Callie described the students’ lack of motivation as playing a big difference in the course of the day in that it can make it creep by, as well as make her dread coming to school.

Lived experiences. A large part of Callie’s discussions regarding her lived experiences revolved around the issue of developing her role and identity as an art teacher, as represented in her discussions regarding issues of classroom management and feelings of respect and stress. Her discussions reflected her awareness of the aspects of
her daily life she had not expected or that had been similar, more influential, or different than she had anticipated. These discussions are organized below based on the recurring themes of classroom management and discipline issues, respect, and stress.

**Classroom management and discipline issues.** During the study, Callie indicated classroom management and discipline as a recurring theme. In discussing her lived experiences with classroom management and discipline, Callie stated that:

*Growing up you think that you want to be a teacher and you think that it’s going to be this way: desks are in a row, kids are orderly, and you are respected, which is a big deal. The idea that it all fits together in nice neat fashion. Then, when you start it’s not the case. You have kids who don’t want to be there or kids whose artwork disappears, which all makes you feel like a failure.*

While her discussion on discipline was a frequent topic regarding both school settings, she particularly directed the issue towards school A, where there is no school-wide discipline plan and her classroom is in a trailer, possessing what she felt was inadequate storage and room. She stated that, *at this school (school A) there’s no support for discipline. I feel like the kids know they can do anything. I can try and be strict, but there’s never going to be any consequences.*

In reflecting on her experiences thus far as a beginning teacher, Callie commented that she felt prepared for behavior issues based on her student teaching experiences in a high school setting. However upon beginning her first year of teaching art, she stated that, *I think I had this preconceived notion that your kids aren’t going to have this many problems and then they totally do. It’s hard to be prepared for that because that’s not how it’s supposed to be.*
Because the behavior of her students was so different from her expectations, Callie described it as a “shock”. She stated that, *it’s never been acceptable to me to act the way some of the children do*, behaviors based on her experiences. As a result, Callie found classroom management and discipline to be a time consuming and frustrating aspect of her job. Callie largely felt this to be the case because it had never really been an area with which she had personally experienced any difficulty when she had student taught or during the time she had worked as a long-term substitute. Consequently, it was an aspect that she had not imagined to play such a large role in her daily life as a teacher.

**Respect.** During the course of this study, Callie evidenced respect as a recurring theme in her data. This theme arose in regard to numerous aspects of her job. In regard to her interactions with peers in her school setting, she provided illustrative stories of ways in which she had reached out to her early childhood co-workers in an effort to collaborate on lessons to create an interdisciplinary curriculum but had received no feedback. This is evidenced in her statement that:

> I’ve tried to communicate with the other teachers about what they’re doing and they don’t even write me back. It makes me feel like they just feel like I’m their babysitter for 50 minutes out of the day, like they could care less what we’re doing. And it makes me sad for the kids because I feel like in order for them to meet all of the standards they are expected to meet they need experiences outside of their regular classroom. And it’s almost like, do you really care about these kids getting these standards met, or do you just want to pass the CRCT test? I mean, because you can’t just check all the standards off the list and expect all the
kids to get it. They need to be stacked, and I’m willing to help them with that. I feel like I am a tool and an asset that they could use and they don’t even try to use it.

Callie provided a story of a major incident from her first year of teaching that stood out. This incident had made her feel very disrespected as a teacher. She narrated:

This has nothing to do with art or teaching, but we have a lady here (School A) who is our safety director. I am here 2 or 3 days a week, depending on the semester or nine weeks. We (art, music, and physical education teacher) do not get things communicated to us that we’re required to do or that we’re expected to do. Our school has all of these safety requirements. Now, before teaching, I was a lifeguard and certified lifeguard instructor. So, safety-wise I feel ok, but I didn’t know that there were requirements we had to meet or PowerPoints we had to watch. No one had told me that ever. I came to school one day and they were giving an epi pen to a student during my planning period. The lady giving the epi pen didn’t know how to do it, so I volunteered to. Well, the next day during lunch the safety director pretty much yelled at me in front of everybody, saying, “Why did you touch that epi pen? You haven’t signed off!” And I was like, “Signed off on what?” She said, “You haven’t signed off on your epi pen training!” And I asked, “When was the epi pen training?” “She replied, “It was on a Friday.”

And I said, “Well, I am never here on Fridays. I teach at School B on that day.” “Well you have to get signed off on that,” she said. I responded with “Well, nobody ever told me that I had to get signed off on that.” I mean she screamed at
me in front of everyone and I was mortified. It’s just little things like that make me question my career and feel disrespected as a teacher.

In regard to her administration, Callie additionally indicated experiences where she felt a lack of respect for her role as the art teacher in her school. In an effort to become involved in her school, Callie detailed her attempts to volunteer for committees or workshops with her administration in which she was told, “no thanks, you’re the art teacher you don’t need to worry with that”. Because of these experiences, she stated that:

*It’s like I’m completely on my own and underutilized, which I feel like is a waste of resources. It sounds whiny, but I don’t feel like they even give a crap that I’m here most days. They want me to do car duty and RTI (Response to Intervention) in the morning and that’s the only thing they need me for. I really feel like I am of no value a lot of the times, which is hard for me because I like to be contributing to the world. It makes me think, could my talents be used somewhere else, anywhere else? It’s like what respect do I get for what I put up with some days?*

In her discussions, Callie further discussed the issue of respect by addressing what she felt was the public’s disrespectful perception of educators. Professionally, Callie felt there was issue of disrespect toward art teachers. Not only had she felt this was an issue for art teachers but also one that applied to all teachers. She stated that:

*All the issues going on in our government, mainly our nation’s economic climate and the shift to teacher accountability and standardized testing have weakened the public’s opinion of teachers, which has translated into the lack of respect held toward the profession of teaching. They think our job is easy, and yet when they*
max our classes out and reduce our funding, the students are the ones who suffer and any signs of student achievement lowering leaves only the teachers for them to blame.

Callie responded that if it were not for the positive feedback she got from kids and the ability to see their appreciation and excitement over their artwork, she believed that she would not be fulfilled as a teacher due to the lack of respect she feels for her profession. She stated that because those instances are far and few between they resulted in her uncertainty as to how long she would remain a teacher.

**Stress.** During the course of the study, Callie indicated stress as a recurring theme that had greatly impacted her initial years as an art teacher. She referenced it concerning numerous aspects of her daily life as an art teacher and as an emotion that she felt daily, especially during her first year. In reflecting on her first year, Callie stated that:

*The best advice I could give a future beginning art teacher is to not stress out by going to the extreme to try and do any and everything or to go above and beyond. In the end, you’ll exhaust yourself and the only people who will really care are the kids.*

Callie stated that she worried about impressing others and doing everything just right and would lose sleep worrying about it. She listed numerous aspects of her job that were most stressful to her as a beginning art teacher. First, she described the planning portion as most challenging because of the difficulty of her schedule. Second, she discussed budgeting and ordering supplies, which she described as “a double edged sword” because, while there was money to spend, it was still hard to figure out what items and how much of them to order. She stated that:
It's really hard for me to plan out what I'm going to order because in college we had to do a budget, but it wasn't realistic. It is nothing like actually ordering and planning-based. When my secretary tells me I had to spend my money by a certain date or it gets taken away I get nervous. Then, I feel like I just end up ordering a bunch of things and then wonder how can I use these things. I don't feel like I was prepared for that, but I feel like I'll get better at it with time.

Third, she listed having to deal with behavioral issues as “tiring” because of how stressful it is trying to be prepared to handle them. Fourth, Callie described that I stress about doing a bad job or not doing what I’m supposed to. Callie also expressed stress about her classes that consist of the inclusion format. She explained that some of the special education students that attend art with the general education classes have serious issues, and these students attend with no paraprofessional support, since it is to a specials (art, music, or physical education) class. She stated that, some days are great and then some days I’m scared because I don’t know if I’ll have to hit the panic button and clear the room out. It’s nerve wracking not knowing and not having support. When asked how she felt at the end of the day, Callie shared that she most often felt exhausted. She stated that, I'm doing my masters fulltime right now and teaching fulltime, so there are some days that I get home and will literally go to sleep at 6:00.

Given the emotional content of most of my discussions with Callie, I asked what she foresaw in her future in education. She stated that:

If it remains as it has been, I won’t stay. I mean’s it not worth it. You want to make a difference, but in what I’m doing it’s hard to make a difference when I wake up dreading having to get up in morning. It’s not ok. Some days are good,
but some are just so bad. It would be easy if I could pinpoint just one aspect that is at fault, but there’s too many. It’s like my current work settings (school A and school B) have me in a boat with a hole and no matter how fast I try to bail the water out it continues to fill with water at too fast of a rate. I’ve been offered a kindergarten position at school B.

When asked whether she had considered taking the position, she provided the following response:

I am seriously considering it. It would be at school B, which is a much better school environment and that makes a huge difference. I mean do I stay in a sinking boat and hope for the best, that it’ll get better with time, or do I jump? It’s a hard decision. Sometimes I just feel like I don’t know if teaching is even the thing I want to do forever. I just know that I feel like if it stays like this for the next twenty years I’m going to die young (laughing). Because I know it’s hard to believe, but I’m not a stressed-out person, or I never have been till I started teaching.

When asked how she handled her stress, Callie stated that:

It may not sound like it, but I feel like I have a pretty good relationship with the majority of the kids. I feel like they get excited, even if it’s not in here, but if I see them in the hall or in the grocery store. They get excited to see me. They are really friendly and outgoing. That makes me think I’m doing something right. I really care about the kids, I really do love them. I guess the most rewarding part is that they appreciate or even acknowledge that I care about them. So, by
dwelling on that I try to make myself relax. I also try to listen to music that inspires me, and I luckily have my husband to talk to.

Also, Callie shared that I’m learning to become more comfortable with what I am teaching, which relieves stress.

**Support mechanisms.** During the course of the study, Callie indicated lack of support as a recurring theme. She stated the following about support:

*I don’t feel like if I were to need help I could ask somebody and they could give it to me. There’s a few other teachers I might ask, and they may or may not be able to help me, but other than that I was just on my own.*

Callie repeatedly stated that she felt out of the loop and that she felt she had no real support. She described this as making her feel like pretty much a kid with a class. Based on her experiences, Callie commented that she had learned from her teaching experiences that she had to be the one to go out of her way to stay informed of what was going on in her schools. When discussing the topic of support, Callie frequently mentioned her administration at each school. She stated that:

*I really like both of my principals as people. As people they are very nice and friendly people, but I think that my administrators have no idea of what I even do. At school B, I have more duties and no planning period, and at school A my administrator has a background in art, so she gives me a great budget and planning but has failed to provide me with any support in discipline or just keep me informed. I feel that my principal here at (school A) is not really intimidating or scary, but I always feel like I’m walking on eggshells; kind of like I’m kind of scared to step a toe out of the line. Not that she’s mean. It’s just that I am always*
afraid I’m going to get in trouble cause I’m always unsure of things and feel like I’m doing something wrong because I wasn’t informed. At my other school (B), I do not feel that way at all. I’m more comfortable. I feel like we have more of a friendship within our working relationship. If I have a problem or an issue I know that I say something and that is going to be taken care of and he’s not going to be upset that I came to him. He’s not going to think that I am a complainer. He’s not going to be like deal with it on your own. He’s going to make sure you’re taken care of as best he can. So, it’s different at each school. It’s not the case at the other school (A), which is my home school. I’ve asked questions and never gotten an answer back. Like I wanted to do some professional development, we’re having a Renzulli learning thing and I’m based at this school (A), which is where my paychecks come from and that is where I’m technically employed. I have to go to staff meetings here (A), not at the other school (B). I assumed that I would use this school to go through those training. There was this one (professional development opportunity) over the summer and I really wanted to learn about CCGPS (Georgia’s set of core standards for grades K-12 that provide a consistent framework for teaching) cause I thought I could use them in here (art room). I was told that, “Since I was an art teacher I don’t get to attend because it doesn’t benefit the students the right way.” That was told straight to my face when I mentioned interest in it. I don’t know, again with the lack of support at each school. It’s different.

When asked if any resources were provided as support, Callie responded that her school system did not provide any resources that she was aware of, such as a mentorship
program or any other formal induction program for new teachers held system-wide.

Additionally, she commented that, because of the economy, the system has had major
cuts in supply budgets, school staff, technology resources, as well as having taken away
all professional development opportunities for specials teachers. She shared that being
able to talk with another art teacher through professional development, collaboration or
mentorship, whichever form was available, would provide the ability to share ideas and
to feel supported and helped out. Specifically, she stated that it would provide:

"Someone to laugh with, provide answers to questions I might have as well as
listen to my concerns. Mainly, someone I could complain to and not feel like a
whiner and one who would appreciate those little accomplishments I am excited
about that no one else gets when you are the only art teacher at a school."

Mentorship. In discussing what resources she felt would have been helpful for
her as a beginning art teacher based on her experiences to date, Callie stated that:

"A mentor or just an administrator who could provide just some basic information
would have helped. Not necessarily to provide information in regard to my day-
to-day teaching but to aid in my overall preparedness to do my job. To
communicate information, basic information, about how things work as a school;
like emergency procedures, how the lunchroom works, where the filing stuff is,
how the laminator works, when grades are due, just those kinds of things. All my
friends who are teachers have always had a mentor to teach them these things."

Callie further illustrated this point when she discussed the most important information
she thought pre-service teachers needed to have shared with them during their pre-service
time. She believed that new teachers should seek out someone to aid them in their
transition from student to teacher. She stated that, *having someone who understands what it feels like to be an art teacher is a good feeling. It helps you make it through the bad times and it makes the good days even better.*

While an official mentor was not provided for her, Callie felt she had received support through several avenues. The majority of Callie’s support was derived from the music teacher she worked with at both schools, as well as a friend from college. Callie stated that, *the music teacher was a person I could relate to because she knows how it is and she has tried to keep me informed of details and dates that I wouldn’t have known otherwise.* Whereas, her friend from college provided *help with planning lessons, budgeting and ordering supplies, and setting up grading.* Callie shared that did not know how she would have made it thus far in her teaching career without the help of these two individuals.
CHAPTER 6

LAYLA:

CLASSROOM REALITY BECOMES AN ADAPTATION OF IMAGINED EXPERIENCES

When I went to college I knew I wanted to be an art teacher, but I wasn’t quite sure why or how I wanted to do it. I had this whole idea in my head that I wanted to have an art classroom that incorporated all the arts, not just drawing and painting; that idea became more clear my first year of teaching while also being enrolled in graduate school. I make mistakes, and I try things that don’t work. I am clumsy at times, but it helps show my students to feel comfortable with trying new things and taking risks, just like I am.

Background

Layla, a petite, 24 year old, was wise beyond her years. I felt that she was very open, with an introspective and analytical ability. Despite her initial nervousness at the beginning of each interview, which never went away, she was able to become more comfortable with me and with the interview context. She often laughed aloud about how the sight of the recorder would make her go blank. If it did, it was only at the very beginning, and it never lasted long. In fact, our first interview lasted well over two hours. She was reflective throughout our interviews and made comments of things to discuss when we met next. At her preference, we almost always met on Friday evenings. I was amazed how, after a long week at work, she was so animated and how intriguing the
conversations were. Since Fridays were causal attire days at her school, she always showed up in a school t-shirt, jeans, and sneakers.

For Layla, becoming an art teacher was spurred from her adoration of her high school art teacher, whom she had respected and with whom she was still close. She described her teacher as a *practicing artist herself*. What stood out most in Layla’s memories of her high school teacher was how she *always doing things in her classroom that she was interested in too*. Layla felt that she had pulled some of that into her own classroom.

Additionally, she felt that art was a subject that *excited* her and had been an area in which she had excelled. She described it as having been a *family thing*, since her mother was an artist who taught adult classes and kids’ groups afterschool. Layla earned her Bachelors in Art Education after having performed her student teaching experience at both the elementary and high school level. After graduation, she went directly into pursuing her Masters in Art Education, which she was still working on during the course of this study. Layla credited her enrollment in graduate school at the start of her teaching career as having provided a *supportive community*. Her future goal was to continue her education by entering a doctoral program to achieve her Ph.D in Art Education right after she finished her Masters degree. However, at our last interview Layla shared, with much excitement, that she was expecting a child. This event did not sway her from her future goal of obtaining her doctoral degree, but it did postpone when she anticipated beginning by about ten years. While Layla had not seriously questioned her career choice because she knew it was what she was *passionate* about and where she wanted to be; she had questioned how *long she would stay in elementary education*. Further, she stated that, *the
current budget cuts, workload, lack of respect, and accountability requirements being placed upon teachers makes she and her husband hesitant to encourage their future child to go into a career as an educator.

Educational Setting

Layla was in her second year teaching at one elementary school (school C), but had previously been split halftime between two different elementary schools (school C and school D), where she spent full weeks alternating between the two. She was employed at school C both years and only her first year at school D. During her first year of teaching art, the two elementary schools provided very different environments. School C was older, on the outskirts of town, and averaged around 350 students, whereas school D was a newer, larger school located within the city limits that averaged around 650 students. Her normal class at school C consisted of around 14 students. At school D, she averaged approximately 32 students per class. Layla summed up the difference between the two school settings having felt like a babysitter almost, who made nice decorations at school D, in contrast to school C, where she felt looked at as more of a teacher who was respected and equal with regular education teachers. She described both schools as having great teachers, great students, and good administration, but it was just the whole mentality of what the art program is for that distinguished the two. Of course, she admitted that part of the problem was just being a half time teacher, where you’re never really, truly there or a part of the faculty based on her experiences.

During her first year of teaching at both schools, Layla’s classroom was only hers when she was present to use it. She often found it changed in some manner when she returned, such as items missing, tables rearranged, and being treated as a storage room
with new things added each week. *Having my stuff messed with was infuriating to me,*
she confessed. At school C, Layla had an hour and a half of planning each day, whereas
at school D she had fifty minutes for lunch and planning, which she stated, left her
feeling like she was *running around unable to really get caught up.* She experienced few
interruptions to her class at school C, but at school D she recounted there having been
countless experiences where a kid would come down five minutes before class is
supposed to be there and say, “Oh we’re having a party. We’re not coming to art today”
or half a class would be pulled out for something during that time. Layla further shared
that *I don’t want to think that it was the administration’s purposeful choice necessarily. I
think being a smaller school allowed for a more flexible schedule* at school C.

Layla was pleased to have received fulltime employment at school C at the start
of her second year. In fact, she stated that, if she had not received fulltime employment
at school C and had instead been offered the fulltime position at school D, she wouldn’t
be an art teacher for very long and would have been looking for myself another job,
maybe not out of the profession but somewhere else. Although Layla admitted that, if it
were not for the *direct comparison* between the two school environments her first year of
teaching would not have felt as negative about school D. She added that *it allowed me to
realize that this whole place (school C) is so much better. I’m treated like an adult. So I
can’t really imagine me having settled for the other school (D) either way.*

**Stepping into the Participant’s Classroom**

It is hard to describe Layla’s classroom. It was a combination of theatre, writing
and visual arts as well as a research facility and exhibition space. The walls were
covered with artwork and posters that designated the purpose of each space. The class
activities changed quickly from one to another, with lots of student interaction and chatter abounding. On any given day, one would expect to have seen anything from writing activities to acting workshops during art class time. Just as the classroom setup itself was stimulating, by means such as self-directed centers and flexibility in materials and choices for projects, so was the teacher who motivated and inspired her students to do more than was previously expected by their past art teacher and by themselves.

Class began with Layla greeting each student at the door with a personal welcome by name and a squirt of Germ-x, which was her attempt to keep germs at a minimum after she got so sick her first year of teaching. Next, students sat on the rug and had five minutes of share time that provided Layla the opportunity to hear so many stories. Following rug time was instructional time using various methods. On this day, Layla used a SMART Board to review the continuation of a collaborative lesson between the 4th grade language arts teacher and Layla on nature and poetry, a lesson where students had to create an artwork to go along with their language arts standards focusing on repetition and rhythm. These artworks were to be part of a poetry book. As such, students were reminded that they would be presenting them at the end of the year for a parent’s day poetry café event. In Layla’s classroom, the students selected an element of nature after a discussion of the characteristics of different parts of nature: the sun, the wind, and the rain. Then, they created a metaphor, such as I am the wind, to be the title of their poem, which they repeated throughout the poem. Finally, the students had to compare themselves to a specific part of nature. On this day, students were finishing up their writing and then beginning an artwork to accompany their poem. Layla showed students an example of how the finished works would be in the form of a triptych for display.
Using the color of student’s clothing, Layla called individual students to leave the carpet to go to their tables to start working. Once all students were situated at their tables, Layla turned on music for one song, lasting about three minutes. At the end of class, she played one song again to indicate time for clean up. This method of providing structure as well as a reduction in the noise level was based on a suggestion her principal made after a classroom observation. Still in her second year, it was apparent that Layla had not figured out a perfect combination of approaches and strategies to use in making things run smoothly; a problem that she, herself, admitted was a daily struggle.

Classroom management was one item Layla felt she was still trying to work out. She stated that, as an elementary art teacher, especially, I have no power really outside of my classroom. You can’t send anything back to the teachers really, and you can’t take their recess. So, the kids catch on really fast. She described classroom management as frustrating and that she felt somewhat powerless from having to deal with little petty things that a regular classroom teacher could set up a system to address.

Layla characterized herself as a very hyper and energetic teacher. During her interactions with students, she refrained from talking to the students differently than she would adults. An intermingling of a little sarcasm and humor makes for a good relationship between Layla and her older students. For example, when observing a student off task Layla remarked, “Chad, have you lost your mind?” A big smile spread across his face, which supported her belief that this approach to student interaction tends to get through to them a little bit more as well as works as a deescalating method.

Layla’s effort to be really transparent with her students was visible in all of her interactions with the students. She explained that:
I really don’t want to be way up here and have them feel like I’m looking down on them and just giving them directions. I didn’t realize before teaching that I don’t have to or want to have to be the all-knowing figure in my classroom. I always try to include them (students) in the discussion and say, you know this is what I am thinking and if you have suggestions I’d love to hear them.

This was evident when Layla had a 4th grade girl, who was finished with her poem and working on her drawing, come up and say, “Why can’t you just be a normal art teacher?” Layla replied, “What are you talking about?” The girl responded with, “You know where you just draw and paint and color because it’s art.” To which, Layla laughed and said, “What is wrong with my classroom?” The student remarked back with, “Just cause of the writing and stuff. Why can’t we just draw?” So, Layla proceeded to go through her whole teaching philosophy with the girl, who at the end responded, “Fine, I guess that’s cool.” The change from Layla’s multi-faceted curriculum compared to that which her students had previously been exposed was a big shock to them when she began teaching her first year. Layla’s classroom was one of a partnership between the students and herself. She found the biggest thing to consider when beginning one’s career as an art teacher was to make sure you want to be there, that you care about your students.

From the second students enter the room until the second they leave, Layla’s students know that she genuinely cares about them.

Emergent Themes through Data Collection

As part of the analysis of Layla’s data collection, the following major themes emerged regarding imagined and lived experiences, and support mechanisms. These will be further discussed in the following sections to better understand Layla’s perceptions of
her second year of teaching based upon her initial expectations and the evolution of those as she lived them. This data is derived, as described in Chapter 3, from data collected using the following methods: interviews and reflective journal entries.

**Imagined experiences.** During the course of the study, Layla described herself as having held high aspirations for her career and what she imagined it to entail. Throughout the study, Layla described a myriad of situations that resulted in a variety of emotions. Layla described herself as having known what I wanted my curriculum to look like and what I wanted my job to be when she was an art student. Based on her experiences from the past two years, she stated that I’ve seen my ideal circumstances come to life in my classroom. The following sections reflect areas Layla indicated as recurring themes based on her imagined experiences and expectations: intentions for curriculum integration and developing positive student-teacher relationships.

**Intentions for curriculum integration.** During the course of the study, Layla indicated the she had held high aspirations for curriculum integration, which indicated it as a recurring theme in this study. Layla typically framed this issue by referencing her prior undergraduate educational experiences first and then evolving the discussion to include what she had experienced once she started teaching. Layla indicated that her prior experiences had resulted in a conflict between what she had been taught in college and what she desired her curriculum to focus on. She stated that:

*When I started teaching everything, suddenly, became clear to me. There are things that you’re taught and things you’re told during student teaching that for the large part don’t make sense until you get into your own classroom. When I finally got in my own classroom it was just a huge relief and freeing experience to...*
not be listening to someone else’s way of doing things or forced into somebody else’s mold cause none of those fit me really. When I was in college, I knew there were things I wanted to do that I wasn’t getting the opportunity to do when I was in undergrad classes or in somebody else’s classroom, although I had a great student teaching experience. I knew that I wanted to do something more than just teach art in my classroom. I have this mentality all through and I still do that I am not training little artists. I think I want them to have an appreciation for art. I want them to problem solve, and I want them to think creatively. I’m much more into process than product. So, much that I saw prior to getting into my own classroom was here’s this cute little project, but I was really more interested into more of a way of thinking. When I got in my own classroom, it was cool to see that here is my idea, this is what I want to do and “Oh, my gosh I can actually do it.” Seeing it work was great, that it wasn’t just some pipe dream and that you could actually pull it off in a classroom. I remember so much from undergrad being about let’s learn about DBAE (Discipline Based Art Education) and learn about the elements and principles like my elementary methods class was. We had these projects where you get an element of art, and you have to develop a lesson around that, and that just wasn’t what I was interested in at all. So that was different cause I felt like when I got into my own classroom I didn’t have a lot to pull from. I was kind of starting fresh. I was coming up with all my own ideas.

Once Layla began teaching she described how she was able to see the high aspirations she held for her curriculum become a reality. She described numerous factors as having made this possible. She stated that:
Starting in the Master’s program allowed me the opportunity to be surrounded by other teachers who shared my ideas or who were at least receptive to them. I was also blessed to have a very supportive administration, who allowed me to move beyond the cookie-cutter art projects that looked great decorating the walls as they've done in the past and to strive to create an art classroom where meaningful experiences and learning, even if it’s not art as traditionally thought. Because my administration supported me I was able to get the majority of the classroom teachers to work with me in making this happen.

Layla expressed many times that these factors had enabled her to have confidence as a teacher. She commented that the biggest change in going from art student to teacher was her level of confidence in the classroom. She attributed this to being able to see my ideals become a reality over the past two years. Not only had Layla’s confidence improved from knowing that what she wanted for her classroom could work, but also it had made her feel successful. Layla believed that the flexibility of teaching art, along with the supportive environment her school provided, was a freeing experience in that it allowed her to step back and adjust her curriculum as she saw fit.

While Layla’s aspirations for curriculum integration with other subjects had been successful, she did discuss areas in regard to her curriculum that she had struggled with as a beginning teacher. She referenced these issues in contrast to the expectations she had held in comparison with what she had experienced in her classroom. She stated that:

Prior to teaching full-time, I expected to have more time in the classroom for a well-rounded art curriculum. I wanted every lesson that I taught to have some sort of closure or critique session. I’m still not sure about how other teachers do
it, but I have yet to find the time to incorporate critique on a regular basis. Typically, if there is time, my students take a lap around the room and view everyone’s artwork. There is little time spent discussing the artwork of peers. I know it seems cliché to talk about a lack of time, but it was certainly unexpected!

Layla illustrated how her beginning years of teaching were a reevaluation of what she had imagined teaching to be as well as how her lived experiences had either aligned or had not aligned with those beliefs. Overall, Layla felt that she was fortunate based on her experiences as a beginning art teacher.

**Developing positive student-teacher relationships.** During the course of the study, Layla indicated developing positive student-teacher relationships as a recurring theme. Given the complexity of tasks that come with beginning a career in teaching, Layla discussed her pleasant surprise in having realized that elementary age children are much more capable (in their artistic abilities) than she had imagined them to be. She stated that:

*Prior situations such as observations, student teaching and camps left me feeling like I would have to “dumb things down” to teach on an elementary level. Surprisingly, I found that my students are capable of much more. I was pleased to learn that if I set my expectations high they would rise to that level. Similarly, I noticed other teachers who set their expectations low, or talked to students on a much lower level, and students acted in kind. In my classroom, I try to be as honest as possible with my students. I’m very transparent and they appreciate that. I was always bothered by teachers in school who were so authoritative and did not have the appearance of being human. I want my students to feel*
comfortable trying new things and taking risks in my classroom, so I think it helps to show them that I do the same. I have introduced a lesson more that once by saying, “Ok guys, this is the first time I’ve ever tried this in an elementary classroom and it may not work out as expected, but we will all learn something!” or "Hey, this is what I had planned but it is not working! Here’s what we are going to try instead". My 4th grade students recently stitched quilt squares and I showed them what I thought was the best way but said I was open to suggestions. A student showed me a different way to tie a knot that made it 10 times easier for everyone! I think that it’s important to remember that they are capable of more than is often expected.

Layla also indicated how her experiences had shown her that the job of teaching art to elementary age students extended past the role of instructing as well as the management of the classroom and behavior. She shared that what stood out the most in her experiences, as a beginning art teacher, was that she didn’t realize she would be able to have such a good relationship with her students or that she would care about them as much as she did. When asked to further elaborate, Layla stated that, I’ve realized my students are not just kids, but individuals, who are interesting and have things they care about. I guess I didn’t really think that would be such a big part of my teaching.

In one of our interviews, Layla shared a story of how she had developed a positive relationship with one student in particular. She stated that:

I have this one, fifth grade boy, who my name for him is Tom because the first week of school my first year of teaching, when I had 900 names to learn between the two schools, I swore his name was Tom. Well, his name is actually Casey.
When the class was leaving, I said, “Your name is Tom” and as a result it just kind of became his name. Now, two years later his name is Tom to me and he started messing up my name and called me Mrs. Tom, which just so happens because he is wise and funny beyond his years. I told him the other day I cannot imagine, but that you are going to get funnier as you get older.

Layla characterized her positive relationships with students as having been possible because of her willingness to change her teaching to accommodate those relationships.

**Lived experiences.** Layla’s discussions regarding her lived experiences revolved around her construction and understanding of her role and identity as an art teacher within the school culture in which the experiences she shared occurred. Highlighted throughout her discussions is an awareness of the aspects she had not expected or that had been similar, more influential, or different than she had anticipated. These discussions are organized below based on the recurring themes of non-teaching responsibilities, classroom management and discipline issues, respect, and negotiating school culture.

**Non-teaching responsibilities.** During the course of the study, Layla indicated non-teaching responsibilities as a recurring theme. While Layla believed that she should have expected it since her husband was a teacher, she nevertheless found herself unprepared for the various roles that had not aligned with what she viewed her job to entail. She stated that:

_Prior to having my own classroom, I did not expect to have so many “non-teaching” responsibilities that would take up my time. Being the art teacher, I feel like I’m constantly balancing teaching and lesson plans with data teams,_
duties, normal procedural things, car rider duty and the added “favors” that teachers and administrators ask frequently of the art teacher. I often have a set design for the musical to assemble, a banner for a retirement to paint or a sign for a teacher’s classroom to help with. These things are not unbearable, but they often leave me feeling rushed or like less of a teacher because I’m trying to complete things while the kids are working so as not to stay so late after school.

On top of her role of teaching art to students in kindergarten through fifth grade, Layla also sponsored a fifth grade art club. While it was an added responsibility that required additional time to plan, Layla described it as a pleasant addition to her job. She stated that:

Because it is a small group and because we only have students who want to be there it makes for an ideal teaching experience. I am able to teach students who are enthusiastic and truly interested in what they’re learning with minimal behavioral issues. I am also able to try things and challenge students more than I could in their typical classroom setting. Those days are the best days because there is engagement, enthusiasm, and a willingness to learn both from the students and from myself. I find that to be one of the few times during the week where my students challenge me.

Classroom management and discipline issues. During the course of the study, Layla’s discussions frequently addressed the topic of classroom management and discipline issues, which indicated this to be a recurring theme. In a discussion on what Layla believed to be the most challenging aspects of her job, she laughed and then stated that I’m going to say this so I’ll get it out of my head. I’d have to say classroom
management. I think that's really the most challenging thing because it's just a battle most days. Classroom management was the area Layla most wished she did not have to deal with. She found that it interfered most with her teaching because of the constant little challenging conversations about was that a good choice. In reflecting on her past experiences, Layla commented that one thing that I struggled with during student teaching was being in control in the classroom. She shared that that those experiences had caused her to worry about this facet of teaching prior to beginning her first year. She stated that I was worried my students would run all over me or that I would not have control of my classroom. In discussing her first year of teaching, Layla provided the following story that illustrated how knowing the ways to handle classroom management and discipline issues was a learning process that took time. She shared that:

_"I had this one little boy who was a 1st grader at the other school where I had 30 1st graders in a class. I did have a paraprofessional in there helping out normally when that class came, and they ranged from really helpful to sitting there (laughing). I remember this particular instance where there is just chaos because there is just not enough of me to pass out the supplies and get class going and before you know it you’re half way through class with that many kids anyway. This one kid I look over there and he has the glue bottle stuck up his nose, and I looked at him, and he got wide-eyed and yanked it out. So, he knew that he wasn’t supposed to be doing it. I was just over it. I got onto the kid, and I went to the paraprofessional and said, “So and so just had this glue bottle stuck up his nose.” She said, “Well, did you tell him not to.” I was like, well obviously. After that incident, I called my husband and was like I’m done. I mean, do I have to tell_
kids not to do that and my directions actually have to be don't cut your own hair; and don't stuck this glue bottle up your nose; and don’t eat the crayons, all before I can start teaching anything. So, that was one of those moments where I was like, Oh God, I am not cut out for this. But, it really got better quickly, I guess.

In addition to just learning the behaviors of children, Layla discussed the transition that takes place when students must become accustomed to the changes brought by having a new teacher. Layla’s discussions highlight how the transition from the old art teacher to the new art teacher can result in some difficulty if the new teacher holds expectations that greatly differ in comparison to those held by the old art teacher. In reflecting on the topic of classroom management and discipline issues, Layla stated that:

*I have been really fortunate this year to not really have any major behavior problems. All of the kids at this school want to come to my class, which is great because it was not that way last year when they weren’t used to everything, and it was not that way at the other school either. I had a lot of, I guess, different kinds of students that were not interested in my class. They liked the way it was before with the old art teacher when they didn’t have to do anything.*

During our discussions, Layla shared that she felt that this was an area she still held concern or tension about as well as an area she desired to become more comfortable with. She attributed this tension to the fact that the dynamics of the art classroom make classroom management and discipline really difficult, especially at the elementary level. She stated that, *there’s not really any ammo or as many things to work. I have no power really outside of my classroom. You can’t send anything back to the teachers really.* As a result, *the students catch on really quick,* which Layla described as further contributing
to the problem of addressing classroom management and discipline in the elementary art classroom.

In her second year of teaching, Layla drew from her experiences thus far in her career as well as the advice of her peers to help her create the most effective classroom management system. One aspect of her classroom that Layla described as having aided in her ability to begin to effectively manage her classroom was that she had worked hard to earn her students’ respect. She shared that this was possible because she had made it a point to have them be partners with her in their education. Layla found it vital to have students’ respect as well as an effective classroom management system because student behavior played such a large part in her ability to teach successfully. She shared that:

For better or worse, student behavior plays a huge part in how a day goes. There are some days where I leave feeling like I spent more of my day addressing behavioral issues than actually teaching. Finally, the level of student excitement and engagement play into what sort of day I am having. When students are happy to be in your classroom or are truly interested in the lesson, it is one of the most exciting things in the world.

Respect. During the study, Layla indicated respect as a recurring theme. She often referenced the issue of respect in regard to the view of the art teacher and art program by the larger school culture, such as her co-workers and administration. Layla stated that:

In my school setting, I see art as more than just a “fun” specials class. The art program is respected by my administration, which in turn makes it more respected by my colleagues. In my school art seems to be viewed as a respected
class where students are not pulled and time is often not taken away. Now, in past years there was a little bit of a lack in the art program. They had a few people in there that weren’t certified for a little while and it just became more of a filler kind of a thing. So, I think I’ve gained more respect because of how diverse and rich my curriculum is compared to what it had been in the past.

This type of equality with her peers was not an experience Layla described as being a part of her first year’s experiences at her previous school setting, when she was halftime between the two schools. Layla stated that:

Last year, I was spending one week at one school and one week at another. It was two very different experiences. One where I was kind of more of the babysitter almost, not respected, looked at more of like, “Oh, these are pretty or these are nice decorations” versus the other school, which I am at full time this year, where I was looked at more as a teacher, an equal with regular education teachers and that felt great. But I went out of my way to make that happen, I went out of my way to work with other teachers and that’s when my principal noticed it. I did go out of my way to pursue those relationships. I think part of it was that I was half time, so really I wasn’t there. So my classroom was not my classroom at that school. It was my classroom if I was in it, if I had the door locked, if I didn’t let anyone else in. It was kind of the storage place for everything else, a place where you move all your tables around so my kids can’t get to their seats because of it, or we have this event going on at the school that we have going on today, and they need to do the catering in your room, so you take your students somewhere else today to teach them. So, that kind of always coming back on
Mondays to a dirty classroom or my chairs are missing and my supplies messed with and stuff, that was part of it. It infuriated me. The other part of it was just a place for dropping off your kids, them coming back later, a little bit messy, but they didn’t really care what you were doing in there because it didn’t really matter. I don’t know how to explain that whole experience. Another thing I guess was the planning time. At the school that I’m at this year, I have an hour and a half of planning every day. The other school that I was at I had 50 minutes, but that was also my lunch period, so I had lunch/planning. I just couldn’t get anything done. I was just constantly running around never really able to catch up and had a much different experience there with the other teachers with just the school that I’m at this year my class is a class. Students are expected to be there. It may be that the teachers here may just like having a planning time more (laughing), but the kids don’t get pulled out of my class. They don’t schedule other things during my class. I had countless experiences at the other school where a kid would come down five minutes after their class is supposed to be there and say, “Oh, we’re having a party so we’re not going to come down for art today” or half the class would come, but half would be back in the classroom doing something or all the kids would get pulled out for something during that time. So, that part was I had classes of 32 compared to classes of 14, which is much different from the other school. I would have a class of 32 and then I have all of these kids that are coming in the next day not knowing what we did and needing to be caught up.
When reflecting on what she wanted her role to be as an art teacher, Layla commented that in her pre-service preparation she had not been sure what her role would be. She commented that she did not want to be viewed as the flighty, crazy art teacher, who sits in the corner from day one. Once she began her job she described her view of her role as having changed, especially from her student teaching to classroom experience. She stated that it’s not that my student teaching experience was not wonderful, but it was I’m an art teacher and maybe I’ll hang out with the music teacher or just keep to myself as well as lot of complaining about not being respected, which is the exact opposite of what I try to be as an art teacher now.

Layla’s experiences during her first two years of teaching had allowed her to see what an art teacher can be in one of her schools and then that preconceived notion that the art teacher just colors and his or her classroom doesn’t matter, more of a babysitter-type format as experienced in her other school setting. In order to gain respect for the role she desired for herself as the art teacher, Layla discussed how she went about advocating for her art program. She felt that it was important to do so in order to ensure that others in the school know what is happening inside the art classroom and what I wanted my role to be. She stated that:

*I advocate for the program by displaying artwork. I try to make sure that I keep examples of our lessons out in the hallway for staff and parents and I make sure to include the description and standards covered. Another way that I advocate is simply by telling other teachers and my administration what we are up to in art. I am never afraid to talk someone's ear off about the exciting things going on in my room! Finally, I try to make sure that the people around me know that I take my*
field seriously, by presenting at art conferences, trying to get published, and presenting at the county board of education meetings.

The concept that beginning art teachers’ ability to gain respect may require time, was highlighted in the way that Layla emphasized throughout our discussions that she had gone out of her way to establish her art program in her school, which had gained her the respect she felt that she had begun to achieve.

**Negotiating school culture.** During the course of this study, Layla indicated negotiating school culture as a recurring theme. In a discussion on the aspects of teaching believed to be most challenging, Layla talked about how she felt the aspects outside of the classroom stuff to be challenging. When asked to elaborate, she stated that:

I’ve always identified more with kids. I can put myself in a kid’s perspective. For whatever reason, I remember being a kid a lot. I can deal with them. They are not that frustrating to me. It’s the adults that are annoying. Working in an environment of all women there are certain things that are frustrating with having to put on the child gloves to talk to this one person cause they’ll get their feelings hurt, and this one person, if you say the wrong thing, they’ll get their feelings hurt and run and to tell the principal. So, that kind of stuff is frustrating. I think you’re going to have that at any school and probably at any job. But I think that that’s something that I wouldn’t experience as much if I was at a high school where there are more men or where the school staff is larger and most spread out. It is just being in an environment all women school or maybe the fact that I am the newbie.
Layla went on to provide a story of a situation she had experienced that illustrates how she had to negotiate the school culture in which she worked in. She shared that:

*I’m getting to a place where I know this individual and what to do, but last year, my first year teaching, I was at that situation where I was split between two schools so I’d have a full week off at one school where my classroom was not used for a week. I would come back on Mondays, and my tables would be all moved around and things would be in different places and stuff. At the bigger school, that was just a problem that I had to deal with more than half the time.*

*My principal at that school suggested that I put a piece of paper on the board that shows what the classroom should look like when you return on Monday, like where the tables go, since so many people use your room during that week that if the first person doesn’t set it back up then nobody knows what it’s supposed to look like. That made perfect sense and the principals at the two schools were friends, so when that started happening at the other school, I told the principal at this school what we were doing at other and she said that’s a great idea about putting up a sign where everything should go. So, I put up a sign and sent out, you know this is a much smaller school, an email to everybody and said, “Hey guys, I know multiple groups are using my room while I’m not there, so I have this piece of paper up on my filing cabinet now that shows where the tables are supposed to be. If you could please return them when you are done, it’d be awesome.” That was that, and my principal was the one who told me to do it anyway. Then, there was this one teacher that sent out this mass email that said, “Thank you so much Layla for letting us know that we’re leaving your classroom
messy.” And this is in a mass email. She said, “You know you could have just come to me directly and told me you had a problem with me.” Thinking that, cause she’s so egocentric, that everything is all about her, like she’s the only one that uses my room. “I’d appreciate it if you dealt with your problems face to face,” so says the woman who’s sending the mass email to everyone. “So now I know.” She’s the one I have more problems with than anybody, but now I know to just pick your battles, or it’s easier to just not say anything at all to that one. But, its funny now, but at the time, you know, I’m 22 and just trying to get along with everybody and I’m excited to be there. I had already shut down my computer when she had sent that email to everybody, and I was in the front office when the principal pops out of her office and says, “Did you check your email yet?” I said, “No.” And she said, “Just ignore it. She’s kind of like this with everybody.” So, I certainly at this point know to pick my battles, but I think that’s one of those things you have no way of knowing how to handle. I’m just trying to stay positive.

I try not to say anything negative and fall into that trap at school.

Layla demonstrated how difficult it can be to negotiate the larger environment of a school culture that is new to a beginning teacher as well as how handling the various situations that pertain to the aspects of teaching outside of their classroom learning process.

Support mechanisms. During the course of the study, Layla evidenced support as a recurring theme in her data. For the majority of her discussions, she stated that she felt very supported in her current work environment by her administrators and co-workers. When discussing her administration, Layla provided numerous examples of instances in which her administration had been supportive, such as empowering her to
create an art classroom focused on curriculum integrations with an emphasis on process as opposed to product. Layla described it as *empowering* when her administration gave her positive feedback over the two years. She stated that she (her principal) *told me often that she didn’t know she could get this much out of an art program*. Also, Layla discussed how her administrator had paid for her to get her gifted certification and encouraged her to take on leadership roles by inviting her to be on several committees and data teams within her school. This type of support had not always been the case for Layla when she had been split between two schools (school C and school D) during her first year of teaching. She stated that:

*The school that I only worked at my first year (school D) had data teams, but when I asked to participate they (the administration) said, “Don’t worry about it. You’re just the art teacher.” And they had stuff like book studies and they told me, “Just don’t worry about it. You’re the art teacher.” Whereas, I was put on a data team with fourth grade teachers at the other school (school C- her current school setting) that my principal thought would interest me and that would be beneficial as well.*

Layla, also, addressed the issue of support when discussing how she had personally been supported by her administration in participating in various professional development opportunities. Layla had found her administration very supportive in allowing her to attend professional development opportunities like the Georgia (GAEA) and National (NAEA) Art Educators Association art conferences, which Layla described as providing her *lots of new ideas*. Also, during the course of the study, she conducted a presentation at the NAEA conference. When we met for our second interview, Layla had
just the night before given a presentation to her school system’s monthly board of education meeting based on her efforts to do curriculum integration in her classroom.

She stated that *I was truly honored by the invitation and that my principal was so enthusiastic about all the cross-curricular learning going on in my classroom. It made me proud to know she is aware of what happens in my classroom.*

While Layla found her administration to be extremely supportive the majority of the time, she did, on several occasions, discuss one issue that greatly impacted her job and which showed her administration as having been unsupportive. In one of her reflective journal entries, Layla wrote that:

*I felt unsupported as an educator within my school this week in particular. This lack of support has only been experienced in the past two years in reference to the topic of paraprofessional support with special needs students. This year my school has been dealing with some particularly challenging kindergarten students. One student, who is diagnosed with autism, requires one-on-one attention throughout the day. Behaviorally and socially he is about a three year old, while intellectually he is on grade level with his peers. This student is labeled as "a runner", meaning that there is a concern that he will run away from the group or out of unblocked doors. He also frequently throws temper-tantrums when something does not go his way, which results in screaming and laying down on the floor. All of the other SPED (Special Education) kindergarten students are grouped into one classroom with the student I've already mentioned. The reasoning for this is so that a special education teacher, along with the homeroom teacher and paraprofessional, can be with the group at all times. This adult*
support, however, does not apply to special area classrooms. When this group comes to my class, I am the only adult in control of a mixed class of 16 students; 10 of which have disabilities. A 30 minute tantrum ensued in my classroom on Tuesday, leaving me exhausted and unable to teach the remaining 15 students in my class. Administration has denied extra support for this group and the thought of five more years like this seems unbearable at times. I often feel that I cannot teach this group of students and feel more like I am just surviving or baby-sitting for 45 minutes.

On another occasion, Layla expressed that the hardest part of this situation was knowing help was denied with that class, even though it was known that the board office had said it was needed. Overwhelmed with the situation, Layla had approached her administration with her concerns. She shared the following response her administrator had given her. She stated that: my principal told me to not worry about teaching art to that class. She said, “We’re just trying to teach behavior and stuff like that right now. So, if they miss their art lesson they’ll be ok.” Layla felt unsupported and helpless in this situation that if it had been any other teacher aside from a specials teacher that support would have been provided. While this situation was the only time Layla felt unsupported at that school so far, she was quick to point out that half the year had been spent dealing with that situation. The recurrence and length at which Layla discussed this issue demonstrated how impactful it had been to her as a beginning teacher.

**Mentorship.** When asked what she thought had helped her most during her transition into full-time teaching, Layla shared that she felt it was having been in graduate school to earn her masters in art education. She explained that:
I was in grad school prior to getting my job, so I was around peers who were thinking on a much different level and had experience, which rubbed off on me. People that I already looked up to were in classes with me, and they could give me advice. That really helped me out a lot cause in undergrad we’re all just clueless together. I looked back through all of my lesson plan ideas and folders that I have from undergrad, and I’m like I would never teach any of this you know cause we didn’t know what we were doing then. Because I had no idea at the time I wrote those lessons what it was like to have 20 first graders in a class at a time.

Layla attributed being in the graduate program as having provided a place where she could be surrounded by like professionals on a weekly basis. Since it is common in elementary school to be the only art teacher in a school setting, Layla described the weekly interaction as having provided her with people to brainstorm with and to reflect on her teaching experiences with.

When asked if her school system had provided any resources that she felt helped her during her transition to fulltime teaching, Layla stated that, officially I don’t think either of my schools provided any resources. She further commented that:

I had really good teachers who stepped in to be my mentor without being required to be. These two teachers at my schools immediately stepped up in more of a motherly role upon my arrival. The help of these two teachers is indescribable. They helped me with everything from getting to know the norms of the school to advising me on how to talk to specific individuals around the school. Both teachers are exemplars, in my opinion, and have aided me in developing my curriculum and developing my classroom management plan, especially discipline
wise just helping know those kinds of things or how to deal with particular kinds of kids.

Layla wrote in her journal entries that she felt that in her first years of teaching she had several mentors all acting in different roles. She added that veteran art teachers stepped in and gave advice and lesson plan ideas as soon as I received the teaching position.

Layla shared that, fortunately, as a first year teacher, she felt support from everyone and felt that she could ask questions, and there would always be someone willing to help.

She stated that it certainly made the transition from student to teacher a lot easier.

Layla felt that it was important to have a mentor during the first years of teaching.

She shared that there are so many little, almost trivial things that no one remembers or thinks to tell you, whether in college or when student teaching. She listed some little things she had experienced as having been trying to find the where the adult bathrooms were, learning the norms for her school, such as how there were specific ways to walk in the halls, and the school-wide behavior plan systems. Layla stated that:

_I have found that unless you have a lot of other new teachers coming in the year you start, you miss a lot of stuff everyone else already knows. We have a new teacher at my school this year, and my principal said that other day at a meeting, “We’re going to do this the way we always do it.” And the new teacher said, “Hello! I don’t know how we always do it.” This is the way I felt a lot last year. Because there are little things no one tells you._

Layla provided a lot of insight as to the things that she felt future art teachers should know based on her own experiences as a beginning art teacher. She described the major aspects as _learning what you are most comfortable with in your classroom, trying_
to not get overwhelmed when approaching the job of creating your classroom, and
creating a need, want, and wish list and a supply list. Most importantly, she felt new
teachers must remember *that it will take time to become confident*
CHAPTER 7

STACY:

MENTORSHIP INSIGHT AND SUPPORT LIMIT DISCOURAGEMENT AND ENABLE SUCCESS

It’s a lot of hard, exhausting work, but I love what I do at the end of the day! I’m young and have the energy for it and somehow manage to get it all done and still enjoy it. You grow as you teach, and you grow with the students you have. That’s what’s happened to me.

Background

When I first met with Stacy, she was very nervous and would whisper to me when she felt unsure as to what to answer. Although she appeared timid, she gave the impression of being a very sensitive listener. She would listen carefully to my questions and often thought long and hard before she articulated her thoughts. She was a perky individual, who happened to be four months pregnant at the start of our interviews and was due in fifteen days at the conclusion of our last interview. She amazed me with her energy, especially in consideration of all the different projects she took on with her job, her vibrancy after teaching all day while being pregnant, as well as her willingness to meet with me after a long day at work.

Through jobs, volunteerism, and school programs, Stacy had worked with children and art nearly as long as she could remember. As such, Stacy informed me that her decision to be an art teacher started out with her having been an art student herself.
While Stacy believed her first inspiration to become an art teacher evolved in elementary school, it was not until high school that she concretely decided to pursue a college degree in Art Education. Stacy maintained the course of earning her degree in Art Education by first completing her Associates in Art at a junior college before transferring to a four-year institution to earn her Bachelors in Art Education. Stacy completed her practicum and student teaching in the same elementary school setting.

**Educational Setting**

Right after graduation, Stacy was hired at her current elementary school, which averaged approximately 700 students. Having grown up in a very rural mountain community, Stacy liked the transition to a more suburban setting where she and her husband now lived and worked. While the elementary school was very different from the school Stacy attended as a child, she found it very similar to the school where she student taught. Stacy described this as having been *extremely helpful* as she adjusted to her new role as art teacher, and it made the school setting *a good fit* because it was so similar to her student teaching school setting. She was offered a job teaching at another school with which she had interviewed, but she turned the job down because she felt that she would not *have been able to fill all the needs of the students since it was a world language academy* (school where students know English as their second language). She found it important when taking your first job to be *sort of in your comfort zone*, because during that time you are going to have *such big shoes to fill* in her opinion.

Over the course of her first year of teaching, Stacy shared that she was observed 10-12 times and was expected to send in her lesson plans along with classroom teachers. Stacy reported her second year to have been similar with her *administration in and out of*
her room frequently. While Stacy could not tell whether it stressed her out or if it kept her on her toes by ensuring that she was doing what she was supposed to be doing, Stacy was glad the observations were required because it made her feel that her art class was a valued part of the school. She also felt it was helpful that her administration left real comments and not just a checklist. She stated, that way I know what I can work on and what I’m already doing right. She admitted that her administration may not completely understand what she does in her classroom, but she felt that they try to understand.

As such, Stacy described her school as supportive in that her co-workers and administration attempted to understand her art curriculum. Stacy shared that some teachers at her school were still stuck in the arts and crafts view or the view that her role was to provide them with a planning period mindset, but that overall her school seemed to succeed because the faculty all cared about what was going on in every single classroom. Nevertheless, Stacy described interruptions as having been a regular occurrence and numerous students with IEPs (Individualized Education Program) to accommodate for as a challenge. Stacy had been able to work through those challenges because of the good climate at her school where all teachers worked together. This climate translated into a school environment where teachers and students were engaged. Largely, Stacy credited the role of a pre-service mentor teacher, with whom she still maintains a very close relationship, as having prepared her for the various situations she might encounter. She credited her mentor with having given her a heads up of the aspects the job of elementary art teacher might entail, aside from just guiding her in her ability to teach and adjust her skills as needed for when Stacy had her own classroom.
In addition to teaching art, Stacy was also expected to teach math RTI (Response to Early Intervention) during her workday, a role she felt completely unprepared for. Like the other beginning art teachers I spoke with, Stacy was planning to eventually return to school for an advanced degree. However, an advanced degree was of no interest to her right now because the focus of her life was starting a family.

**Stepping into the Participant’s Classroom**

As the lights dimmed, 4th grade students entered Stacy’s classroom and moved to their designated seats at tables across the room. On the screen was an artwork by modern artist Tord Boontje, the artist that was the focus of the day’s lesson. Very quickly, students became engaged and began responding to the artwork before them by making comments like, “Cool!” and “Wow!” or “Look at that!” Stacy began a discussion introducing the students to the artist, his technique, and his use of shadow through positive and negative space. She probed student learning with questions and always included students in the discussion. When a student was believed to be off task, Stacy redirected him with comments such as, *I have night vision, so just because it is dark it does not mean I can’t see you.* Most often, she was heard answering a question with a question in order to develop critical thinking skills in her students. Creating innovative ways to use budget-friendly materials for hands-on-projects that were meaningful and interesting to the students was the focus of her curriculum.

Following the PowerPoint presentation, Stacy had all students gather around her for a demonstration of how to construct a large, complex, three-dimensional kinetic sculpture from one 18x24 sheet of white paper using only circles, pencils, and scissors, before sending them off to work. Using a system of table helpers displayed on a poster
for students, materials were passed out systematically with students responsible for getting all materials out. Her classroom management method provided a combination of organization as well as a way to increase student learning during even the simple task of getting materials out, such as students having to know the color scheme used to designate each table in order to know what material to take to which table. She stated that, she believed in teaching in a manner that *empowered students by placing upon them the responsibility of taking care of having what they need and completing a project through discovery rather than having it told or done for them.* Stacy’s classroom reflected her belief in the *importance of being organized,* which she felt *helped in managing time.*

Students worked up until clean-up time. It was at that time that their voices were heard begging for more time to keep working. Following clean-up, students lined up one table at a time and played a game called, Strike a Pose, while waiting on their classroom teacher to pick them up. The game consisted of selecting a student who then called out a gesture or pose, such as hitting a homerun, for the students in line to make without talking. The students would all strike the pose, after which the student would then call out the name of another student, who would then tell the students the next pose to strike. The game would continue until the teacher arrived. Not a minute was wasted during Stacy’s classes because as she puts it, *there is never enough time.*

Stacy’s classroom was large in size and open and allowed for students to easily move about. Cheerful, brightly-spotted curtains hung above two large windows flanking each side of her white board which was centered on the largest wall in the room and allowed for natural light to enter the space. On the wall above the sink was a large color wheel, which Stacy had just finished painting over Christmas break. It, along with the
numerous art posters, reflected the vibrancy of the room. The classroom had a blatant lack of technology resources, such as computers and a SMART Board, despite the school having those resources available in other classrooms as well as the library. Her PowerPoint presentations were made possible by hooking her laptop up to a small wall mounted 24” television.

Stacy believed her primary role as an elementary art teacher was to teach children how to express themselves, to teach them how to grow; not just academically, but as individuals, creators, as our future. While the students may have followed the same directions for each project, their artworks are each personal and unique, thereby reflecting the students who created them. Stacy’s students were truly immersed in an environment where they are encouraged to grow as individuals, while she herself learned through them.

**Emergent Themes Through Data Collection**

As part of the analysis of Stacy’s data collection, the following major themes emerged regarding imagined and lived experiences and support mechanisms. These will be further discussed in the following sections to better understand Stacy’s perceptions of her second year of teaching based upon her initial expectations and the evolution of those as she lived them. This data is derived, as described in Chapter 3, from data that was collected using the following methods: interviews and reflective journal entries.

**Imagined experiences.** During the course of the study, Stacy described herself as having held realistic aspirations for her career as a beginning art teacher and what she imagined it to entail. Stacy stated that, *I imagined teaching to be the most exciting and fulfilling career for me. I knew that there would be good days and bad days, but it (art*
education) *is something I am passionate about*. Throughout the study, Stacy described a myriad of situations that resulted in a variety of emotions. While she had not fully anticipated all the experiences she lived, she reflected that when faced with the unexpected she had felt prepared overall based on the experience and advice she had received from her cooperating teacher when student teaching. Two specific examples Stacy provided to support her belief that she was prepared for her first year of teaching were (1) extended time (one year) spent observing and student teaching in one school setting and (2) transparent discussions with her cooperating teacher regarding the realities specific to teaching in the classroom as an elementary art teacher, but also as a teacher within a larger school culture. She shared that *when little things that I never really thought about happened, like the ones my cooperating teacher had told me when I student taught, mainly those outside the classroom, I felt I was prepared*. The following sections presented below reflect areas Stacy indicated as recurring themes based on her imagined experiences and expectations: curriculum design and lesson plans and student motivation.

**Curriculum design and lesson plans.** During the course of this study, Stacy indicated the issues of curriculum design and lesson plans as a recurring theme. When asked about her expectations prior to having gained employment, she stated that *I wanted to teach children to think outside the box and how to individually be creative and expressive. I had these amazing lessons that taught higher order thinking skills and included intricate projects*. Without prompting, Stacy then described how those expectations had been affected as she began teaching. She stated that:
I knew that teaching would be stressful and challenging, but I did not fully realize that my perfected lesson would need some room for mistakes and time management. I had read and studied the different learning styles and how to teach them; however, even with my student teaching experience, I had no idea of how difficult the actual task would be given the ratio of them to me. It was not until I was physically in my own room with no other help that I realized, Wow! It’s not just about writing great lesson plans. I can’t say that I was really shocked or anything. I feel like I’m getting to do a job I love. I just came to realize even more that you have to be ready to alter things as needed: like your lessons, your style of teaching, and your expectations.

Stacy felt she was successful in her curriculum design and lesson planning because she had understood from the beginning of the first year how important being organized and using time wisely were to teaching, especially teaching art. She described the teaching of art as demanding so much responsibility, which had necessitated the creation of a very good organizational system for the students as well as for myself. She felt that being organized saved time, an aspect she had experienced a shortage of. She stated that you don’t want to waste time hunting for things. It will drive you crazy. So, once school started I had what I wanted when I needed it. That really helped in my transition to teaching and career thus far. The one aspect that Stacy felt she needed more of was adequate time to plan during the school day in order to teach the type of engaging lessons she desired. She stated that I find myself staying late and going in early to plan and prep for classes. Although she was able to get things done, she shared that it still took every minute and sometimes required her staying after school and then taking
work home, especially when you take into consideration the parts of the day that eat into your planning time like painting banners or meetings.

**Student motivation.** Throughout the study, Stacy indicated student motivation as a recurring theme. In order for Stacy to create an environment in which students were motivated to learn, Stacy shared that she found it important to *tell my students what I want them to learn and what I expect.* Stacy felt that her students could *reiterate the expectations* she shared with them as well as believed that students were provided with an opportunity where they could be *excited and proud of themselves when they meet those expectations.* Not only did Stacy believe there were less issues with discipline in her classroom when students were motivated but also, believed it provided her with moments when she had felt most successful. Stacy shared that:

*One time I felt successful as an art teacher was when a student brought in a sculpture they created at home. After being highly engaged in a lesson about sculptures, I had a couple of students that actually went home and told their parents about what they were doing in art class. One parent gave their child access to the materials they needed to create another sculpture. I was so excited to see that the student took what he learned in art, went home, and created a whole different sculpture. Since they only see me once a week, I was excited to see that they are taking what they learned in class and using the knowledge at home.*

While Stacy had felt for the most part that her students were highly motivated about what they had learned and created in her art room, she did confide that she felt most
disappointed when students comment a dislike of art. During our last interview, she shared that:

When you start teaching you just assume all students will love art, largely, I guess, because you love it so much. And then you start teaching and have kids that despite your best efforts just don’t like art, which makes me think what am I doing wrong? I think you are going to have that anywhere. If we were all the same, the world would be a boring place. I mean my students all participate in class. It’s just I found it really disappointing once I started teaching, but I’m learning to cope with that disappointment.

Ultimately, Stacy described that when she began teaching she realized how different her classes were and how they would require a different method of teaching. She stated that it’s about more than just making great lessons. It’s about learning to re-adjust your expectations in order to meet the needs and learning styles of the students.

Lived experiences. The largest part of Stacy’s discussions regarding her lived experiences revolved around the issues of developing her role and identity as an art teacher and working within her school culture. Her discussions reflect her awareness of the aspects she had not expected and what had been similar, more influential, or different than she had anticipated. These discussions are organized below based on the recurring themes of non-teaching responsibilities, respect, and negotiating school culture.

Non-teaching responsibilities. During this study, Stacy indicated non-teaching responsibilities as a recurring theme. Stacy illustrated her newfound awareness of the responsibilities her job entailed based on her lived experiences as a beginning teacher when she stated, my expectations have been altered as the year has progressed mostly
due to the many responsibilities I was unaware were in my job description. In her interviews, Stacy discussed how those factors played a large part in what she considered to be a good day of teaching largely because of the time it (non-teaching responsibilities) takes away from teaching. She shared that:

> A good day teaching art would have to be the day that I can focus on my lessons, and make sure the students get as much out of those lessons as possible. Good days are when I do not have to do a duty during my planning time and when I do not have a meeting during my lunchtime or find myself having to decorate another bulletin board that has been added to the list of ones I’m responsible for. The count right now is at eight. I even have to decorate the lunchroom bulletin board. Without these interruptions and additional tasks, I can focus more on my students and what I want them to learn.

Stacy described numerous experiences where non-teaching responsibilities had been placed upon her during her beginning years as an art teacher, such as sponsoring an art club that required her to stay after school with no stipend, making props for PTO (Parent Teacher Organization) meetings and plays, and creating posters for school events. In her reflective journal entries, Stacy described an unanticipated occurrence where she had been volunteered to paint a 60ft by10ft mural in the school cafeteria, during the course of the study, after the school system decided to paint the entire school interior. She stated that, teachers quickly spoke up about the current mural, saying they did not like it or that it wasn’t “child-like” and that the new art teacher should paint a new one. Stacy shared that her administration explained to her that the painters only came once every 10 years or so and then asked her if she would be willing. Stacy explained that she
had felt unable to say no. As a result, she spent the majority of the time, during this study, working up on a ladder, while being more than six months pregnant when she started, in order to complete the mural. Despite the fact that the responsibility had been something she had not anticipated, Stacy shared that she had not felt unprepared for handling these additional responsibilities. She stated that I was given insight, when student teaching, about things outside of what I thought would be my role as an art teacher, which isn’t always a bad thing. Being provided with “a heads up” to prevent her getting discouraged or caught off guard when she experienced circumstances where she was asked or made to do things she had not expected had helped Stacy greatly during her first years of teaching art.

**Respect.** On numerous occasions, Stacy remarked that she felt respected regarding her role in school she worked at, which indicated it as a recurring theme. She commented that her administration conveyed a sense of caring about every classroom, which in turn made Stacy believe that her role was perceived similarly to how she viewed it. She described her school as having made an effort to understand what she did and that the effort resulted in her feeling respected the majority of the time. Stacy had rarely needed outside support for instances like discipline, but when needed, she shared that administration and co-workers had been there for me an art teacher. In addition, her administration required that the classroom teachers and specials (art, music, and physical education) teachers meet together at the beginning of the year in order to discuss ways of supporting each other with curriculum and discipline issues. Stacy stated that we all have different opinions, so our styles of teaching and disciplining don’t always align, but we
meet halfway. We all work together which helps the school run smoothly. Stacy
described this type of interaction as having created a good climate.

Although, Stacy felt respected in her school, she did provide areas of her job that
might be perceived as having been disrespectful to her role as the art teacher. One area
Stacy commented on that had greatly affected her ability to teach was interruptions to her
teaching schedule. She shared that:

> Interruptions affect what happens in my classroom because we only have 45
minute classes. I have students once a week, so I have different students Monday
through Friday. If I have an interruption during or before a class, it kind of
throws off what I have planned. One example would be when the classroom
teacher comes into the art room during class and asks a few students to come
back to her room to finish a task they did not complete earlier. Now, those
students have missed an instruction, expectation, and over all, a part of their
lesson. Some of the students will come back halfway or towards the end of art
class, and some won’t see me again until next week. I have to make sure I make a
note of the interruption so that I can find a way to catch up the students that
missed part of the lesson. When the next week rolls around, all of the other kids
will have completed one part of the lesson and their art is dry and ready for the
next step. The students that missed have to play catch up and I have to somehow
redistribute the supplies from the previous week. This scenario happens at least
once or twice a week in one grade level and is so frustrating.

Additionally, Stacy shared a discussion of how testing impacted her ability to do her job.
She described testing as having been given priority over connections classes. As a result,
she discussed instances where *students stroll into the art room at random times throughout an art period, or even miss art for this week altogether.* In particular, Stacy highlighted state testing time, which falls at the end of the year, as a disturbance affecting her class time because students get anxious to be finished with school and put forth less effort in class. Also, the testing schedule resulted in less art class time. She stated that *connections teachers are usually in a testing room distributing the tests for the students who require modifications, so I have to make sure I create my unit so that it is worked around those changes brought about by state tests.* Stacy shared that, while the state CRCT test impact her curriculum and lessons each year, what she disliked the most about it was that she *was not informed until the very last minute* regarding the schedule and her responsibilities during that time. Not being told ahead of time left her feeling inconsequential. These examples reflect how the structure of the educational systems place a larger focus on the subjects where learning is measured in the outcome of tests and, therefore, leaves the field of art in the non-tested category. Although not intentional, the result is a feeling of neglect and thereby art teachers being in what might be felt to be a less respected position. Subsequently, Stacy has to be the one to accommodate her schedule.

Stacy further discussed the topic of respect when she was asked about anything she would like to have changed or improved in her day-to-day life as an art teacher. She stated that:

*I would like to have more support and respect for what I do. The economy is hard right now, so it seems to be making it even harder on the field of art to gain the respect it has worked so hard to earn. Being asked to teach things other than art,*
like RTI math, with no preparation and additional duties makes it hard to do my job effectively. So, to improve my day-to-day would mean to just provide me with the same support that is provided to any other teacher. It can be exhausting mentally, physically, and emotionally just being a teacher but is even worse when you don’t feel supported and respected.

In an effort to gain respect from her co-workers, parents, and the public in general, Stacy felt it was important for her to advocate for the art program. Stacy described her efforts to advocate as having allowed not only for the students to be involved but also the public so that they might learn to appreciate art in the community. This objective was important to her because she believed that, if art teachers do not advocate for art in schools, it allows more room for “excuses” to be ignorant about art.

**Negotiating school culture.** During the course of the study, Stacy indicated learning to negotiate the school culture, which impacted her role as the art teacher, as a recurring theme. Upon beginning her career, Stacy stated that:

> I was new at this school and was pretty much on my own. I quickly noticed that the role of the art teacher was to do art outside of the classroom, like supply other teachers with materials and to help teachers draw their bulletin boards and so forth. Now, I think my colleagues are getting used to what I stand for and the role my position actually is; therefore, the latter has occurred less often. Luckily, I have an outgoing personality, so I made sure I got out and met people and that they knew who I was and what I was there for.

Although it took time, Stacy expressed that she had learned to say no to her co-workers. For instance, when they asked for supplies or to paint a sign or to make
seasonal things with the students in art, she would refuse. She shared that she used those opportunities to foster relationships with her co-workers and to educate them on the arts. She provided examples of how some teachers would ask her to make seasonal things and how she used those instances as an opportunity to tell the teachers the importance of creativity and teaching the students to be individuals. For example, she stated that I will suggest a way for a teacher and I to work together to make a cross-curricular project that goes more outside of the box than say making a Valentine’s card. Like at the end of this year, 1st grade made mobiles that incorporated cinquain poems. Stacy described that, we talk about the importance of the arts, but it’s hard for other teachers to understand because we’re providing their planning time. So, I try to remain patient when I explain to them what all I actually do teach. Laughingly, Stacy had commented that not only had she had to learn patience with the students but with her co-workers as well. Stacy further shared that she was unsure what effect this (lack of respect) will have on my career long-term.

In discussing any experiences that made her question her career choice, Stacy commented that I don’t hate anything really other than the politics of it. When asked to describe what she meant by politics, she stated that:

I try to stay out of the politics part because I try to stay in my own little bubble and worry about my job, which is more than enough, instead of worrying about everyone else’s job as well. So, I don’t get into the complaining that tends to happen. Like when I hear teachers saying negative things or when I feel that mentality of being the quote “babysitter” for the other teachers. Of course, it bothers me, but it’s not going to make me quit. I’m definitely not a quitter. It’s
frustrating, and it can hurt my feelings, but then I think I have to pick my own battles. I state my opinions, stay away from the negativity, and mainly keep to myself. I’ve learned not to focus on the politics of it. I don’t have the time or energy to waste on it.

In reflecting on her role in her school setting, Stacy shared that she felt she had grown over the past two years. First, she stated that, *I’ve learned to just focus on what the administration thinks of me and that I’m doing what’s right for the students.* Stacy described her first year of teaching as having been a time when she was *more worried about impressing her principal and people around her,* like other teachers and parents. However, in her second year of teaching, she conveyed the sense of growth she felt she had experienced in that she had learned to focus more on teaching and to trust that she knew what she was doing. She stated that she had come to realize that her administration trusted her to do her job as opposed to thinking that her administration and co-workers did not care about her or what she was teaching. Second, she shared that she felt she had been prepared during student teaching to *handle being asked to do things she had not anticipated to be part of her job description,* like non-teaching responsibilities. Based on that preparation, Stacy felt confident to say no when asked to take on responsibilities when needed. She stated that:

*I’m learning that you can’t make everyone else in the school happy. They’re always asking for this and that and it’s challenging, but it can be done. I try to tell them what all I have going on because they have no clue. I tell them that I really don’t think I’m going to be able to do whatever it is they want. Usually once they hear that they back off. I have definitely learned that it is ok to say no.*
Stacy demonstrated that learning to work within the school culture in which she found herself was a process that took time.

**Support mechanisms.** During the course of this study, Stacy indicated support mechanisms as a recurring theme. In her interviews and reflective journal entries, Stacy shared on numerous occasions that she had felt supported and unsupported during her first two years of teaching. Throughout the majority of our interviews, Stacy characterized her administration as mostly *supportive*. Because the previous art teacher had been at her school for so long, she felt that the administration was more *supportive* and *open to changes*. She described her administrative support in ways such as letting her make decisions regarding her curriculum. Stacy mentioned that her administration had been in and out of her room between 10-12 times her first year. While the observations had stressed her out, she stated that they had *made her feel needed and an important part of the school*. She shared that the feedback she received from those evaluations led her to believe that her administration understood, or at least tried to understand, her curriculum. Most of all, it made her feel that they believed art was important. Also, Stacy shared that her co-workers were supportive in areas like discipline. When major problems arose, Stacy described her school faculty as having been able to work together to find a solution.

In her reflective journal entries, Stacy did provide an instance during the course of the study in which she felt her administration had been unsupportive. She shared that:

*An unanticipated occurrence is that I have a student teacher right now. Who even has a student teacher during their second year of teaching? She was supposed to observe at the beginning of the year, and then her supervisor pushed it to the*
middle of the year. When the middle of the year came, I got an unexpected email from my administrator notifying me that he had given permission to the college student’s supervisor, who said she was all ready to student teach. I had no clue that this was happening.

Stacy, who is herself in the beginning years of teaching, could not believe that she was placed in this position by her administration, especially since she was pregnant and had just had a mural painting project thrown into her lap, in addition to her other duties. Stacy described how, on the one hand, it had felt good to know her administration thought she was competent enough to handle this added responsibility but, on the other, felt angry that she had not been consulted.

In addition to the administration, Stacy shared in her reflective journal entries that she had experienced situations in which she felt unsupported by her faculty as well. She stated that she felt unsupported when a co-worker asked her to draw something or to paint backdrops for school events, all during my planning or after school. While she found it flattering that her co-workers thought she was a great artist, at the same time she felt like they only asked because they had not felt like doing the task at hand themselves. Going from the old art teacher to the new art teacher required a transition for not only Stacy but also her co-workers as well. Stacy felt she was beginning to feel more supported by her co-workers and more confident in her role herself. However, she had shared that she still found herself being asked to take on too many non-teaching responsibilities, which reflected a lack of support for her role in the school setting.

**Mentorship.** When asked about resources Stacy viewed as having been supportive to her thus far in her career, she shared that her school system had not
provided her with an official mentor but that she had participated in a required new
teacher orientation program held at the county board of education office. She described
the program as having been helpful. She stated that:

We met for a couple of hours after school, once a month for the whole year. They
informed us of the economic status of the county, the demographics and cultural
make-up of the population, and things like the ratio of students to teachers.

Basically, preparing us for who we were going to be teaching and our
surroundings. I think it helped. I took notes and infused that information into my
lessons. Also, we were given information you need to know that you don’t even
think about when you’re in college and trying to get a job; stuff like your
retirement and insurance, all the paperwork aspects.

While this program had been helpful, Stacy found that the most useful resource
for her had been the cooperating teacher with whom she had completed both her
practicum and student teaching. Stacy shared that the cooperating teacher had provided
her with a figure from the field of art education who had acted as a mentor during her
first years of teaching. She offered the following insight into the role this person had
played during her first year of teaching:

The very first role this person (cooperating teacher) played was being a great
mentor. She literally taught me everything. I say this because we all learn, and
read, and write about art theory and curriculum design repeatedly in college, but
it is not until you have your first real hands-on teaching experience that you learn
the most about being an art teacher. Not only did we also become great friends,
but also we have become great colleagues in the profession of art education. She
is always available to me when I have a question or need some advice, and she and I collaborate on different lessons or units. She even came and helped me set up my classroom the summer before I started my first year. I email or call her when I’m frustrated or angry, excited or proud. She listens and gives me advice and celebrates with me.

In addition, Stacy shared that her cooperating teacher had advised to her to reach out to other art teachers at the start of her first year. Following that advice, Stacy described how she had been able to network with a few of the other teachers in her school system, which she felt had been beneficial in providing her with other teachers that possessed prior knowledge of the school system in which she was employed. Stacy’s school system had financially been unable to allow art teachers for the past two years to attend any state or national art professional development opportunities, such as attending the GAEA conference, due to budget cuts stemming from the national economic recession. However, Stacy had been afforded a couple of professional development days held on teacher workdays where the elementary art teachers in her school system were able to plan together collaboratively. She stated that, *it is impossible for one person to come up with everything on their own.* As a result, Stacy felt that collaboration with other art teachers was necessary in order for her to be successful.

Without a mentor in her own school setting when everything was still new to her, Stacy was forced to learn through what she described as *trial and error.* For instance, she shared that, *aside from a quick tour with the principal before I got the job, I was lost trying to find my way around the maze of a school and I had lots of questions about things like ordering supplies.* These instances reflect how a mentor at her school setting
would have prevented Stacy from having had to discover numerous aspects on her own during her beginning years of teaching. Stacy’s interview conversations and reflective journal entries convey how vital she found her mentor to be in having not only prepared her prior to starting her first year, but, also, how important she found having a mentor to be during the course of her experiences as a beginning art teacher.
CHAPTER 8

RESEARCH FINDINGS THROUGH CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

In the previous chapters, I presented the analysis of the participants’ experiences on an individual basis. I now offer the cross-case analysis where I compared the participants’ responses as a group in an effort to address the research questions this study sought to investigate, which will be presented in the figures (8.1-8.5) throughout this chapter. Given the small sample size (three participants) in this study, these findings are by no means meant to be representative of the field as a whole, but instead, they are meant to be unique accounts of the individuals who lived them.

I found it necessary to design a figure in order to visualize the intersecting expectations or experiences of each participant and to show more clearly the overlapping expectations across all the participants. The figures used throughout this section were developed in order to illustrate each the emergent themes: curriculum, non-teaching responsibilities, classroom management/discipline problems, respect, and support mechanisms. These figures are meant to aid in constructing a clearer picture of the findings for the reader.
Figure 8.1 Visual display of emergent theme: Curriculum.
Figure 8.2 Visual display of emergent theme: Non-teaching responsibilities.
Figure 8.3 Visual display of emergent theme: Classroom management/discipline issues
Figure 8.4 Visual display of emergent theme: Respect.
Research Question #1

The first question this study sought to address was: What are the imagined and lived experiences of beginning art teachers? During the course of the study, the participants’ discussions comprised a constant cyclical process of understanding lived experiences in relation to what they had imagined and how the participants’ experiences overlapped and evolved throughout this study as one component informed the other.
Throughout the study, as participants began to share their imagined and lived experiences, the process of actively understanding the lived was made possible through reflecting on the imagined expectations and past experiences. Given that the participants data demonstrated what Dewey (1938) coined as the term experiential continuum, where one’s past, present, and future are always in constant interplay, it proved necessary for this research question to be broken in two parts and addressed within the two separate components in order to more accurately address this question, given the various facets this question entails.

In order to address these questions, data presented in Chapters 5-7 will be used to create responses that captured the essence of the participants’ stories. It is important to acknowledge that some responses will overlap in varying ways due to the narrative nature of this study. Therefore, in order to more accurately address the research question, it has been broken into two separate components so as to understand the multi-faceted responses this research produced.

**Research question #1 part A.** What were the most striking similarities between beginning art teachers’ imagined experiences and beginning art teachers’ actual experiences? During the course of the study, it became apparent that the beginning teachers shared very few overlapping similarities between their imagined and lived experiences. While the participants themselves had experienced education from the standpoint of students, their responses from the new role of teacher illustrated the given complexity that arises in being able to fully understand that which you have yet to experience. Within the framework of discussing the topics that emerged, the following
similarities were found to be evident and will be further discussed in the subheadings within this section.

**Love their job (passion).** One aspect that was common across all participants was their personal passion or interest in art, which they credited as having influenced their decision to become an art teacher, a job they loved since it was the fulfillment of their career path. Throughout the myriad of experiences during their beginning years of teaching, both positive and negative, the participants still described a love for teaching art. It is important to note that Callie did indicate that she was seriously considering a change of career since she had been offered a kindergarten position. However, she felt that the choice was difficult because, as she stated, *I really do love art and I really do love the kids. In a lot of ways, it is fulfilling. I still love teaching art.* For Callie, her motivations for changing careers were the result of her personal and professional experiences that left her feeling a lack of respect or appreciation for her role and her profession as a whole as opposed to a change in her passion for her job. Therefore her love for her job had not changed. While the participants did not love all aspects of their job, there was a common thread between their imagined and lived experiences of a love of art and teaching.

**Being the only art teacher at their school (lack of a department).** In reflecting on their expectations for their careers as elementary art teachers, the participants in this study all anticipated being and were the only art teachers at their schools. Stacy illustrated this when she shared that; *I knew it was going to be just me, so I had to be the one to ask the questions in order to get answers.* Similarly, Callie described the importance of collaboration when she explained that *you get stale by yourself. You get in*
a groove and it is easy to forget that the “whole world” exists out there and that there are other people out there with great ideas. The participants’ comments indicated that an alignment between their imagined and lived experiences of being the sole teacher of their discipline occurred during their beginning years of teaching and thus did not change based on their lived experiences in their school settings.

**Isolation.** In addition to being the only art teachers at their school, the participants also expected a sense of isolation or being set apart from the others. All participants in this study reported their lived experiences to have resulted in a feeling of isolation to different degrees. Layla had both anticipated and experienced herself being the only art teacher at her school. However, because she had witnessed her cooperating teacher complain about isolation during her student teaching period, Layla shared that she had made an effort to not live in her own tiny little bubble. Layla did acknowledge that it was harder to accomplish this task when she was based at two school settings during her first year of teaching. Callie, who was split between two different schools, attributed her feeling of isolation as making her seem out of the loop and in her own little world despite her efforts to collaborate and be included within the larger school culture. On the other hand, Stacy was the only participant to have not attempted to change her situation of being isolated from the school culture. In fact, she stated that, *I try to stay in my own little bubble and worry about my students and my classes.* A common thread through all participants’ discussions was a feeling of autonomy and freedom within their classroom curriculums that stemmed from their isolation. However, all participants did feel that they would benefit from collaboration through avenues such as professional development with other art teachers (this will be addressed in more detail later in this chapter).
Nevertheless, all participants experienced a form of isolation during their first two years of teaching art.

**Extra duties.** During the course of the study, all participants discussed an anticipation of having to complete additional non-teaching responsibilities, such as bus or car duty, based on their student teaching experiences and a description of those experienced in the participants’ various school settings. Although it is acknowledged that this theme was a similarity between all participants imagined and lived experiences, it also served as a striking difference given the variety and amount of duties or non-teaching responsibilities each participant experienced as well as their feelings regarding this issue. As a result, extra duties will also further be addressed within Chapter 8.

**Classroom management.** The theme of classroom management was shared by all the participants in this study in regard to what they imagined and then lived in their experiences as beginning art teachers. All of the study participants described expectations dealing with classroom management as a part of their daily job. In particular, Callie and Layla described classroom management as a more time consuming aspect of their job than expected. Layla described classroom management as an area she expected to struggle with and had struggled with during her first two years of teaching, while Callie, who initially felt prepared for classroom management, later shared a commonality with Layla’s struggles and felt that classroom management was a difficult aspect of teaching. Stacy, although less overwhelmed with the aspect of classroom management, still acknowledged this factor as a classroom component that did not change for her but was a foreseen challenge. Overall, all participants indicated classroom
management as part of the participants’ imagined and lived experiences as beginning art teachers.

**Support.** The participants of this study all shared the topic of support mechanisms as an imagined and lived theme based on their experiences. Prior to starting their careers, all of the study participants imagined the need for various forms of support. Additionally, the study participants all anticipated and received support when teaching in some manner. It is important to note that although they all imagined support to be present, each teacher found the support they needed in varying ways, although it may not have been in the predetermined way she had anticipated. Regardless, all participants did receive support in some way, whether it was provided by the school or not.

Although these topics were found to be similar in regard to what the participant imagined and lived, due to the nature of learning through one’s experiences, there are varying degrees of differences. These differences will now be discussed in part B of this research question.

**Research question #1 part B.** What were the most striking differences between beginning art teachers’ imagined experiences and beginning art teachers’ actual experiences? Within the framework of discussing the topics that emerged from the contents of the data, the following differences were found to be evident between the imagined and lived experiences of the participants. These will be further discussed in the subheadings contained in this section.

**Expected time for preparation.** The beginning teachers spoke of having expected to be provided with adequate time for purposes such as planning lessons, handling non-teaching responsibilities, and preparing materials. The study participants
all received some form of a planning period; however, all the participants described feeling a “lack of time” to get everything done. The lack of time provided for each participant impacted the participant in a variety of ways:

- Callie was provided with a 35 minute planning period at only one of her two schools and described herself as always feeling one day behind.

- Layla was provided with an hour and half planning period at her current school and only a 20 minute planning period at the school she had also worked at during her first year. She described herself as having felt rushed and that she could not get everything done.

- Stacy was provided with a 50 minute planning period daily and stated on numerous occasions that there is never enough time.

Callie and Stacy both discussed having to come in early and stay late in order to get everything ready for students. Stacy also indicated that she, on numerous occasions, would have to come in on the weekends as well as take things home in order to complete the tasks asked and expected of her. All of the study participants shared a realization that much of their planning period was spent completing procedural and non-teaching responsibilities, such as participating in various meetings and decorating bulletin boards, as opposed to planning their curriculum as they had anticipated. Stacy shared that, I do not feel that I am provided with adequate time to prepare. I use up any time, any amount of planning time and sometimes my lunchtime and still feel unable to fully prepare for certain lessons. The perceived lack of time was a factor that all the participants shared as contributing to their having felt exhausted and stressed out.
**Expected support of rigor.** The beginning teachers imagined their teaching experiences to be rigorous, based on the merit of the lessons they had been encouraged to create during college, and they expected a school culture that would foster a level of respect and appreciation for the rigor an art program can produce. However, in reality, the teachers faced a multitude of challenges that in turn affected the rigor of their programs.

The participants each commented on how testing, particularly standardized state mandated tests like the CRCT, were frequent interruptions to their ability to focus on student learning for their curriculum, as stated below:

- Callie characterized testing as a major interruption to her schedule that made it very tough for her to accomplish all that she wanted. However, she had found interruptions to vary from simple to complex on a daily basis and all resulting in some sort of chaotic situation.

- Layla was the only participant to feel that testing and interruptions did not alter her curriculum throughout most of the school year. She attributed this to the efforts of her administration as well as the additional funding (endowment) her school received that allowed for more staff. However, Layla did describe the week of CRCT testing as having made a huge difference on her curriculum because she felt like CRCT testing made everything else happening in the school irrelevant.

- Stacy felt that testing greatly impacted her art curriculum because, in her experience, testing is priority. She described students as being pulled from her class to take classroom tests or to make-up assignments on a
weekly basis, which resulted in her schedule being off. She stated that,

*interruptions for testing always make me feel like I’m playing catch up.*

In addition to interruptions and testing failing to support rigor for the teachers, lack of paraprofessional support for students with special needs was evidenced as well. All the teachers in the study discussed instances in which they were denied adequate support for teaching inclusion students in their art classes. Layla, in particular, experienced this problem when she explained her frustration that, despite teaching students who were provided paraprofessional support during all other classes, the students were not provided such support when attending her art class. This lack of support resulted in her experiencing great difficulty and frustration while trying to maintain the rigor in her classroom and meet the needs of each individual student. Her experience highlights the importance of how this issue negatively affects the rigor of an art program and a beginning teacher’s role as perceived by others.

If teachers perceive their co-workers’ or administrators’ attitudes to be negative towards their role as art teachers and the art programs in general, it may be detrimental to the beginning art teacher’s identity as a respected member of the school culture and thereby limit the art curriculum. Conversely, if the teachers feel respected and supported by their school culture in their role as art teachers then the beginning art teacher may flourish in her identity.

The teachers who participated in this study shared experiences of how their school culture impacted their art curriculum and role as art teacher. Callie described the few instances when teachers told her motivational things regarding her teaching as having made her feel good. Because Callie considered her experiences within her school culture
to be very unsupportive, where she felt alone, she found it helpful to get a compliment from her co-workers or administration. She stated that, *it makes me feel like I’m actually doing something right, like I belong, and that I should stay*, which was something Callie needed to hear since she described herself as often feeling like a *complete failure as a teacher*.

Layla described her school as being very supportive of her role and was able to provide numerous examples to support this interpretation including: collaboration with coworkers and an administration that placed her in a leadership role to highlight her personal strengths. These opportunities gave Layla a sense of involvement and appreciation as part of her school culture. She was quick to point out that *I did go out of my way to pursue those relationships with my co-workers and to earn the respect of my administration*. However this experience was unique to Layla because both Callie and Stacy explained their inability to collaborate with co-workers as well as frequent interruptions to their schedules. Stacy felt her school climate was good; however, she held this opinion based on her ability to adapt to the reality of teaching environment is worked in. She purposely isolated herself in order to focus primarily on her classes and students as opposed to worrying about others (coworkers). Nevertheless, all the participants described experiences with co-workers and administration that had resulted in feelings of disrespect toward their role, which impacted their ability to teach as rigorously as they desired. A good day of teaching was listed by all the beginning teachers in this study as a day in which they could focus their attention on teaching their art lessons and student learning. Consequently, it is important to understand the factors
that resulted in teachers feeling a lack of support for rigor because rigor is necessary in order for teachers to feel successful as part of their school culture.

**Unaware of some types of non-teaching responsibilities.** The expectation to fulfill non-teaching responsibilities, like car or bus duty, had been held by all participants. Within each of the participant’s lived experience was some level of surprise at the unanticipated responsibilities they found themselves having to accomplish in addition to their role of teaching art.

Both Layla and Stacy experienced a multitude of duties and responsibilities being asked of them, such as school favors by co-workers, fundraisers to supplement art budgets, sponsoring art clubs, decorating bulletin boards throughout the school, creating decorations for school events, serving on committees and attending meetings, and painting murals, among others. Layla expressed that not only was she unable to imagine having so many non-teaching responsibilities but also that she had found it hard to balance them all in addition to teaching art. She described the non-teaching responsibilities as having made her feel rushed or less like an art teacher. In contrast, Stacy described herself as having been prepared for the challenge of being asked to handle numerous added responsibilities because of her student teaching experiences, where she stated, *I was told to be prepared that it* (being asked to do non-teaching responsibilities) *was going to happen.* She added that if she had not been informed during her student teaching, she would not have been able to handle the reality of how frustrating and disheartening it is to be asked to do things that, as she put, *did not relate to teaching art, such as decorating bulletin boards for places like the cafeteria or making props for a third grade play.* Callie described herself as fortunate in that she had not
been given many additional non-teaching responsibilities. She stated that *I\’m not on any extras, like committees, but there may be other things I\’m supposed to do that someone failed to tell me about because I think they forget I\’m even here or a part of the school.*

This lack of communication might be attributed to the fact that she was split between two school settings where she felt largely isolated. However, as is apparent, Callie found being split between schools fortunate when considering that her isolation had freed her from having additional responsibilities.

One major aspect that Callie and Stacy both addressed as a responsibility that neither had imagined having been asked to do nor prepared to do was having the responsibility of teaching RTI. Both Callie and Stacy shared that they were required to teach a small group of students RTI math for 30 minutes each day. When discussing the subject of RTI, Stacy commented that,

*I don’t feel that I was prepared or supported for that role at all. I feel that I am the last person that they should feel confident in having help students with their math, especially the students who are in small group because they are with me because they are already struggling. As a teacher, I feel disappointed in my inability to help them in the way they need.*

Callie shared that, *aside from the obvious fact that it makes no sense having an art teacher teach math, I find it insulting to be in that position and more so to do so without support.* The additional responsibility of teaching a subject outside of the area of a teacher’s certification as well as inadequate support for special needs students reflect the manner in which legal policy and initiatives have increased the teaching responsibilities of teachers.
The participants in this study all detailed their teaching schedule as having consisted of at least one inclusion style format class a day. Within these discussions, the art teachers indicated the difficulty in following and remembering each child’s IEP, which provides steps to follow to identify and aid the teacher in addressing the individual needs of each student, as well as the impact of teaching art in an inclusion format without proper support. Stacy shared her frustration regarding this topic when she stated that, *I have so many students with IEP’s, that are sometimes a mile long. It is just hard to keep up. It’s like they forget that with connections (art, music, and physical education classes) we see all 652 students in one week.* Each participant provided situations where they had experienced a lack of support for meeting the needs of special education students.

- Callie shared that one of her schools had a high population of special education inclusion students who had very detailed IEP’s and that attended art without paraprofessional support. She described situations where she had to try and restrain one student, who was as big as her, and where another student required being separated from other students and moved to a safe place when he had episodes. As she described it, the situation was hard given that her art classroom was in a trailer. Callie characterized such instances as having felt *scary.*

- Layla repeatedly shared how her administration had not provided professional support during her class with a group of special needs inclusion students, although the board of education had recommended the support being given. She stated that *were I any other teacher aside from a specials teacher I would have support in that class.* During her first year
of teaching, when she did have a paraprofessional helping out in her room with kindergarten classes, she described those individuals as having ranged from really helpful to sitting there doing nothing.

- Stacy described one student, who, in her art class, has been physically aggressive towards other students as well as himself by means such as punching and kicking at other students and throwing furniture in the art room. Stacy, who was pregnant during the course of the study, found this teaching environment unsafe for the students and herself.

All participants shared a common belief of improper support for their students as well as for themselves as teachers in regards to meeting the needs and complexity inherent in teaching special needs inclusion students. The participants all described circumstances relating to the issue of teaching special needs students as being instances in which they felt unsupported and helpless within their own classrooms. The teachers all referenced the current decline in the economy as having adversely impacted their school environments in ways such as teacher staff reductions, staff furloughs, budget cuts for departments at their schools, and larger class sizes, all of which might be attributed to lack of support being provided for students with special needs. Regardless, the participants’ experiences demonstrate the real and palpable way in which the teachers feel the effect of the legal policies everyday in their classrooms.

The participants all characterized the non-teaching aspects of their job as having affected them physically and emotionally, such as making them tired and stressed out. In offering advice for future beginning art teachers, Stacy shared that it was important they are aware that an art teacher is not just about teaching art. There’s a lot more and many
of the aspects will have little to do with art. It's important to be prepared. It is important to acknowledge that without adequate support and respect, beginning teachers may feel a disconnect between the overall goals of the school and the ability to perform their jobs at the level they anticipated.

**Expected support for classroom management issues.** The beginning art teachers in this study all imagined they would have support for classroom management and discipline issues in their teaching experience. In reality, the teachers faced a multitude of challenges and experienced varied levels of support regarding the issue of classroom management that, in turn, affected their ability to teach.

The teachers shared the importance of not only having a school-wide policy as a guideline for how to handle issues of classroom management and discipline but also the need for that policy to be effectively communicated to beginning teachers. Layla illustrated this concern in her first year of teaching when she found small paw prints (a behavior management program the school adopted that Layla was not informed about) in her desk at the school but did not know what they were for. When she asked a co-worker several months into her first year, it was explained that they were for the school-wide behavior plan and that she was to give a paw to the classroom teacher at the end of class when good behavior, based on the school wide code for conduct, had been displayed during art class. She stated that, *I could have went the whole year with no clue that this system was in place.* At her current school, she described there being a school-wide program where the students worked towards a star to take back to their classroom teacher, and, upon receiving a specific amount, they received a classroom party. She viewed this system as helpful in managing student behavior since it made expectations
for behavior universal throughout the school. Callie, also, believed a school-wide discipline plan was important. She shared how difficult it had made her job when working at the school setting with no established discipline plan because it made for an environment where the students knew they could do anything and never have any consequences.

One aspect that teachers observed as being a huge factor in classroom management was the administration. In each beginning art teacher’s data, there was at least one situation that illustrated the importance of administration in providing support, or a lack thereof, for classroom management. The participants’ experiences indicated the importance of communication on the part of the administration in making a beginning teacher feel supported. When discussing the topic of support, Callie frequently mentioned her administration at each school. She stated that, I really like both of my principals as people. As people they are very nice and friendly people, but I think that my administrators have no idea of what I even do. She particularly referenced one school (B) as having failed to provide her with any support for discipline.

The realization that classroom management was the sole responsibility of the teachers was an aspect that the beginning teachers failed to fully realize as a result of their student teaching experience having always provided them readily available support within the classroom. Stacy discussed this realization when she stated that an aspect that was different and not by choice was discipline because I realized that I now have to be the one to make sure that students are behaving. The job of being manager of her classroom was an area that Layla admitted to having been concerned about prior to having starting teaching. She stated that, when I was student teaching I struggled with
being in control of my classroom. So I worried that the kids would run all over me.

When she first started teaching, Layla recalled that there is just chaos because there is just not enough of me to pass out the supplies and to get class going and then before you know it you’re halfway through class. The initial shock of the responsibility of having to manage all aspects of one’s classroom was overwhelming but began to improve with time for participants. Callie and Layla described the main difficulty in handling classroom management as being the lack of support from administration and co-workers, which resulted in these teachers still trying to find a way to work out how to best address classroom management. Both felt that they had no real power outside of their classroom in the form of consequences for students, which resulted in the students catching on really quickly and the teachers feeling frustrated and powerless. Stacy, on the other hand, had a very supportive school culture where she was able to communicate with her administrator and classroom teachers about classroom management problems and receive support for discipline issues by being provided ways where students received consequences for negative actions in the art classroom, such as loss of recess.

The participants in this study all discussed a failure in having anticipated the issues related to the transition from the old to new art teacher and how the difference in the new teacher’s classroom management policy affected students at the start of their career. When describing her difficulty with classroom management in first year of teaching, Layla stated that:

I found the students were coming from an experience where there were very few expectations in our classroom. They were automatically freaking, and then, it is this new young person and so let me try everything I think I might be able to get
away with. Now (at the end of her second year), it’s really good. All of the kids want to come to my class, which is great because it was not that way last year when they weren’t used to everything. I had a lot of different, I guess different kinds of student, that were not interested in my class and liked the way it was before when they didn’t have to do anything.

Given the difficulty found in the transition of taking over the old art teacher’s program, Callie illustrated how memorable it was for her the first time she experienced a student accepting her as the new art teacher. She stated that:

Because I had so many discipline problems it was almost unreal, cause it shocked me when I had a classroom teacher show me how a student had written about me when asked to do a persuasive writing assignment. She wrote that, she loved art and how Mrs. Callie had let her be creative. That first year the students talked a lot about her, so it was a big deal to me to hear that I was important to her.

When beginning teachers are faced with situations that are beyond the expectations they hold for themselves, there can be a conflict between what they imagined their job to be and what they are living. This lack of alignment and discontent with reality can be too much for some beginning teachers to handle. Layla demonstrated this in her narration of a moment during her first year when she felt overwhelmed at the reality of her job as art teacher and unsupported by her co-workers. She stated that:

I remember a little boy out of a class of 30 students my first year that had a glue bottle stuck up his nose and when he saw me looking at him, he got wide eyed and yanked it out. He knew that he was not supposed to be doing it. At that moment, I was just over it. I got onto the kid and I went to the paraprofessional and said,
“So and so just had this glue bottle stuck up his nose.” She said, “Well, did you

tell him not to.”

For Layla this was one moment that made her really question her career choice. While
Callie and Layla continued to find classroom management challenging, all of the teachers
in this study believed that classroom management had started to become a less
overwhelming aspect of their job as they grew in teaching experience and familiarity with
the school culture.

**Expected respect within the school culture.** The beginning teachers imagined
their school culture would foster a level of respect for their role as art teachers and the
rigor an art program can produce based on their past educational experiences and
personal appreciation for the subject of art. However, in reality the teachers faced a
range of experiences that presented varying levels of respect being felt by the beginning
art teachers.

The beginning art teachers in this study all experienced having felt a lack of
support for discipline and rigor on different occasions throughout their first two years of
teaching. Both Callie and Layla referenced having felt powerless in handling discipline
in their classroom and felt no support outside of the art classroom in addressing the issue
of discipline because of either a lack of a school-wide discipline plan or a failure to
receive support from administration or co-workers. Stacy shared that she rarely needed
outside support for instances like discipline, but when needed, she felt that her
administration and co-workers were there for her. While support for discipline was
provided, Stacy did indicate situations that might be perceived as having been
disrespectful to her role as the art teacher. In particular, Stacy and Callie both
commented that interruptions to their teaching schedules greatly affected their ability to teach. One aspect that all the participants in this study expressed as having been a major concern dealt with meeting the needs of all students in their art classrooms. This concern stemmed from a lack of adequate support when teaching special education inclusion classes, which they felt greatly impacted their ability to teach rigorously. As a result of experiences such as these, the participants felt a lack respect and appreciation for rigor in their art classroom by the school culture.

Another aspect indicated to have been contrary to what the beginning art teachers had expected regarding respect for their role within the school culture had been the presence of experiences in which other co-workers requested “favors” of them as the art teacher. Stacy shared that, during her first year, she quickly realized what her co-workers perceived her role to be as the art teacher outside of her classroom. She described being perceived as the person to supply them with materials or to help them draw their bulletin boards. This experience of being asked to manage the additional responsibilities asked of her was a realization she felt adequately prepared for, based on the advice and mentorship she had received from her cooperating teaching during her student teaching experience. She believed that this perception by her co-workers was based on the past experiences they had shared with the previous art teacher. As a result, she found time to have been necessary for her colleagues to get used to what she saw her role to be as well as time for her confidence as an art teacher to grow in order to be able to say no to “favors” requested by co-workers when the circumstances warranted it. Similar to Stacy, Layla realized how past art teachers can have an impact on her role as the new art teacher. She stated that:
There were a few people (art teachers) that weren’t certified for a little while which made it (art class) became more of a “filler” kind of a thing. So, I think I’ve gained more respect because of how diverse and rich my curriculum is compared to what it had been in the past.

Layla also described having been unprepared for the amount of added favors her co-workers asked of her, which she felt were hard to balance. She described her responsibilities as often being filled with set designs for a musical, assembling a banner for a retirement to paint, or creating a sign for a teacher’s classroom. While not unbearable, Layla did discuss these responsibilities as having made her feel rushed and as having taken up time during her day that she could have used in preparing her lessons.

Across the beginning art teachers’ experiences, varied levels of respect were experienced. For those participants like Callie and Layla, who were employed at more than one school, there was a major difference in the level of respect shown each week toward their role as the art teacher. Layla taught her second year fulltime at one elementary school but previously had been split halftime between two different elementary schools, where she spent full weeks alternating between the two. She described both schools as having great teachers, students, and administration, but that the whole philosophy of what the art program is for was what had distinguished the two. Layla felt that her experiences in the two separate school settings had allowed her to see what an art program can be and then that preconceived notion that you just color and the art classroom doesn’t matter, more of a babysitter type format, which provided her the ability to compare what she wanted her role to be and what she had not wanted her role to be within her school culture. Callie, who remained split halftime between two schools,
highlighted how she had felt more respect at one school as opposed to another, but felt that her administration and co-workers had no idea of what she actually did in the classroom. This lack of respect for her role, she felt, was because of her inability to play a consistent part in her school culture due to never being at one school for more than three days in any given week. This problem was equally shared by Callie and Layla and stemmed from what Layla described as the reality that as a halftime teacher you’re never really, truly there or a part of the faculty.

The administration of a school sets the tone for respect for the entire school faculty. Strong and successful arts programs and thereby arts teachers are characterized by having supportive administration (Stake, Bresler, & Mabry, 1991). The experiences lived by both Layla and Stacy in their respective school settings demonstrate how they felt respect in general for their art program and role as art teachers. They attributed this feeling to their administration’s respect for their art program, which in turn made it more respected by colleagues. Stacy shared that her administration had an open door policy to foster a good climate across the faculty, which in turn created a level of respect for each teacher and the role they played in the school setting. In contrast to Stacy, who had frequent interruptions to her schedule and individual classes, Layla described her art program as being viewed as a respected class where students are not pulled and time is often not taken away. Regardless of those aspects that might be perceived as disrespectful, both Layla and Stacy felt that having the respect of their administration provided them with an enjoyable working environment.

When discussing instances of disrespect, the participants in this study all referred to themselves as not wanting to be seen as a “complainer” or a “whiner”. This reference
reflected the participants having felt unprepared for handling issues of disrespect and not knowing how to address situations that greatly differed from their previously held expectations for their role as art teachers.

Layla shared a specific instance in which a classroom teacher had made the comment that the quick, simplistic sketch the students had done looked like the work of the old art teacher (who was not highly respected by the school faculty). Layla stated that she had quickly remarked, *no, I promise that is not all they did today. We made bigger stuff.* Layla described the disrespect shown in this instance as being an insult to her role and as making her feel as though she had impress her co-workers to make sure they really knew what was happening in her classroom. She stated that:

> Within my experience, there seems to be a stereotype of the art teacher as the babysitter, where you go and you draw. It's weird to have to feel you need to impress others because the math teacher doesn’t have to justify anything or anyone else, like the music teacher, because they’re not sending back a physical product.

Despite having described these situations as making her feel disrespected, Layla expressed that she was determined not to make it a big deal or to do a lot of complaining. Since Layla described her school setting as the most positive and respectful of the three provided in this study, there appeared to continue to be a disconnect between the level of respect the beginning art teachers anticipated and that which was held by the larger school culture, a situation which resulted in disillusionment for Callie and the need for adjustments to reality as in the case of Stacy.
Support mechanisms. Throughout the study, all participants experienced some level of support, although it came in numerous ways and not always in a manner in which they had anticipated. While the topic of support was shown to be a difference between what the beginning art teachers had anticipated and then lived in their role as an art teacher, it will be discussed in more detail in response to the second research question of this study.

One area discussed by each teacher in this study as being an important form of support was administrative support. The importance of the administration in setting the tone for a school has previously been addressed in this chapter. The participants in this study referenced how important they felt it was to know what their administrator expected from them and to have a sense that their role was shared and understood by their administration. When that sense of support was provided by the administration, the participant described having felt supported, respected, and better equipped to successfully do her job, such as with the experiences of Layla and Stacy. Callie, meanwhile, described her lack of support from her administration as having created a feeling of having been unsupported, frustrated and isolated. While the art teachers in this study all experienced varied levels of support from their administration, there were collective areas in which the art teachers experienced both a lack of support as well as a feeling of support. An anticipated situation unique to Stacy that resulted in her having felt unsupported by her administration was when she was given the responsibility of a student teacher in her second year of teaching, without having been consulted by her school administrator. This role was obviously not one that Stacy felt experienced enough in to warrant training another future educator; however, having her principal require this of her
during her initial years of experience conveyed to Stacy that her administration was not showing her respect or support in this regard.

Common areas in which the art teachers shared a lack of support were the areas of teaching special education inclusion style art classes (without paraprofessional support) and in the administration’s communication of expectations and demonstration of having understood the standards and objectives of the art program. Although Layla described her administration as being the most supportive of the three art teachers in this study, she too experienced a lack of understanding of her role and program by her administration. As an example in her first year of teaching, one administrator asked if there were art standards.

The participants in this study all reflected initially that more support was needed, but Layla and Stacy did add that they found it less needed as they grew in confidence and familiarity with their staff and students. Callie, though, still felt a lack of support from administration and staff, even in her second year.

**Research Question #2**

What support mechanisms were described to aid the new teachers who participated in this study? The beginning art teachers in this study all shared the topic of support mechanisms as an imagined and lived theme based on their experiences. The art teachers all, prior to starting their career, imagined the need of various forms of support as well as anticipated and received support in some manner. It is important to note that although they all imagined support to be present, each art teacher found the support they needed in varying ways, although it may not have been in the predetermined way they had anticipated and might not have been provided by the school.
Administration support. For the majority of their discussions, both Layla and Stacy described their current work environment as supportive. When discussing her administration, Layla provided numerous examples of instances in which her administration had been supportive, such as empowering her to create an art classroom focused on curriculum integrations with an emphasis on process as opposed to product. Layla described having felt especially empowered when her administration gave her positive feedback over the two years. Also, Layla discussed how her administrator had paid for her to complete gifted certification and encouraged her to take on leadership roles by inviting her to be on several committees and data teams within her school. All of these actions aided Layla in feeling supported and helped her as a beginning art teacher.

Callie repeatedly stated that she felt out of the loop and that she felt no support. She described that this lack of support made her feel like pretty much a kid with a class. Based on her experiences, Callie commented that she learned that she has to be the one to go out of her way to stay informed of the goings on in her schools. When discussing the topic of support, Callie frequently mentioned her administration at each school.

Professional development. Layla also addressed the issue of support when discussing how she had personally been enabled by her administration to participate in various professional development opportunities. Layla had found her administration very supportive in allowing her to attend professional development opportunities like the Georgia (GAEA) and National (NAEA) Art Educators Association art conferences, which Layla described as providing her with lots of new ideas. Layla was also able to conduct a presentation at the NAEA Convention while she participated in this study. When we met for our second interview, Layla had just the night before given a
presentation to her school system’s monthly board of education meeting based on her efforts in curriculum integration in her classroom. Additionally, Layla described her administration and co-workers as having supported her requests to collaborate within her school setting on lessons. This level of support was unique to Layla. The other art teachers in this study failed to receive such forms of support in professional development and collaboration.

Callie discussed that, although she had sought out opportunities for professional development, she had been denied those by her school system and administration as well as by her co-workers, who failed to acknowledge her requests to collaborate on lessons. This lack of support was demonstrated when she was told, upon mentioning interest in attending a professional development opportunity offered to early childhood teachers in her school, that *because I was an art teacher I don’t get to attend because it doesn’t benefit the students the right way.* Callie had been provided with no opportunities to attend art specific conferences or other forms of professional development.

For the past two years, Stacy’s school system had not been financially able to afford art teachers’ attendance at any state or national art professional development opportunities, such as the GAEA conference due to budget cuts resulting from the national economic recession. However, Stacy had been afforded a couple of professional development days held on teacher workdays in which the elementary art teachers in her school system were able to plan together collaboratively. She stated that *one person cannot come up with everything on their own.* As a result, Stacy felt that collaboration with other art teachers was necessary in order for her to be successful.
Stacy was the only art teacher whose school system had provided a new teacher orientation program held at the county board of education office. She described the program, which met for a couple of hours after school once a month for the whole year, as having been helpful in that it introduced the beginning teachers to their surroundings and the students they were going to be teaching. She listed the topics covered in the meetings as having been: the economic status of the county, the demographics and cultural make-up of the population, and the ratio of student to teacher. Additionally, she stated that, *they covered information you need to know that you don't even think about when you’re in college and trying to get a job: stuff like your retirement and insurance, all the paperwork aspects.*

**Mentorship.** None of the art teachers in this study reported their school system or individual schools as having had an official mentorship program. However, each participant described the manner in which they had sought out and received mentorships in unique ways.

Layla described that while the two schools she worked at in her first year of teaching had not provided her with mentors, there were two really good teachers at each school setting that filled the role without having been asked. She listed them as having assisted with the development of her curriculum and classroom management plan, how to handle discipline, having communicated the norms of the school and having provided advice on how to talk to specific individuals around the school. Callie felt she had received support through several avenues, with the majority having derived from the music teacher she worked with at both schools as well as from a college friend. Stacy did not mention any figure in her school as having assisted or having played the role of
mentor. Without a mentor in her own school setting when everything was still new to her, Stacy was forced to learn through what she described as *trial and error*. For instance, she shared that, *aside from a quick tour with the principal before I got the job, I was lost when trying to find my way around the school.* She also described herself as having had lots of questions that she was left to answer on her own.

While Stacy failed to have a mentor figure within her school setting, she did describe her cooperating teacher, with whom she had completed both her practicum and student teaching, as having provided her with a figure from the field of art education that acted as a mentor during her first years of teaching. She described this figure as having taught her everything, but also as a great friend and colleague in the profession of art education. She described her as always having been available to answer questions or give advice as well as to collaborate with on lessons or units.

During the course of this study, both Callie and Layla were enrolled in graduate programs: Callie in early childhood education and Layla in art education. Layla was the only one of the two who felt graduate school had provided a form of support through mentors within the field of art education during her the beginning of her career teaching art. She described her graduate program as having offered a supportive community that had surrounded her with people that could give her advice on a weekly basis.

These beginning art teachers’ experiences reflect how a mentor can serve to prevent beginning art teachers, like Stacy, from having to figure it out on their own. The art teachers’ conversations and reflective journal entries in this study convey how vital a mentor was felt to have been during the sharp learning curve of beginning their careers as art teachers. When reflecting on how the ways she felt support could have been
provided, Callie shared that being able to talk with another art teacher through professional development, collaboration or mentorship, whichever form is available, would provide:

…and not necessarily something I would use everyday, but the ability to share ideas and to feel supported and helped out. Someone to laugh with, provide answers to questions I might have as well as listen to my concerns. Mainly, someone I could complain to and not feel like a whiner, and one who would appreciate those little accomplishments I am excited about that no one else gets when you are the only art teacher at a school.

All of the beginning art teachers in this study described the figures who acted as mentors in their beginning years of teaching as having helped make the transition from student to teacher easier. This sentiment was especially expressed by Layla, who had two individuals to whom she could turn for support on a daily basis at her schools.

Mentorship was referred to by the art teachers as having been important because each of the art teachers in this study realized how there are a number of things, big and small, that everyone else takes for granted and fails to tell new teachers, because the experienced teachers already know them.

Various forms of support were referred to by the beginning art teachers in this study as having aided them in their first two years of teaching, with each having helped them feel less isolated and, ultimately, cared about. Their experiences exemplify the need and importance of support mechanisms being provided for beginning teachers, especially art teachers, in hopes of retaining educators that feel empowered to provide a quality art program and feel successful in their role as art teachers.
CHAPTER 9
CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, SIGNIFICANCE, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During this course of study, I spent a lot of time reflecting on my own experiences as a beginning art teacher. As I spent time talking with the beginning art teachers in this study, I could not help but reflect on how their experiences related to my own. Their stories spoke to that still small voice inside me of the beginning art teacher, who started her career with innocence, a rebellious passion, and a hope for all that could be, and whose expectations were limitless in regard to what I expected for myself and from others. I, too, found myself overjoyed in the moments of success and delighted in the look of joy on my student’s faces as they took pride in their artwork. I found myself overwhelmed in situations that failed to align with my expectations and instances when I felt frustrated, stressed out and unappreciated. I find that voice inside me to be a necessary component in retaining the identity and role I desire for myself and for the students I am honored to teach. That voice has grown and has taught me so much as a result of the transformations I have seen, felt, and made based on my experiences. It enables me to keep my passion alive.

Now as I find myself at the last chapter, I understand how fortunate I am to have had the opportunity to learn and grow in my knowledge and understanding of my experiences as a beginning teacher. My doctoral journey began the summer following my third year of teaching art. This timing allowed, as a result, the ability and time to attempt to better understand how those experiences impacted and shaped my career as a
teacher. As the art teachers in this study shared their voice, I was careful to listen to their stories as they told, lived, and shared them. It is my hope that through the sharing of the experiences of the beginning art teachers in this study, as they lived them, I will provide current and future educators the opportunity to reflect and learn from the experiences I have recorded.

Dewey (1938) contends that our lives are intertwined with our experiences and that our experiences are what create education. This study has been my life for the past four years. It arose from my experiences as a beginning elementary art teacher, like seeds taking root in the ground. The context of this study, based on the active reflection of how one’s experiences constantly affects her as she grows in knowledge, is evident in how my experiences throughout my career have informed and guided me in my course of life and in my role as an elementary art teacher.

Each of us possesses a personal history, which is rich and vastly appealing, derived from our experiences of learning in formal or informal settings, in families with parents and others, and in schools and other institutions with teachings in classrooms. These accounts represent in a way the informal reflection that occurs as one recollects, considers, and interprets various education-related experiences. For the most part, our personal histories are private, mental creations that exist as imagined constructs. These experiences may shape the thinking and approach of one’s teachings. The ability to call forth one’s experiences may be difficult, especially if elements of prior experiences are confronted that are contradictory to elements of present lives, career aspirations, or philosophical orientations and school placements. By asking teachers to actively reflect on their past experiences, one might possibly bring to light implicit theories, values, and
beliefs that underpin the perceptions of what a beginning art teacher’s lived experiences have shown as having impacted her career, both positively and negatively.

As teachers, we talk, tell stories, reflect on stories told, and work toward making connections among artists, artworks, related subject areas, communities, and each other. Dewey (1938) spoke of the effects of experiences on knowledge as arising from the synergy of two principles, continuity and interaction. Continuity describes how personal experiences influence one’s future, for better or for worse, whereas, interaction is the influence of one’s experience on any given situation. Based on Dewey’s theory of experience, one’s present situation is understood and experienced based on one’s past experiences and present situation. As I went through the process of completing this study, I witnessed this form of interplay and knowledge construction as the art teachers who participated in this study communicated their experiences. The themes that surfaced were a glimpse into that form of interaction, as described by Dewey, when explaining experiences as they were lived.

The beginning art teachers’ stories were an inspiration to me and encouraged me to reflect further on my own experiences. The three participants in this study spoke in a manner that was reflective of their imagined and lived experiences. At times, they shared those stories in the form of reflections of how the expectations they previously held had been altered or how anticipations had been altered, as well as how their personal histories failed to inform them in specific situations. Common throughout their discussions was their inability to separate the two (one’s past and one’s present). This inability indicated the dependence on both the past and present in life and in education. In other words, this qualitative study illustrated Dewey’s belief that education is life. The process of
education is two-fold: education requires reflecting on life, which in turn teaches us about life when thinking about education.

Throughout the stories of the beginning art teachers, an apparent undertone was the issue of becoming a teacher and how, as the beginning art teacher lived out her experiences, which were informed by her prior expectations, the role her imagination played in informing her development as a teacher during that transitional period. Greene (2005) informs us that imagination provides the link between our awareness of the possible, the unpredictable, and the present. The beginning art teachers all relied heavily on their imaginations during their pre-service training as they prepared themselves for the role of becoming art teachers. However, as they lived their experiences as beginning art teachers, it became apparent that the amount to which each participant relied on her imagination, and to some extent was able to keep her imagination intact in the transactional process of no longer becoming, but being an art teacher, varied. These variations offer points for reflection in consideration of the issues of how to keep teachers in the classroom as well as providing possible pieces that might fit into the larger puzzle of understanding the issue of teacher attrition.

I, initially, had intended to conduct my study using first year art teachers, and had even received initial IRB approval for that sample group. However, I quickly realized, after an informal meeting with a prospective participant, how my theoretical framework and research questions would be more informed if I explored the experiences of second year art teachers instead. This decision was based on the understanding that second year teachers possessed a full year of experience to reflect back upon in order to reflectively convey their understanding of their experiences from becoming to being teachers, while
still early enough into their career to be living new experiences daily. It was after this revelation that I completed an IRB addendum that changed my sample population to second year elementary art teachers.

Imagination, for the participants, meant the ability to acknowledge how the experiences they were living related to what they had imagined for themselves as art teachers, but, also, a way by which they were able to re-evaluate conditions they found most troubling. When the lived experience was found to be in contrast to that which the participant desired or expected, it became an intersection of sorts, in which the participants were left with the task of deciding what to do next. This intersection visually symbolizes a turning point in life of a teacher. An example of this was when Layla, overwhelmed and disillusioned at the beginning of her career, came home and told her husband, *I went into the wrong career*. At this point, the teacher’ use of imagination is put to the test, and the results comprise consequences that can drastically impact the life of the teacher, and I propose the field of education as a whole.

When the beginning art teacher, such as Callie, finds herself in conditions that are constantly in opposition to those she imagined for herself, it can result in disillusionment. Callie, repeatedly described how she possessed prior expectations for her career and when faced with situations that did not align, she made efforts initially to change those situations to align with what she imagined, such as when Callie tried to be included in professional development opportunities at her schools or asked her co-workers to plan lessons with her and was denied access. When those efforts return void in the eyes of the beginning teacher, as displayed in the experiences of Callie, who stated she *no longer had expectations*, the result is a loss of imagination. This statement by Callie, in addition to
her actions, indicate a loss of imagination and the ability to link the present to the future, to hope for what might be, and as a result the end of the beginning of new possibilities of understanding not only what and where one is now in their development of self, but all that one has yet to become. Callie’s experiences illustrate why Greene (2005) and Dewey (1934/1938) argued that the problem with education is the lack of imagination.

Bruner (1996) discussed important points that relate to further understanding the process of becoming of a teacher, the most important of those being the need for teachers to be able to sustain imagination in order to succeed in their role and self identity as a teacher. Our expectations, which we use our imagination to develop, influence how we act or behave as teachers. The participants’ stories reveal opportunities for understanding the themes of agency, self-efficacy, resilience, and re-conceptualization in the life of a beginning teacher. These issues are central to understanding how imagination, which informs our expectations, influences how we act and plays a part in the process of becoming and remaining a teacher.

Layla and Stacy most concretely present examples of the idea of agency described by Bruner (1996) as “taking control you own our mental activity” (p.86). After reflecting on her school culture and personal expectations for her role, Layla set out making her reality into what she had imagined it to be through daily efforts to advocate, support, and collaborate within her school setting and her own classroom. Stacy, on the other hand, presents a picture of agency in that she believed and proved herself able to initiate and carry out efforts on her own without the need to rely on others, as demonstrated in her choice to keep to herself. Callie, Layla, and Stacy’s experiences, are evidence of the skill of knowledge required for completing tasks required within their jobs and as well as
examples of resilience when faced with success and failures, all necessary for the
development of one’s identity and role as teacher. However, Stacy, most concretely,
highlights the need for an individual to have self-efficacy in their teaching identity.
When presented with instances, such as her administrators and co-workers lack of interest
in her role, Stacy chose to take the view that her administrator was not disinterested or
disrespectful of her role as the art teacher. Instead, she took the viewpoint that her
administrator respected and trusted her ability within her role as the art teacher and,
therefore, left her to do her job as she saw fit. Stacy was able to have this position on the
issue as a result of the strong sense of self-efficacy she possessed.

Although all the themes are necessary, a central component to a teacher’s success
and longevity as an art teacher is the ability for an individual to be able to re-
conceptualize. This characteristic could be viewed as the link between one’s imagination
in the past and future, as lived by an individual in the present. As such, the need to be
able to re-conceptualize is the ability for an individual to look at their expectations, as
informed by their imagination, for the future within the current situation in the school
setting as to make the two inform each other in a way that brings the individual’s past,
present, and imagined future together in a reconstructed format. This ability allows the
individual to maintain passion in the present and hope for the future. Callie’s inability to
re-conceptualize was evident when she stated that she could not see herself doing this job
for the next ten years, five years, or three years and that she could see herself doing other
jobs. Her story presents the necessity of an individual to possess all the characteristics of
agency, self-efficacy, resilience, and re-conceptualization in order to become and remain
an exceptional teacher for the course of one’s career as an art teacher.
Conclusions

Past research on new teacher attrition offered some guidance to areas that have been found to contribute to beginning teachers’ decisions to leave the field of teaching. However, little research that focused on beginning teachers and the factors that resulted in their premature exodus from the profession was found within the field of art education as a whole. Instead, art education studies such as Ellett (2011) and Stout (2002) demonstrated factors that motivated and inspired veteran art educators to remain in the profession. My study was original in that it focused primarily on the spectrum of experiences lived within the first two years of teaching art in order to access and evaluate the areas addressed and to provide insight as to how to better support art educators during the challenging period when the learning curve is steep. In many ways, the findings of this study, discussed in Chapters 5-8, support those of other studies from other areas of education. Based on those findings, the following conclusions can be drawn from this study:

1. The first year of teaching is tough and assistance is needed.
2. Beginning teachers placed high value on coursework and student teaching that provided “authentic,” or “hands on” experiences regarding issues faced in the everyday K-5 setting, (e.g.: classroom management).
3. Mentorship plays a vital role in teachers feeling competent and prepared.
4. Specific to the needs of beginning art teachers is the value found in having mentorships with more experienced teachers from the field of art education.
5. School culture plays an important role in job satisfaction affecting areas such as respect.
6. Support provided by administration, collaboration through professional development, and mentorship is needed and valued by beginning art teachers.

7. The beginning art teachers in this study listed primarily practical expectations (e.g. grading, lesson plans and curriculum, discipline and class management issues, and needing time and support) as important; however, they did look past tasks and responsibilities in listing their hopes, beliefs, and dreams for themselves and students, such as changing the world, instilling individuality, teaching children, and motivating change in their schools and education as a whole.

These conclusions lead to the question of what factors appear to encumber and disillusion beginning art teachers to the point that they find one day, week, month or year of teaching in such circumstances unbearable? The findings of this study offer conclusions that inform pre-service teacher preparation, new teacher attrition, and job satisfaction. These findings need to be taken into consideration when preparing pre-service teachers for the initial years of teaching so that they can adapt to the individual needs of their students and school settings.

**Discussion**

As addressed earlier in this study, a world-wide recession is a burden for us all. Furloughs, budget and program cuts, and job loss are prevalent alongside reductions in the quality of support and professional development. These economic deficiencies can result in increases in teacher to student ratios, workloads, and supply reductions. These are just a few of the factors playing a role in teachers feeling anxiety and hopelessness within their teaching situation. Overwhelmed and frustrated teachers, insecure of their job security and the direction of their life’s future, are left wondering whether they should
plan or even want to continue teaching. Thousands of teachers leave their current positions for jobs in other occupations, within other schools or school systems, leave for personal reasons, or choose to retire (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008; Boe, Cook, & Sutherland, 2008; Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Ingersoll, 2001). I have witnessed in my own workplace, in my conversations with teachers in all disciplines of education, and within the context of this research, the cycle of events that results in teacher turnover or attrition. These events include reasons such as lack of support, feelings of isolation and of being overwhelmed, as reported by Krueger (2000) and Scherff (2008). The majority of current research on new teacher attrition (NCES, 2009; Keigher & Cross, 2010) reported a decrease in music and arts teachers leaving the profession. However, the findings of this study, with one participant out of the three having made the decision to leave her current teaching position presents findings more in line with past research, where beginning art teachers were reported as possibly being the greatest at risk to leave their current teaching positions (Luekens et al., 2004). These findings suggest that beginning arts (music and visual art) teachers are still leaving their current teaching positions as a result of more favorable career opportunities, as demonstrated in Callie’s comment that she could not imagine doing this job the rest of her life and choice to move from her current position as an art teacher to that of an early childhood classroom teacher. As such, it highlights the need for continued and renewed interest in research focusing on the conditions and issues that result in beginning teacher attrition, specifically beginning art teachers. As suggested, the economic recession has greatly encouraged those professionals who have jobs, to retain them regardless of the circumstances. The similarity of the findings of this study with those of past research on new teacher attrition
document the aspects still prevalent as adversely affecting the field of education for beginning teachers.  

**Educational reforms.** One area that contrasted greatly with past research on teacher attrition was the impact of educational policies being implemented and the feelings of frustration and lack of preparation and support felt in regard to such policies by beginning art teachers. In the 2011 school year, Georgia began its campaign to determine how to best implement pay for performance. This structure pays beginning teachers at the lowest level, and therefore lowest pay, while most effective teachers (determined based on state criteria of student achievement) move to the highest paying top tiers (Dixon, 2011). While still in the formation stage, the system has non-classroom teachers (teachers responsible for numerous classes, such as art teachers) apprehensive since little has been clarified as to how the decision to place those teachers, such as art, music, and physical education, on the scale will be made. Tying teachers of subjects like art to student achievement not only places the teacher in a compromising position, since they may be responsible for students they do not even teach, but specifically implicates the desire for art to be numerically assessed. The standardized test focus of American schools places the art teacher in the troublesome position of trying to justify her importance through means that I believe fail to reflect the depth of student learning and the learning derived from experiences lived within the context of an art classroom.  

Additionally, the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* (1975) and *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001) were difficult for the beginning art teachers in that, in keeping with the requirements set forth by the guidelines of these legal policies, adequate preparation and support staff were needed. As a result of this need to meet current policies by individual
schools, such as RTI (Response to Intervention), the art teachers in this study were also required to teach subjects outside of their certification fields. This additional and unexpected assignment was due to the fact that the requirements for meeting such policies have not changed regardless of the fact that the federal and state government have continued to cut education funding, resulting in inadequate staff available to meet the needs of the students these educational policies seek to address. The students and the teachers are the ones left feeling the effects of such educational reforms.

Support mechanisms. Each beginning teacher in this study had different needs and, therefore, induction needed to be individualized instead of using a “one size fits all” program. This fact was especially the case for art teachers, whose discipline makes them unique in their school setting. One specific result Smith and Ingersoll (2004) documented was that providing mentors from the same field, having common planning time, 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. All of these components have a common thread; new teachers benefited from the experiences shared with other teachers, specifically those teaching in the same subject area. All of the participants in this study discussed a desire for collaboration and the importance of working with other teachers.

Gilbert (2005) found the following results from a survey created by a focus group that 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.

While the participants in this study did not rank strategies valued most by new teachers, they did discuss topics they believed most useful and needed as beginning art teachers. The most discussed topics centered on the supportive mechanisms and responsibilities and concerns of being an art educator, such as (placed in order of significance as described by the participants):

• Having a mentor

• Being provided with time for planning and curriculum design to alleviate time management/stress/frustration

• Providing additional support for students with modifications – individualized instruction or behavior

• Providing collaborative professional development opportunities

• Providing new teachers with feedback based on classroom observations

• Preventing interruptions

• Receiving supplies and technology resources

Understanding the areas most valued by beginning teachers can enable both state and local school districts to identify the tools necessary for designing and implementing measures aimed at supporting beginning teachers.

**Role and identity.** While the findings of this study inform the field of education as a whole, it is important to acknowledge the conditions that are specific to art education. The participants in this study all experienced feelings of stress and a lack of respect from “unwanted or tedious” responsibilities placed upon them, much like Schieb
(2002) found in his study of the roles of art educators, which created a conflict between their role as art teacher, as viewed by their school culture and that held by one’s self. Schieb recommended that when dealing with incompatible roles, beginning teachers either change: (1) their role (identity, expectations), as illustrated by Callie when she stated, *I don’t have any expectations anymore*; or (2) the reality (context), such as Layla, who stated, *I knew what I wanted for my career, and I made sure I got out* (of my classroom) *and earned the respect of my co-workers and administration*. It appears necessary for pre-service students to be prepared for dealing with incompatible roles through approaches to teacher preparation that allow students to adjust to the school context in which they find themselves.

**Significance**

This qualitative study provides no clear answers as to how the field of art education might prevent or even keep beginning art teachers in the classroom. Rather, it serves to provide a greater understanding of what it is like to be a beginning art teacher from the firsthand accounts of three elementary art teachers who, having just completed their first two years of teaching, provided their own unique perspectives in their school settings. The most pressing concerns discussed by the art teachers in this study offer insights into the fields of both art education and general education as to what can be done to positively improve the start of a teacher’s career. Since the literature has shown beginning teachers to be most vulnerable to attrition in their first five years, it is necessary that school systems and school administrators construct and implement better support mechanisms, such as mentors, for beginning teachers. The participants in this study shared a need to be acknowledged and heard as well as feel supported and
appreciated. It is important for beginning art educators’ experiences and perspectives to be understood by pre-service educators, administrators, and veteran teachers. This understanding will allow beginning teachers to be provided with sufficient support and mentorship so that they may prosper as opposed to simply survive. This study can inform the ways in which beginning teachers can be better prepared and supported.

The beginning art teachers in this study all experienced different levels of support: Callie with the least, Layla with the most support, and Stacy falling in-between the two in the level of support received. Similar to the level of support received was the level of career satisfaction described by each participant. Regardless of the relationship the art teachers had with their administrators or their status within the school, the participants all described school culture as having an effect on their classroom teaching because of two main underlying reasons: (1) The positive relationship with colleague teachers increased the opportunity to get help and support from each other, and (2) a supportive administration provided a safe environment that enabled teachers. As indicated by the stories of the three art teachers in this study, mentorship was the form of support most valued and recommended to be necessary. This commonality is significant in that it indicates the importance of support through mentorship as a means of helping retain beginning teachers.

This research informs the needs of pre-service teacher preparation programs and the areas of teacher attrition and retention. When equipped with the knowledge of what beginning teachers themselves consider as their most pressing concern, it may be possible to more effectively facilitate mentoring and professional development opportunities. Drawing on the common challenges shared by beginning art teachers can offer insight as
to how to better provide support during the fragile and challenging period at the start of one’s teaching career that results from the huge transition from student to teacher. Additionally, insight can be garnered as to how to improve the pre-service preparation of beginning art teachers through these accounts of the areas in which the subjects felt most unprepared or overwhelmed. These efforts can help to improve the new teachers’ beginning years with the hope of creating an environment that enables success for each new teacher and future generations.

**Recommendations**

There remain to be numerous aspects of teaching that beginning art educators are not being adequately prepared for regarding the realities of teaching. These issues exist in regard to the many issues they face during their initial years in the classroom and in the larger school culture. These recommendations below are derived from the participant interviews, field observations, and reflective journal entries. Specifically, the recommendations are directed to beginning teachers, administrators, professional associations, teacher preparation educators, and policy.

**Beginning teachers.**

- Ask if your school has a mentorship program, if not seek out a veteran teacher you respect and ask them to be your mentor. Researchers such as Ellett (2012) have found that veteran teachers are often those who have maintain their passion in spite of the conditions they found themselves faced with. Therefore, those individuals, discipline-specific or not, will provide a wealth of knowledge about teaching students, the job shared by us all, as well as the delicate and difficult job
of working within and with a larger group of educators and the school culture itself.

• Seek out an arts education specific mentor. Depending on your pre-service experiences this could be your cooperating teacher, a college professor, or another art teacher within your district.

• Maintain communication with peers from your teacher preparation program throughout your career. You are all experiencing your first years of teaching and can offer support to each other in understanding what it feels like to be at the same point in your careers. Those relationships can develop into lifelong friendships that can improve your career and your life.

• Seek out a strong professional relationship with administration in order to better understand the schools needs as well as expectations for your art program. This will enable you to become a vital part of your school program and advocate for the unique needs that come with being an art educator. This relationship will convey a sincere interest in being a part of the larger school culture and place you in a position that enables you to be heard by the decision maker in your school setting.

• Regardless of whether your efforts are recognized by all the teachers you approach, continue to see out and make connections with other teachers in your school. Strive to find ways in which your curricula can inform that of each other. The results of such efforts will benefit the students, the other teachers, and you. Through your interactions with other teachers and professionals within your school you will grow in your personal connections, your knowledge and skill
base, and level of support. Support the other teachers in your school and in your school district.

- Advocate for your program and for yourself. Seek out and participate in learning opportunities. Take classes, attend workshops, belong to associations and organizations, and increase your certifications (e.g. gifted endorsement). Be reflective. Try to find ways daily to cultivate the artist within you as well as your identity as art teacher. Keeping those two identities nurtured and motivated through reflection can assist in helping you feel supported and positive.

Reflection is thought to be essential for all teachers, regardless of discipline, to be exceptional in their role as teachers (Dewey, 1938, Schon, 1938).

**Administrators.** While some form of dissatisfaction is inevitable, a host of researchers (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Ingersoll, 2004; Johnson, 2004/2005; Smith & Ingersoll; 2004) found two keys to retaining teachers are a positive sense of professional school culture and administrator support. Therefore, school administrators must hold some of the responsibility for beginning teachers’ feelings of satisfaction or of disenchantment. At the school level, beginning art teachers have inconsistent expectations regarding their jobs as art teachers from one school system to another as well as from school to school within one school system (ex: schedules). This inconsistency makes it difficult for colleges to adequately prepare beginning art teachers as well as makes it especially difficult for beginning teachers who are split between different school settings. Consistency in basic aspects, such as teaching and non-teaching responsibilities, carried out by school administrators would provide beginning teachers with stable working conditions where the role of the art teacher is clearly defined for the
school culture at large. Below are some key recommendations directed at administrators in helping improve the experiences of beginning teachers.

- Make sure your school has a mentorship program in place. Do not assume that new teachers know what they are supposed to know. As the participants’ stories in this study show, we often forget what we did not know in the beginning of our careers now that we are experienced in our field. Having a mentor program in place provides new teachers with the opportunity to have someone to share this information with them.

- Maintain communication among principals in schools regarding teachers, who are shared between more than one school setting.

- Administrations within school districts must communicate regarding the expectations required for arts teachers through a school district in order to create uniformity in the program and in the role and expectations held for the art teachers.

- Talk to your new teachers. Ask them what they are learning in the process of beginning their art program. Let them know that you care about their program and by doing so you let them know that you feel what they are doing is important.

- Marginalization of arts in education is a subject recurrent in this study. As the administrator who sets the tone for the school, it is important that the art teacher feels respected by her administrator, and thereby her co-workers.

- Encourage beginning teachers to play a larger part in the leadership within the school because one day they will have to take on that role and need to be adequately prepared to do so.
**Professional associations.** Beginning art educators, and art educators as a whole, are not receiving adequate preparation and support in numerous aspects of teaching. Often times, individual schools, school districts, and state and federal governments are not providing the adequate resources necessary for initiating the funding and implementing opportunities for professional development. Professional associations are tasked with the role of supporting and educating its members and offer possibilities for filling in deficiencies and gaps currently present in the educational setting regarding beginning art teachers and their unique needs. The following recommendations are directed to professional associations:

- Professional partnerships between art education associations and teacher preparation programs need to be collaborating on efforts to better prepare teachers in the field of art education and address the unique needs of this group of educators.

- Make efforts to play a larger influence on policy recommendations by providing a voice as to how policy reforms are being interpreted by individual school districts and schools in regard to the art curriculum and role of the art program, and by the art teachers themselves.

- Broaden advocacy to include workshops/presentations/articles geared towards administration that communicates the factors necessary for fostering and supporting a rigorous art education program at the local district and school levels.

- Offering workshops specialized for meetings the needs of special education students in the art room at the association level as well as extending those opportunities to individual school district levels.
• Providing a stronger support base of workshops that move past recurrent topics for familiar faces, but seeks to enlarge its population of members with focused attention on topics most pressing to the needs of today’s educational school settings.

• Creating a mentoring program within the organization that provides training for prospective veteran art teacher mentors and arts specific mentors for beginning arts teachers.

• Offering workshops at conferences geared towards topics pressing and relevant for beginning art teachers based on feedback research collected from mentors within the association fostered mentoring program

Teacher preparation. Colleges of education and others at the University level responsible for preparing teachers need to perform more research regarding the needs of beginning teachers as they enter the field in order to discover what deficiencies their teachers are facing based on the preparatory programs they have in place. Henry and Lazzari (2007) called for increased research in the field of art education based on preparing art educators for the context of current educational reforms such as the advancement for content standards and standards accountability. These findings highlight areas in need of reform in teacher preparation programs and areas that could help colleges adapt their programs in order to stay current with school conditions and in order to create more prepared and competent educators ready for the challenges associated with starting out in the ever-evolving field of education.

Specifically, this research makes a strong case for research focused on designing teacher preparation programs with collaborative coursework or classes for art educators
and early childhood educators during pre-service preparation. Prior experience of early childhood educators and art teachers working together in a collaborative format may develop expectations of working with co-workers across disciplines. These efforts could aid in fostering a collaborative community in the school setting, where all teachers are united with the aim of working together to best meet the needs of students as opposed to pursuing separate means through individual purposes.

The beginning art teachers in this study, like many novice teachers, quickly realized the enormity of the bureaucratic demands of teaching as well as the ensuing fatigue it caused, followed by a lack of time and support to concentrate on teaching. There exists a need for more focus at the college level on preparing beginning teachers for the aspects documented as most challenging, such as classroom management and special education accommodations. Difficulty with classroom management, unfortunately, is common for beginning teachers. However, the recurrence of the problem implies the need to better address this issue during pre-service teacher preparation. The current economic recession has resulted in larger class sizes, a reduction in school staff, and decreases in resources and supplies, all of which further affect classroom management, curriculum, and state and school policy. Particularly, a lack of special education support staff was evident in the stories of the participants in this study. These factors warrant the need for pre-service preparation of teachers to provide a greater emphasis on educating future art teachers on topics such as how to read and interpret an Individualized Evaluation Plan (IEP) or teach in an inclusion style format class, with the focus specifically resting on how these issues impact the art classroom as a part of college curriculum training. Also, efforts must be made to keep on top of
educating beginning art teachers of current policy changes, such as Response to Intervention (RTI), and how individual schools are applying these policies. Another implication for teacher pre-service preparation programs is to encourage a dialogue where pre-service teachers’ fears and concerns can be voiced. It is necessary to understand that pre-service teachers’ fears and concerns may differ from those of beginning art teachers, since the lived experience has not been attained. Examples of teachers’ narratives, such as those Galbraith (1995) provided of beginning art teachers’ experiences, might be used for reflection for pre-service teachers. However, given the constantly changing nature of education, more current examples must be provided and even panels or presentations by current beginning art teachers to speak to students would be valuable.

It is important to note that the recommendation for an emphasis on encouraging pre-service teachers’ reflective dialogue in college courses is due to the fact that pre-service education programs and educators are often blamed for the lack of preparation beginning teachers report experiencing during their first years in the classroom. Allowing pre-service teachers to voice issues they feel concerned about may open up a dialogue that highlights any disconnect between the pre-service students’ understanding of the course content being taught as opposed to that intended by the pre-service educator. In this study, the participants’ often stated that they had not understood during their first year of teaching why they had been made to complete certain assignments in college as well as how they had initially found some college assignments to be of no use to them in their career thus far. However, the participants later reflected on how during their second year of teaching they had started to see the importance of some, but not all,
aspects of their college courses they had initially overlooked as ineffective in their careers. Encouraging a dialogue during the pre-service education of a teacher might allow for the learning to progress at a faster rate through the reflective process it entails and provide an opportunity for beginning teachers to enter their first years more aware of the efficacy of the education they received and capable of applying it in their daily role as an art teacher.

**Policy.** The requirements of inclusion-style formats for students with special needs are not being adequately met under Georgia’s current policy in which special education support is not provided in programs such as music, art, and physical education. This policy may actually be placing students and teachers in unsafe and unproductive situations. Additionally, using teachers in areas outside of their certification field, such as art teachers teaching RTI math, inadequately meets the needs of students as well as those of the teachers when asking them to teach subjects they are not certified in and with which they may feel unprepared or uncomfortable. These instances result in difficult working conditions for beginning teachers, an area believed to be a major cause of teacher attrition. As such, the job of changing the culture of schools should be a key target of policy efforts (Cooper & Alvarado, 2006). The beginning art teachers in this study show that teacher education cannot account for all the issues that drive teachers out of the classroom or lead them safely through the politics and culture of individual schools. It is necessary for schools to invest in resources needed to keep teachers teaching, resources such as high-quality induction and mentoring programs. If local education agencies and conditions impede such support, then school systems need to establish beginning teacher support groups to provide a safe community to raise questions.
and speak concerns. Additionally, school administrators need to create and maintain school cultures that support teaching and learning. By better addressing these issues at the college, local school, and state level in a more specific way, schools can provide an opportunity to keep beginning teachers in the profession.

The findings of this study support the need for the state to look into adopting a mandatory mentorship program that will fully address the needs of entry-level teachers at the local school system level, such as those proposed in the Georgia GSTEP program. These programs should be uniform throughout the state educational system. Policy makers and school administrators need to consider the possible uses of mentoring for influencing quality teaching and student achievement focused on nurturing individual expectations as opposed to solely institutional expectations. With proper guidance and direction, based on discovering the uniqueness and strengths of beginning teachers, a new or beginning teacher could be viewed as an educator in progress instead of a replica of a former teacher or another new teacher attrition statistic casualty. In addition, this research highlights the need for beginning art teachers to have opportunities for collaboration with like professionals through professional development and mentorship, as argued in the research of Conway et al. (2002/2005) and Ingersoll and Strong (2011). This form of collaboration may serve to scaffold beginning teachers to higher levels of thinking and teaching than they might be able to reach alone, thereby developing relationships with professionals needed for the internalization of strategies required for creative problem solving at a personal level and maintaining resiliency and innovation in the field through learning from someone more knowledgeable. Helping to address issues
of teacher attrition can help build a strong foundation to support new educators and their needs.

**Epilogue**

*During the entire course of this study, these lyrics from Brandi Carlile’s (2007) song “The Story” came to mind and, ultimately, described the essence of the stories of the participants in this study as well as my own; that being the need for someone to share your story with as a beginning art teacher.*

**The Story**

All of these lines across my face

Tell you the story of who I am

So many stories of where I’ve been

And how I got to where I am

But, these stories don’t mean anything

When you’ve got no one to tell them to

This study offers hope into improving the teaching profession as whole, especially for beginning art teachers, through the insight garnered from the lived experiences shared by the art teachers, who participated in this study. I believe that it is imperative that we listen to the voices’ of novice educators, who are charged with the goal of continuing the mission we all hold so dear, of educating the future minds, hearts, and lives of today that will lead the world of tomorrow. School administrators, professional associations, teacher preparation educators, teachers, and policy makers collectively, must make efforts maintain an open and critical dialogue of the educational state our teachers are working in and more importantly, the conditions that our nations students are learning in.
An awareness to the less than optimal teaching conditions that teachers are confronted with on a daily basis in the educational setting will require exposure to the lived experiences of those teachers working in the conditions on a daily basis, which reveals the importance of research from the point of the teachers living as teachers, such as those comprising this study. Through such dialogue, solutions could be revealed in order to provide support and changes necessary to prevent the loss of teachers. I believe, along with a milieu of others, that narrative research findings privileging the use of Greene’s (2005) conception of imagination and Dewey’s (1934/1938) theory of experience can offer direction that moves past the recurrence of old topics and problems and opens the consciousness of experience in order to reveal the uncertain and yet to be, to better improve the present and future conditions of education for both teachers and students.

We must listen, hear and maintain unfolding discourses, which enable all to share our stories and to better understand the fullness of our experiences. Most importantly, we must enable the beginning educator to share their actualities of experience and foster the imaginative voice within in order to move past the awareness of the problems to really move towards in an attempt to transform the commonplace. I believe this can only be obtained when we take the time to share and earnestly listen to the stories of the teachers’ who are living the daily experiences of being educators. My study has to conclude, but life continues… may we all carry on a legacy of listening to the stories of educators in order to keep hope, belief, and support in education alive.
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APPENDIX A: INFORMATIONAL LETTER

Date

Dear Respondent:

I invite you to participate in a research project to study the experiences of beginning elementary art teachers. I am a doctoral student under the direction of Dr. Carole Henry, in the Department of Art Education at The University of Georgia.

The objective of my research is to provide insight into the important and sensitive issue of teacher attrition within the field of art education. In particular, I desire to gain insights into beginning art teachers’ imagined and lived experiences as classroom teachers. The research conducted from the perspective of art teachers’ will garner implications as to what can be done to support and improve a beginning art teacher’s experience. The findings will inform professional development aimed at in-service arts teachers.

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. I do not know of any risks to you if you decide to participate in this study and steps will be taken to ensure that your responses will not be identified with you personally. I am asking you to respond back to this email in order for me to schedule three, one hour follow-up interviews as well as your completion of 10 reflective journal entries you will complete via email. The results of the research study may be published, but your name will not be used. In fact, the published results will be presented in summary form only. Your identity will not be associated with your responses in any published format.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me at (706) 968-0473 or send an e-mail to ladonna@uga.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, 629 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu.

Please respond back to this email if you wish to hear more about this study and/or might be interested in participating in the above described research project.

Thank you for your consideration! Please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

LaDonna Canup
APPENDIX B: OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Below are the questions that were used as a guide during the interviews. In order to cover all 15 questions, each interview session (3 interviews per participant) addressed at least five questions. Based on the discussion that evolved during each interview, additional questions and/or probes were used.

1. Tell me about your decision to become an art teacher.
   
   Possible Probes:
   - Tell me about any experiences that validated your career choice.
   - What made this incident(s) so memorable?
   - Tell me about any experiences that made you question your career choice?
   - What made this incident(s) so memorable?

2. What stands out for you in your experiences as a beginning art teacher?
   
   Possible Probes:
   - How are your experiences similar to the expectations you had for a career of the teaching of art?
   - How are your experiences different from the expectations you had for a career of the teaching of art?
   - What aspects of your job do see as most rewarding?
   - What do aspects of your job do see as most challenging?

3. How did you imagine the teaching art to be based on your pre-service preparation?
   
   Possible Probes:
   - Classroom management, pedagogical strategies

4. Tell me about a typical day in your art classroom?
5. Describe your role in the school setting?

**Possible Probes:**
- Aside from teaching, what additional expectations are required of you?
- Tell me about your relationship with your school administration? other teachers?
- Has your role changed from what you anticipated it to be during your pre-service training? And if so, tell me how?

6. In your opinion, what helped you most in your transition into full-time teaching?

**Possible Probes:**
- Mentoring, induction program, administration, networking with other art teachers
- Are there any resources not provided that you feel could have helped?

7. Tell me about what you believe are the greatest needs you have professionally in order to teach successfully in your opinion?

8. Overall, how do you feel about your career choice to date?

**Possible Probes:**
- Is this career choice fulfilling to you? Why or why not?
- Can you share with me an experience supporting this?

9. Tell me how you describe your profession to others (for instance tell me what you told your family/friends about your career).

10. What advice would you give future beginning art teachers based on your experiences as a beginning art teacher?

11. Describe the most important information you feel pre-service art teachers need to have shared with them.

12. Tell me about an experience that made you proud to be an art teacher?

13. Tell me about an experience in which you were disappointed as an art teacher?

14. Professionally, what do you see yourself doing in the next five years?

15. Are there any questions you feel I should have asked you or comments you would like to share?
APPENDIX C: PROMPTS FOR EDUCATOR’ REFLECTIVE JOURNAL ENTRIES

Below are the prompts that participants were asked to respond to via email on every other Friday each month (two prompts per month and 11 total) in between the scheduled dates for interviews. The participants received one prompt on Monday by email and had till Friday to respond back by email to the researcher.

Week 2: Describe your expectations for being an art teacher prior to experiencing gaining fulltime employment. Have these expectations been altered as the year progresses? If so, please explain.

Week 4: Has anything unexpected happened this week?

Week 6: Describe a good day and the factors contributing to your perception.

Week 8: Describe any unanticipated obstacles you experience as an art teacher.

Week 10: How do interruptions impact what happens in your classroom?

Week 12: How does testing impact your art curriculum?

Week 14: Describe a time this week in which you felt supported and unsupported.

Week 16: Has a figure acted as a mentor within your school or from the profession of art education helped you during your first years of teaching? What role did this person play?

Week 18: What do you see the role of art to be in your school setting?

Week 20: Do you advocate for your art program? and why/why not?

Week 22: Please provide a story of a time when you felt successful as an art teacher.
APPENDIX D: PERMISSION LETTER FOR PRINCIPAL APPROVAL OF FIELD OBSERVATION

Date

LaDonna Canup
P.O. Box 64
Turnerville, GA 30580

To Whom It May Concern:

LaDonna Canup, a doctoral student in the Department of Art Education at The University of Georgia, has my permission to observe the (participant) art classes at (school) for the purpose of the gaining insight into the real life experiences of beginning art teachers. It is understood that this research will provide insight into the important and sensitive issue of teacher attrition within the field of art education. The research conducted from the perspective of art teachers’ will garner implications as to what can be done to support and improve a beginning art teacher’s experience. The findings of this study will inform professional development aimed at in-service arts teachers.

Sincerely,

(Principal)
APPENDIX E: RESEARCHER’S STORY

My first years in the classroom were more marked with moments of disappointment, anger, and frustration than with the isolated instances of satisfaction, pleasure and contentment I had hoped for. As an elementary art teacher, who is typically the sole individual in my discipline at my school, I had no mentor to talk to who could understand or relate to my daily life. The induction program I was required to attend meant staying after school once a month for meeting on a monthly topic, such as insurance. It was poorly designed and not geared for those of us who were on the fringes of the school setting. What made the situation worse was that my story was not unique. I contacted other members of my graduating class during my first years and heard the same story I was telling but through different settings, voices, and characters. Veterans in the field declared that all teachers go through this process and either stick with it or leave. Being asked to either give up a career teaching a subject I am passionate about or continue to being subjected to the current situation left me with a dubious outlook for my future. For me both options were out of the question, so instead of becoming what research calls a mover—one who changes teaching fields—or a leaver, I decided to use my situation as a motivator and enrolled in the doctoral program I am currently in.

This story is not new or isolated for all teachers. The field of art education research has been dominated with many pressing agendas over its history, such as striving to prove its worth in the school setting or determining which curriculum best meets the needs of students. While answers to those questions are extremely pertinent to
the field of art education research, I feel that without more attention to the personal experiences of art teachers there may not be any teachers left to teach this most needed subject, and those who are left may be so broken that they fall short of providing the quality art education all students deserve. An individual’s thoughts and experiences are the stories of a life. My autobiographical story provides personal motivation for conducting this narrative inquiry and demonstrates the formation and nurturing of my own teacher identity, the genesis of my personal and professional knowledge, and how reflection on experience is vital in understanding the needs of today’s art teachers.

Looking back, I suppose I was a teacher in the making as far back as elementary school. Like many people, my life’s path followed many detours. In elementary school, I loved art class and was fortunate to have parents who fostered my artistic interests and talents at home. All my elementary writing samples and childhood journals foretold of my future as an art teacher. This career motivation was due as much to my talent and interest in the subject as to the reinforcement I received from teachers, parents, and friends about how it was a fitting profession for me. The seeds of my future teacher identity were planted long before they were fertilized and tended. These elementary-school seeds were quickly covered with weeds during middle school and high school. During those years, I was no longer encouraged to pursue a career in art education. As is still too often the case in today’s society, students are pushed to strive for careers with rewards of more money and respect. As a result, I was steered more towards a business career, possibly advertising, where my talent in the arts would be better utilized. Based on this guidance, I entered college pursing a business degree. In addition to my core and business classes during my freshman year, I took an art appreciation class in which my
passion for art was reignited. I remember my professor as vividly now as the days spent sitting in her class. Her passion for teaching was captivating and evident in her exuberant voice, animated gestures, and expressive attempts to motivate and inspire us to share in her appreciation and love of art. Throughout that semester I was in a constant battle with myself over whether to change my major to art education or stay in business. Much to my surprise, after the final exam the professor asked if I had ever considered art as my college major. The interest she took in me changed the course of my life’s direction as I switched my major to art education my sophomore year.

The time spent in my undergraduate studies provided me with an abundance of knowledge and experience from which to pull from during my first years of teaching. I received outstanding advice, mentorship, and friendship from professors and my peers, many of whom I have maintained relationships with. After 4 years of undergraduate studies in order to earn my art teaching degree, I was equipped with educational theory that included understanding of childhood development from Piaget to Bruner and Lowenfeld to Efland. I was prepared to present stimulating lessons in methods such as the Reggio Emilia approach, discipline-based art education, visual culture, and multicultural education, which would motivate the most difficult of students. I spent countless hours observing in elementary, middle, and high schools across a broad range of socio/cultural and economic backgrounds. My student teaching entailed 16 weeks divided into 8 weeks at an elementary school and 8 weeks at a high school. Influential in my pre-service preparation was my elementary placement teacher, who had over 25 years of experience as an elementary school art teacher to her credit. She was as inspiring as any of Stout’s (2002) Flower Teachers and conveyed a relentless and
resilient passion for teaching that heavily influenced my current teaching style, curriculum approach, and motivations for why I teach. Even after her countless years in the classroom, she too often had to fight the tendency in public schools of mundane teaching and the role of fact giver. She remained strong in the face of adversity. Her mark, as well as those of other influential teachers, beckons me to be one of those teachers who influences her students’ lives in powerful ways and drives students to love learning.

As an undergraduate student, I felt inspired, educated, and prepared upon conclusion of my student teaching and forthcoming graduation. I had even received the Georgia State University Outstanding Future Art Educator student award, designed to recognize the most promising student from the graduating class for that year. Having come from a family with numerous educators, such as my mother and brother, I had spent many years in schools seeing behind the scenes and hearing about teaching experiences. During my undergraduate time, my professors worked hard to convey the realities of teaching art, like budgets and the need for advocacy, and the harsh aspects of teaching, like unsuitable classroom conditions where no running water is available as well as the possibilities of being a traveling teacher on a cart. I felt aware of the expectations required in a life of teaching art.

My expectations led me to believe that I would have a stake in the details that affected me personally and professionally in the outcomes of my classroom, such as scheduling and discipline. I imagined myself being an active part of the faculty, and a respected one at that. It is imperative for educators to continue to develop expertise in their curriculum. While I knew numerous professional learning opportunities would not
exist in my future, I assumed I would be encouraged and provided with opportunities to
meet with art educators so as to create a program based on current national, state, and
local school needs, standards, and goals. These opportunities would also allow me to
stay connected with other art educators. I presumed my administration would be
interested in my curriculum, which I would design to focus on what the students need to
become self-actualizing, innovative, and complex visual thinkers. Recalling those
teachers who had influenced me the most educationally, I found it vital that I would
continuously look for different ways to make the material interesting, fun, and
intellectually stimulating. As a public school art teacher I imagined having time to plan
lessons daily so that I could give the best of myself each day to my students and my peers.
I hoped to be an art resource for my fellow educators. I wanted to encourage the
inclusion of the arts as a facilitator for their teaching while still advocating the
importance of the arts to be taught as an individual discipline. I felt it would be
important for me to plan and participate in art-related school-wide activities. Because I
valued what I taught in my classroom, I thought my administration and fellow teachers
would as well.

I imagined my career to be challenging and that I would face my share of
adversity, but I also thought each situation would end ideally. Whatever negative
experience I imagined, I was naïve enough to think either it would not happen to me or
that I would be strong enough to overcome and change it. While I knew that I could not
imagine all the experiences I would face, I felt prepared to know how to handle those
imagined experiences, and that sense of self-assurance helped me feel in control of my
future. However, that presence of mind was quickly thrown off when I found myself
living experiences that upset my state of equilibrium. What I lived was the shattering
reality of an educational system not focused on the limitless possibilities of student
achievement and preparation or focused on educating students to be capable of
maintaining and improving society in general as well as competing in the world
economy, but instead focused on those achievements only a standardized test can
measure.

My imagined expectations for my career supported a vision in which the school
environment was a mere backdrop in relation to my classroom. Within the walls of my
classroom, I was happily content. I taught stimulating lessons, managed behavior, and
formed gratifying relationships with my students. I started an art club that required me
to stay after school till 5:00 every Wednesday afternoon and provided opportunities for
me to get to know the students better as well as extending their art education past what I
could afford them during their designated class time. So that all students could attend art
club, the school counselor and I volunteered to take home the children whose parents
could not pick them up. Doing so allowed me to see my students’ housing conditions and
home lives. It gave me opportunities to mentor students in ways I could not have
imagined or been prepared for. During my first year, I planned and executed the
school’s first ever art show, which led to the biggest turnout the school had had in years
and shocked the administration. The art show was a great fundraiser, and between the
first and second annual art show, I raised enough money to buy the school a full size kiln
so that my students could experience the possibilities of working with clay. In those
moments I felt like I was learning what it meant to love my job and make a difference.
Outside of those moments, I was living the everyday reality of being an art teacher.
My school days consisted of morning and evening duties, a break for lunch, 5 minutes between my classes and art club once a week after school. My schedule allotted no planning time to prepare lessons for school or art club or complete paperwork, much less meet with other teachers. Additional obstacles to my teaching effectiveness were class size, lack of facilities, and lack of technology. I quickly learned how to make the best of what I had. I knew the caliber of lessons I wanted to teach; however, after several months of coming early and staying late, I was getting frustrated, not to mention physically and mentally weary. My schedule was constantly being interrupted when my instructional time was used so students could attend an assembly or event. This ensured that the classroom teachers would still have their planning time, but what about me? Where was my planning time? Was I not a teacher as well? Other times, teachers would pull students from art for disciplinary matters. Taking art time away for assemblies or as a means of discipline told the kids and me that art was unnecessary and replaceable. I took these actions as insults to both my profession and myself.

I realized how political and egocentric the school environment could be when I listened carefully in the break room and workrooms. I found out whom to confide in and whom not to. Each school is its own habitat, where some teachers help sustain it and others cause damage to it. Some teachers reassured me of my place within the school by showing interest and responding to my requests to integrate art, while others shared snide remarks like, “I wish I was an art teacher, so I could play all day.” I had not been prepared for educators who would be so open about their dismissal of art. Trying to keep perspective, I saw these degrading remarks as the frustrations of overwhelmed teachers who were unaware of what it is to teach art. Nevertheless, the remarks were
inappropriate, and as a beginning teacher they were unsettling and undermined my still-developing identity as a teacher who is a valued and respected part of the school faculty.

The administration of a school sets the tone for the whole faculty. I learned this lesson clearly at the end of my first year. Throughout the school year, I had made several attempts to discuss the issues with my administration that I found unsettling, such as students missing art for various reasons. These discussions went considerably well. I felt like I was getting things addressed and handled the way I wanted, as opposed to things being done the way the old art teacher had allowed. After living my first year with a class schedule I had no control over, I decided I should ask to play a part in the construction of the upcoming year’s scheduling decisions since they directly affected me. This meeting with my principal was a significant moment in my career and identity formation as an art teacher. Despite my requests for a planning period to be included in the schedule and for classes to be scheduled in a more developmentally appropriate manner, the discussion boiled down to the principal informing me that the decisions would be made based on what was best for the classroom teachers. I responded by asserting my needs as a teacher. He concluded by informing me that my role in the school was to give the classroom teachers a planning period, so that they were prepared to teach each day. This was just one of many infuriating and saddening instances that brought me to tears over the course of my first years as an art teacher. I felt like I had worked so hard that year to prove myself and yet it seemed like my hard work had not made a difference in promoting the value of the arts. This moment could have easily shattered my ambition and passion for teaching art as well as my zeal for continuing to work hard at becoming a better teacher.
Luckily, I made friends with the music and P.E. teachers, and they helped me learn my way around the organizational aspects of the school that I was unfamiliar with. In many respects we were all in the same situation, so they listened to my concerns and frustrations and gave me advice. Both teachers had numerous years of experience behind them and seemed less concerned about the matters I found disturbing. I found their dismissal of these issues disappointing. As a result, I began to question myself and wondered if I cared too much. I believed there was more to be learned than what I had learned in my undergraduate courses. This revelation occurred only after an extended time in the classroom and motivated me to look for answers. Starting spring semester of my first year of teaching, I taught and worked on earning my graduate degree. The time spent in evening classes with fellow art teachers and professors helped me greatly during my first years in the classroom. The knowledge gained from those classes as well as from the friendships with art peers provided me with a pillar on which to rest my weary self and restore my identity. Fortunately, I was able to keep my passion intact in spite of experiences that contrasted with the expectations I had previously held.