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## A BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT OF AN EXPERIENCED ELEMENTARY TEACHER STRUGGLING TO CHANGE FROM TRADITIONAL TO REFORM-MINDED PRACTICE

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Sharon A. Schwille

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_Sharon Feiman Nemser_

Major professor

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A BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT OF AN EXPERIENCED ELEMENTARY TEACHER STRUGGLING TO CHANGE FROM TRADITIONAL TO REFORM-MINDED PRACTICE

By

Sharon A. Schwille

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ABSTRACT

A BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT OF AN EXPERIENCED ELEMENTARY TEACHER
STRUGGLING TO CHANGE FROM TRADITIONAL TO REFORM-MINDED
PRACTICE

By

Sharon A. Schwille

This is a story about an experienced elementary teacher who transformed her

teaching from a teacher-directed more conventional approach to one that reflects

innovative, reform-minded practice. It is set in the context of a Professional

Development School where she had rich resources to support her journey of change.

Nevertheless, she struggled for six long years trying to enact the teaching and learning

she envisioned for her classroom. This is a story of turmoil, frustration, confusion and, at

times, loneliness. It is also one of determination, courage and perseverance by a

thoughtful, reflective teacher. This story is about difficulties encountered in changing

practice and what it takes to help teachers learn and engage in practice that puts students'

understanding at the center.

Using a biographical approach, data was collected from interviews and from

journals which Courtney (a pseudonym for the teacher studied) kept as she moved

through years of change. From these data, four strands emerged around which the story

is woven. One strand looks at how she struggled to create a learning community culture

within her classroom. In this strand we see how visions and the language of reform were not sufficient for putting these into practice without guidance and direction. Another strand focuses on learning to teach for understanding. Here we see how much there is to learn, even for an experienced teacher, in order to help children construct knowledge rather than being expected to absorb it. A third strand looks at the difficulties Courtney had in learning to mentor pre-service novices. The fourth stand focuses on her struggle to define herself personally, searching for her voice in both personal and professional situations.

In the seventh year of her journey of change, Courtney began to experience success in making dramatic changes in her teaching practice and in defining herself. An analysis of Courtney's story through organizational, professional and personal lenses reveals that opportunities for professional development do not automatically result in meaningful teacher learning and change. For Courtney, an array of resources such as a teacher study group, a peer mentoring project and personal therapy came together in ways that provided the guidance and support she needed to change her professional practice and personal self.

In some ways, Courtney is a typical teacher. Yet, in many ways her journey of change was atypical. Her story raises questions about what teachers need to learn and what shapes their learning in order to enact reform-minded practice. It reveals the intricate relationship between teachers' personal and professional lives, raising questions about how opportunities for professional development can take this interplay into account. It invites further exploration of what is needed to help experienced teachers move to reform-minded practice, diminishing the struggle while striving to improve.

To my family who cheered for me and offered steadfast support
on my educational journey


To teachers who embrace lifelong learning as a way of living
both in and out of the classroom

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Although writing a dissertation is known to be lonely work, it is misleading to think that it can ever be accomplished alone. As I moved through the process of writing a proposal, gathering and analyzing data, and putting this dissertation together, I was supported intellectually, emotionally and even physically by many people who wanted me not only to survive but to prosper. I am most grateful to these people who sustained me by showing a genuine interest in my work and my well-being. They were my intellectual companions as well as emotional resources whose influence reminded me that I need not feel alone as I worked on this endeavor.

My dissertation committee was an outstanding group of scholars who guided my thinking, encouraged me to pursue challenging research, and trusted me to write this story intelligently. As my dissertation director and advisor, Sharon Feiman-Nemser helped me see beyond the surface of this story to its conceptual basis, examining what we can learn about teacher learning and change in practice. I remain in awe of her ability to abstract meaningful concepts and insightful questions from empirical evidence. She has pushed my thinking in ways that I would have missed without her help and I treasure her colleagueship.

Steve Weiland, a dissertation committee member, suggested that I write a biography. His interest in adult development and biographical research caught my

attention even before I began this project. His enthusiasm for and confidence in my work sustained me throughout my program. I am thankful for his support, his encouragement, and his guidance.

Anyone who has worked with Helen Featherstone will understand why I valued her participation on my committee. Her sensitivity to others as whole people with personal lives that interplay with professional endeavors was a model for me. She helped me find ways to unlock the human pieces of the life I was exploring and see how they shaped the direction and events in the professional life of the teacher whom I studied. I am grateful for her ideas as well as for her being a compassionate person herself.

All along Bill McDiarmid provided his perspectives on the story I was trying to tell that stretched my thinking to questions about policy, points of view, and what can be learned from a biography that reaches beyond the immediate narrative. With the help of email and a speaker phone, Bill stayed in touch even though he was physically thousands of miles away in his new position in Alaska. I greatly appreciate his continued interest and willingness to participate as a committee member.

When Jan Alleman heard many years ago that I was working on my doctorate, she became one of my greatest cheerleaders. Whenever we met, she always asked how I was doing and encouraged me to keep making progress. At the last moment before my defense when I learned that, due to Bill's departure, I needed one more MSU committee member, Jan enthusiastically agreed to participate. I have always been thankful for her support and felt privileged to have her on my committee.

I did the bulk of my dissertation work while I was on leave, traveling with my husband, Jack, who was on sabbatical and doing research in Burkina Faso, Guinea, and

Maryland. Since we rented our house in East Lansing, I became dependent on many people for food and shelter with a spot where I could set up my laptop computer. Chris and Penny Wheeler provided me with a home away from home whenever I was in East Lansing. They have been good friends for more than 25 years.

Already a professional colleague and good friend, Martial Dembélé and his wife Alizata Ouédraogo not only fed us but were constant companions, becoming even closer friends as we lived and worked in Ouagadougou. I value their friendship and especially Martial's willingness to listen almost daily to how I was thinking about my work. In Ouaga as well, I could not have made the progress I did without being able to rely on Lucie Tapsoba, our housekeeper, to attend to the many chores involved in living in Africa. She was very accepting of my beginner's French and accompanied me so I could better communicate whenever I went out.

I am grateful to the teachers and others who consented to be interviewed for this study. Their participation was crucial to validating events and perspectives. I am most indebted to the teacher whose story I tell. At all times she was gracious and receptive to my probing her life. She participated wholeheartedly in this endeavor and we spent many wonderful hours together exploring her personal and professional lives. She will always be a special person and teacher to me.

I became interested in the particular teacher I chose to study because of my involvement in the Learning from Mentors research project sponsored by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning at Michigan State University. This group composed of Sharon Feiman-Nemser, Lynn Paine, Martial Dembélé, Neli Wolf, Jian Wang, Cathy Reischl, and Judy Murdoch, became my collective mentors as well as

individual intellectual colleagues as we worked together. I will always value belonging to this special group and the learning I gained from it.

My going to school has been a way of life for my family for many years. Their unequivocal support gave me the momentum to keep moving through my program, course by course, year by year. Jack has been my mainstay, providing me with emotional sustenance and being willing to read my work when I needed advice in the midst of his own heavy workload. This dissertation is a reality because of his love and care. Kirsten and Jay provided their own support, believing that my learning was important and taking pride in my progress. My extended family, as well, have encouraged me and celebrated my accomplishments. I am as proud of them as they are of me.

There are numerous other friends and colleagues who have listened, laughed, and played with me intellectually as well as recreationally whose support I greatly appreciate. The list is long and to all of them I say, "Thank you!"

As I said, I could not have done this dissertation alone. My work is a result of the support, encouragement, and companionship of others. Without them, the following pages would be empty.

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# Chapter 1

# INTRODUCTION: EXPLAINING THE STUDY

> I was really worried I wouldn't have anything to say to you...I didn't think I had a story,
> but there is a story here...It is the story of my life. (Courtney)

Teachers have stories to tell about who they are and what they do in their

classrooms that give insights into what teaching is like and what it takes to teach. (see, for

example, Casey, 1993; Hall, Campbell, & Miech, 1997; Neumann & Peterson, 1997;

Spencer, 1986; Stuart, 1958/1949; Wigginton, 1985). In the current environment of

educational reforms, some teachers are telling their stories about what it means to change

teaching practices from conventional teacher-centered approaches to innovative student-

oriented approaches that more closely align with state and national subject-matter

teaching standards (see, for example, Wasley, 1994; Schmidt, 1997; Steel, Jenkins, &

Colebank, 1997). Often presented as a group of case studies, these stories provide some

breadth in considering what happens as teachers undergo changing their practices but

lack the depth necessary to look closely at the substance and process of changing

teaching practice over time.

Telling one teacher's story provides an opportunity to look in depth at what it

means to change from more conventional to more reform-minded practice. While one

teacher's story is necessarily unique, from it we can gain insights into what teachers

confront as they attempt to change their practice and what it takes to support their efforts. Courtney's[1] story is a close look at an effort to change teaching practice and how it affected both her professional and personal lives. Change in one sphere often means change in the other but little is known about what this looks like or how each life dimension is affected (Ball & Goodson, 1985; Goodson, 1992a, 1992b, 1992). Courtney said it is the story of her life because it touched all areas of her life. Her desires, struggles, confusion, and eventual success made up her life for at least six years. This study examines the fabric of those years and traces the journey Courtney made as she radically changed her teaching practice.

### What This Study is About, Who It is About and Why I Did It

**What and who this study is about.**

This study is about an experienced elementary school teacher who transforms her teaching practice from a conventional, teacher-centered approach to a more innovative, student-oriented, reform-minded approach. It is about the substance as well as the process of change for her. It is about teacher learning as an integral component of changing teaching practice—what she needed to learn and what supported her learning as an experienced teacher. In this sense, it is about teachers' professional development and what it takes to sustain long-term transformation of teaching practice—long term both in the time it took for her to change her practice in noticeable ways and in the sense that she realized she would continue developing her practice throughout her career. At the same time, the story reveals the changes she was trying to make in her personal self that intermingled with the changes she was attempting professionally. In order to be more

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[1] All names in this study are pseudonyms and all identifying features of places have been disguised to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

pro-active in her professional life, she needed to clarify her self-definition, learn to take more control over her personal decisions, and gain more confidence in herself.

In many respects, Courtney is an ordinary teacher (Newman, 1994/1990). She is a white, middle-class, woman who has taught for more than 25 years. She has been married for more than 25 years as well and has two teenage children, a girl and a boy. Her journey through change, however, was extraordinary. With determination and courage she struggled through several years of confusion and frustration until she eventually found the kind of help she needed to make fundamental changes in her teaching practice and in her personal self. The context in which she endeavored to change her practice was also extraordinary. Her school became a Professional Development School based on the Holmes Group (1990) model. While it offered many support structures for changing teacher practices, it also hampered Courtney's efforts to make all-encompassing change. What prompted her to change after so many years in teaching? How did she maintain her commitment to change in light of the many struggles and obstacles she confronted as she moved through her journey of change? What did she need to learn in order to change her practice? What resources enabled her to change so that she and those around her agreed she had radically changed her practice? What happened to her personally as she tried to change her professional practice? How did she maintain her vitality in teaching after so many years in the classroom? This study looks for answers to these questions.

Change is the focal point of this study. While concentrating on changing her professional practice, Courtney also changed parts of herself, personally. Although she seldom spoke of her personal life while at school or of her professional life while at

home, her professional and personal lives touched each other in ways that made a difference in both. By professional life I mean whatever is associated with Courtney's teaching practice as well as her mentoring of pre-service novices. Professional life entails relationships with colleagues that are established in study groups, as a result of PDS projects or other work-related projects, and as part of a teaching team. The roles a teacher assumes such as teacher, mentor, study-group participant, colleague, or learner are another component of professional life. In addition, professional life encompasses stages of career development (see, for example, Burden, 1990; Huberman, 1993).

Personal life means the parts of her life that are related to family, friendships that function beyond work relationships, and herself as a person. It encompasses her roles as wife, mother, daughter, friend. It means how being female has shaped her aspirations, self-image, attitudes, and expectations for herself and others. Personal life relates to phases of identity development, especially those associated with middle age as in Courtney's case (see, for example, Erikson 1963/1950; Levinson 1978; Rossi, 1980).

Change occurs within a social-historical context that influences the direction of both professional and personal lives. While major world events to some extent shaped Courtney's life in all its dimensions, this study looks more closely at the contexts that immediately surrounded her in her school and home. Her childhood experiences and teenage friendships influenced who she became as an adult. The Professional Development School context provided rich opportunities for working on educational reforms. How did these personal, professional and organizational contexts influence Courtney's perspectives, beliefs, and efforts to change her practice? What part did they play in supporting or obstructing her progress?

## Why this study?

I got to know Courtney when I participated in an earlier study of experienced teachers who were mentors to novice teachers.[2] I observed her teaching, her novice's teaching, and their working and talking together as the novice moved through her student teaching. I saw that Courtney was in the midst of tremendous struggle, trying to change her classroom culture, her teaching practice, and her mentoring practice. Little seemed to be working for her and I wondered why and how she continued to persevere. What was she trying to accomplish? Why was it so hard? Why did she want to make these changes? What did she need to learn in order to enact the changes she envisioned? Why weren't the available support systems helping her? What help did she need? I wanted to know more about this teacher who seemed so determined to teach differently and in ways that I was trying to help novices learn themselves.

As a teacher educator, I work with pre-service and experienced teachers, helping them learn to teach at their respective levels of experience and helping them learn to learn from each other in a mentoring relationship. Although the experienced teachers I work with often employ teaching approaches that are promoted as current best practice such as cooperative group work or process writing, I am struck by the hesitancy many teachers have to change their practice in ways that go bone deep and have a lasting effect on teaching and learning in their classrooms. I wanted to learn more about the barriers that confront teachers who try to change their practices and what it takes to help a teacher make changes. In addition, I wanted to learn more about what it means for an experienced teacher to learn to mentor a novice. This is yet another dimension of

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[2] Learning From Mentors was a study of the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning, Michigan State University's federally funded center.

changing practice. Until recently, cooperating teachers were expected to step aside while their student teachers tried out what they learned in their teacher education programs. Currently, however, there is a call for closer mentoring of novices by experienced teachers and teacher educators (see, for example, Feiman-Nemser & Beasley, 1993; Tomlinson, 1995; Feiman-Nemser & Rosean, 1997). Experienced teachers are expected to work with their novices in ways that are new for them, using forms of mentoring that engage novices in planning and teaching with co-participation, close guidance and teaching from the mentor. It means building a relationship in which both participants can question, challenge ideas, and design teaching and learning tasks, acknowledging its asymmetry based on the experienced teacher being more knowledgeable about learners and teaching and learning. I wanted to learn more about what it takes to help an experienced teacher change from being a conventional cooperating teacher to being a mentor.

In deciding on a dissertation question, I knew I wanted to learn more about what it means and what it takes for an experienced teacher to change her teaching practice as well as what it means to learn to be a mentor for novices. In addition, I was interested in learning about how a teacher's personal life affects her professional life. I wanted to know more about how a teacher's biography plays into the way she functions in her professional life, working on the hypothesis that knowing more about a teacher's personal life may provide insights into how to support teachers' professional work and efforts to change teaching practice. The literature calls for an intimate look at teachers' personal and professional lives (see, for example, Ball & Goodson, 1985; Goodson, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992; Natalicio & Hereford, 1971/1969;

Schmidt, 1997); thus this study helps to fill that gap. I also knew I wanted to learn more about Courtney who, by the time I was ready to do my dissertation study several years after I had first observed her, was experiencing some success in teaching differently. Putting these interests together, I chose to learn about how one teacher experienced the process of change and how her personal and professional lives affected her disposition to change and her determination to succeed.

## Biography as the Methodology

### Biography

I decided to use a biographical approach for my study because biography delves into life experiences and issues in enough depth to reveal patterns, propensities, relationships and critical incidents in the life of a teacher in and out of the classroom. Biography extracts the details in ordinary living that can be put together to tell a story— in this case a story of dramatic change. A single-case study provides the opportunity to look intimately at the complex nature of changing teaching practices over time.[3] Close investigation of a single case can uncover knowledge that is often glossed over in multiple-case studies that look more broadly than deeply. While single-case research is not generalizable, it can provide insights and understandings that offer a basis to question prior assumptions, envision possibilities, and generate further research. In looking closely at one teacher's development, we can see not just an isolated reality but possibilities for other teacher's professional growth as well. As Runyan (1982) points out,

> Research at the group or universal level can contribute to the task but is, in itself, often insufficient to enable us to understand and predict the behavior of individuals. (p. 169)

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[3] Single-case studies are by no means unprecedented. See, for example, Allport, 1937; Crapanzano, 1980; Hamilton, 1994; Lewin, 1930; Murray, 1938; Shatz, 1994.

Courtney's story grounds us in the complications and messiness of trying to change teaching practice. The insights we can abstract from it will help us better understand the substance and process of changing teaching practice. It will help us consider what other teachers might encounter and what they might need as systems of support as they make their own journeys of change.

**Data Collection.**

Courtney was the primary source of data. I did 14 interviews with her, each about three hours long, over the summer months in 1996 when she was on break from school. Using Huberman's (1993) approach of starting his interviews with teachers about their professional career paths with an open ended question, I began by asking her to talk about her past teaching year which she thought had been successful in many respects. This provided a reference point for what she had hoped to achieve in transforming her teaching practice. Although she recognized that she would continue to work at refining and making changes in her practice for the rest of her career, the 1995-96 school year was particularly rewarding for her because she felt, for the first time, that she had truly transformed her practice and that it had come together in ways she envisioned. From this starting point, it seemed natural to explore how she got there. Continuing to use open-ended questions, I asked her to reflect on the years when she struggled to make changes, what seemed to help, what seemed to impede her progress and how she felt. As we began to delve into her past, she also touched on her personal life, telling me about events that affected who she was and how she thought. We looked at lots of old photo albums to help jog her memory of her childhood and raising her own children. Fortunately, she saved mementos and artifacts such as her high school yearbook and essays she wrote in

college. Each time we met, I had questions I wanted to ask or areas to probe which often acted as a catalyst to explore some territory we had not yet touched. When the summer ended, I had more than 40 hours of audio taped interviews with her.

In addition to the interviews, I also read Courtney's journals and teaching notebooks. Courtney had journals from each year since 1988, when her school became a Professional Development School. She did not keep just one journal going at a time. Sometimes she used several, recording her observations and thoughts in the one most handy. While each one proceeded chronologically, more than one often covered the same time period. Thus, I had to juxtapose journals to get the fullest picture of a given time. For the most part, Courtney wrote about her classroom, her students, the meetings and study groups she attended, and sometimes about events in her personal life rather randomly in her journals. For example, an entry that was notes from a PDS meeting might be followed by an entry of what students said during sharing time, which, in turn, might be followed by a reflection on how a mathematics lesson went, what she and her student teacher discussed, or a note to remind herself to tell her own children something. I read more than 1650 pages of journal entries covering the time from the 1988-89 school year to the 1995-96 one.

Since most of the data came from Courtney's own subjective viewpoint, I wanted to bring some triangulation and validity to the study. Therefore, I interviewed several of Courtney's professional colleagues as well as university professors who led study groups in which Courtney participated. I drew upon data from two previous studies I had done. One was the National Institute for Research on Teacher Learning study, Learning from Mentors, in which I observed Courtney's mentoring practice with her student teacher.

The other was one in which I investigated the curriculum history at the school in which Courtney taught (Schwille, 1994). I also observed Courtney teach in the fall of 1996 as a point of comparison to my earlier observations in 1992.

It is important to note that this story was composed from data that came primarily from the subject of this study; thus it is a product of her selective memory and recall. Her journals were a rich source of information and insight into her thinking and perspectives on her personal and professional life, but again, they were written according to her observations and interpretations. The other colleagues and friends I interviewed substantiated Courtney's story. In telling the story, however, I imposed my own filters that make all biography a subjective art (Edel, 1985/1979; Wagner-Martin, 1994). This subjectivity, however, should enhance readers' abilities to find connections to their own situations, assumptions and questions about changing teaching practice. Courtney's interpretations and feelings about what happens in her professional and personal life are vital components of her story that make it compelling. No rendition of someone's life can be completely objective. I believe we can learn from the insights and meanings that both the teller and listeners extract from the story. Since complete objectivity is impossible, I believe it is important to portray the fullness and richness of this teacher's life so that others can relate to it, find their own meanings, and learn from its presence.

**Analysis**

In some respects, analyzing biographical data is similar to analyzing other data collected through qualitative methods. Even as I was interviewing, I began to look for patterns and ways to categorize the material. I looked for patterns in Courtney's life events and in the way she talked about her life in and out of the classroom. For example,

it struck me that she seemed to talk a lot about friends and family, valuing the human connections she had. When I pointed this out to her, she seized upon the theme of human connections and wrote a journal entry tracing all the important relationships she had. She realized this was an important theme in her life—a revelation she had from our work together. I asked her to help analyze phases or stages in her life, giving labels to periods that she identified in the manner of a timeline. While she had difficulty composing very original labels, her delineation of time periods and critical events was informative. In this way, data collection and analysis went hand-in-hand for awhile, each one informing and shaping the other. From the data collection and analysis, I composed more questions and areas to explore for further data collection; from newly collected data, I examined the emerging patterns and categories to see if they still held or if others needed to be created.

I looked for patterns in the journal entries as well. I looked at patterns in the content of the material such as teaching subject matter, reflecting on a child's behavior, or listing some norms for a learning community classroom. I looked for patterns in types of events such as meetings, study group sessions, classroom observations, or conferences with student teachers. I noted patterns in types of data such as notes from listening to a presenter or an audio tape, interpretations of a reading, draft letters to parents, lesson plans, or reflections about a situation in her family.

From these patterns I created categories such as "personal," "professional," "classroom culture," "mathematics teaching," "study group session," "meeting notes," or "observation of students." By combining color-coding and written labels on adhesive type paper, I was able to apply multiple codings to a single data entry. For example, on a journal entry that was notes from a presentation about creating a classroom learning

community, I used the color code for "learning community" and labeled the adhesive "presentation notes about norms."

I indexed all journal entries and interview transcriptions on a database using these codes. Journal entries were listed by school year and as chronologically in that year as possible. Thus, I was able to scan the index looking for further patterns. For instance, I looked at what Courtney did to get ready for each school year and noted that she usually started by writing her vision for her classroom. I looked for a rhythm to her school year. Did the classroom culture always fall apart about the same time in the fall and get rejuvenated again in January? I looked for discrepancies and incidents that did not seem to fit into the patterns and categories I had identified.

From this analysis, themes emerged such as language as a tool for visions but not for practice, school as a place to connect to people but not academics, or the role of learner for an experienced teacher. These themes threaded their way through Courtney's story, highlighting aspects of her journey of change and offering some insights into what made her journey so difficult. They also provided a scheme for organizing the presentation of her story.

**Writing biography.**

Writing biography is not as straightforward as it may appear to an unsuspecting reader. While Smith (1994) notes that academicians might favor a conventional chronological approach to presenting the facts of a life story, there is a strong voice in the literature on doing biography that argues that it is a creative art leaving much room for interpretation and design (see, for example, O'Connor, 1991; Edel, 1985/1979; Denzin, 1978). Edel says,

> A compendium is an ingenious way of avoiding biographical responsibility. That responsibility involves not only accumulating and offering facts: it entails the ability to interpret these facts in the light of all that the biographer has learned about his subject. (p. 18)

As I put Courtney's story together, I realized that its complexity needed to be untangled in order to understand what changes she was trying to make, what made it difficult for her and what eventually helped her succeed. A chronological approach did not lend itself to looking closely at each of the aspects that were operating at once, overlapping or touching one another, in ways that defied simple explication. While I include a chronology at the beginning of the dissertation, I decided to structure the story itself using four different foci. Each focus is like a strand of the story. These strands emanate from the same source, which is Courtney in her professional and personal lives, but tell the story according to events and Courtney's interpretation of those events that coalesce around something Courtney is trying to learn. The story concentrates on the six years that Courtney struggled on her journey of change, dipping into her past in order to understand better the situations she confronted. Each strand provides a look at this six-year time period, revealing the roles, relationships, and learning that Courtney was trying to grasp. In reality, each strand was being shaped simultaneously. In order to provide focus, however, I have presented them separately. Like a braid, the strands come together in the seventh chapter which presents the seventh year of her journey, 1995-96. Having struggled for six years, Courtney experienced noticeable success in changing her practice in the seventh year. This approach to telling Courtney's story allows for interpretations to cut across the foci. It assumes the reader will keep in mind that many things were happening at once.

## The Story Structure

The story begins with a prologue (chapter two) that sets the background for Courtney's journey of change. The prologue looks at some precursors to the journey presented in this study. These prior situations bolstered Courtney's receptivity to change. They set the stage for her participation in the professional development resources that eventually provided the support she needed to help her change her practice. The Prologue brings the story to the 1989-90 school year, a point at which Courtney was excited about changing some of her teaching practices under the auspices of a Professional Development School effort. The four chapters following the prologue tell Courtney's story of change.

Chapter three tells Courtney's story with a focus on her struggle to develop a classroom learning community culture. This chapter concentrates on Courtney's struggle to transform visions of practice into classroom realities. She usurps the language of reform without knowing its meaning or how to enact it. What happens when there is a gap between vision and enactment? Courtney hears much of the language of reform as a script that will transform her teaching practice but discovers that scripted words without meaning and interpretation become hollow sounds. She becomes confused and frustrated. Her classroom management breaks down repeatedly. She works on learning how to make sense of the language of reform-minded practice, how to use it authentically, how to know and respond to children differently, and how to shape a classroom environment that supports students' personal and social growth. How does she come to make the language meaningful and develop a classroom culture resembling her vision? This chapter traces this strand of the journey.

Chapter four focuses on Courtney's attempt to change her personal self. She strives for clearer self-definition which affects both her personal and professional lives. Courtney pushes herself to function more autonomously, abandoning the false sense of security she gained from her dependence on others. This strand examines the relationships she has with others as well as with herself. She highly values her family and friendships, finding her own identity by following others' leads until she realizes that she has become too invisible, unable to find her voice in her relationships. She avoids direct confrontation but finds that she must learn to handle conflict if she wants to have more control over her teaching practice. How does this affect her self-image both in and out of the classroom? How does it add to her struggle to change? How does she eventually find her own voice and become more comfortable as a leader in her classroom and school? This chapter follows Courtney's search for self-definition.

On her journey to transform her teaching practice, Courtney discovers herself as a learner. Chapter five focuses on her role as a learner of reform-minded teaching practices. It concentrates on her learning to teach literacy, especially writing as a process, and mathematics for understanding. What does she need to learn in order to transform her practice? How does she learn what she needs to learn? What obstacles impede her learning and what resources support it? This strand reveals that opportunities for support for changing practice do not necessarily mean change will occur. Eventually, several resources for professional development come together for Courtney to form a system for her that helps her move past the roadblocks on her journey. In addition to participation in study groups and her propensity for self-reflection, a rather unique mentoring relationship forms between Courtney and a couple of her colleagues that adds an important dimension

to her learning and her support system. This chapter captures what it means for Courtney, as an experienced teacher, to struggle with learning reform-minded practice and eventually discover the intellectual enjoyment of teaching.

As Courtney endeavored to transform her practice, she worked with several student teachers. The student teaching program at the university was undergoing reform itself. Courtney found that she was expected to change the way she worked with student teachers, becoming a mentor who worked shoulder-to-shoulder with her novices, helping them learn the innovative practices that Courtney was trying to learn herself. Trying to effect change in so many arenas become overwhelming for Courtney. She felt she could not be an effective mentor until she had learned enough to be an effective teacher of reform-minded practices. She eventually decided to not work with a student teacher even under much pressure from the student teaching program to continue. What influence did her work with student teachers have on her journey of change? Why did she have difficulty becoming a mentor? Why did she decide to work with a novice again after a two year hiatus? Chapter six looks at her journey of change as she transformed her work as a teacher educator.

The preceding four chapters tell different strands of Courtney's journey of change. They trace the story through the years that Courtney experienced the most frustration and turmoil, from 1989-90 to 1994-95 school years. Like a braid, Chapter seven plaits the strands of the previous chapters together to form a single entity as the seventh year of her journey, 1995-96. This was the year Courtney began to put things together in both her professional and personal life, experiencing success in transforming her professional practice and her personal self. While this chapter brings some closure to

the story for the period that it covers, Courtney recognized that her journey of professional change would be a career-long trek, never completely ending as long as she teaches. She also realized that as a learner, she could also continue to grow and change in her personal life.

Chapter eight analyzes the strands of Courtney's story more holistically. It looks at the personal, professional, and organizational contexts that surrounded Courtney as she moved through her journey. It explores tensions and stresses Courtney encountered within these contexts that reveal that opportunities for professional development can both hinder a teacher's learning as well as support it. Courtney's story highlights that opportunities for professional development do not automatically result in meaningful change. This chapter looks at what it took for Courtney to change her practice by examining an array of resources that provided opportunities for Courtney to gain support for her growth as a learner, enabling her to change her professional practice and personal self. Not only did Courtney have to be receptive to change, she had to experience these resources as relevant and authentic supports for her as an individual. They had to connect to her personal disposition as a learner in the throes of change and to the kind of teaching for which she was striving. For the most part, these resources were highly interactive endeavors with colleagues who challenged each other's thinking and asked hard questions about their practices. Courtney came to highly value these interactions as they evolved over time.

Chapter nine presents insights and implications from this study and raises questions for further research. This chapter address concerns about policies that gloss over the difficult nature of changing teaching practice. It calls for close attention to the

nature of teachers' professional development and supports for changing practice. It discusses issues and questions regarding efforts to reform teaching and learning practice. For example, it questions who needs to change their practice. To what extent do teachers need to change their practice? What is the difference between an experienced teacher radically changing her practice compared with a novice teacher learning reform-minded practice? What must be in place for a teacher to make significant change in her practice? Courtney's story, although unique, helps us examine the substance and process of changing teaching practice by exploring these questions.

There is an epilogue to this story that I will offer now rather than at the end of the text because it highlights the steadfastness of Courtney's desire to continue her journey. During the 1996-97 school year, Courtney continued to make changes and experience success with transforming her practice. She worked with a science educator from the university to concentrate on that subject-matter area while still continuing her involvement in the study groups and other projects she found valuable. Her novice was particularly capable and Courtney honed her mentoring skills while working with her. I believe Courtney's story is evidence that seemingly ordinary teachers can do extraordinary things with the will and resourcefulness to seek unusual support structures and the courage to become a learner. Ordinary teachers, however, will not make extraordinary changes in their teaching practice if they have to endure a long-term struggle as Courtney did. We can provide conditions and resources that are more conducive to fostering change by attending to how we help teachers bridge the gap between visions and enactment, breaking down the norms in the culture of teaching that

inhibit experienced teachers from becoming learners and mentors among each other, and

shaping support systems to connect with individual growth.

# Chapter 2

## PROLOGUE TO CHANGE: SOME HISTORY OF THE SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXTS IN WHICH COURTNEY ATTEMPTED HER JOURNEY OF CHANGE

> I like the tadpole theory. I'm a frog. Sometimes I think I still have parts of my tail, but I'm getting out [of the water.] (Courtney)

Describing Courtney is, in many respects, like describing thousands of middle-aged women who are elementary teachers. She is about 5' 6" tall, weighs approximately 135 pounds, has shoulder-length wavy brown hair that frames her face, often smiles or laughs, yet is serious and insightful. She is the mother of two children—a girl and a boy, both teenagers. Raised in a working class family, she grew up in a small mid-western town that was about 25 miles in one direction from the city where she was born and about 15 miles in another direction from the city where she now teaches. Her father was a truck driver, her mother a secretary until after marriage when she started raising a family. Courtney has a younger sister and brother. She met her husband while they both attended a community college. He is a hospital administrator who manages several departments in a hospital about 30 minutes from their home. From the time they were married in 1969, they have lived in the same house in a suburb of the city in which Courtney teaches. Courtney turned 50 in November 1995.

Such a description is deceptive, however, because beyond these rather ordinary attributes, Courtney differs from other teachers who might fit her profile. After practicing a conventional, teacher-dominated, textbook-driven approach to teaching and learning for at least 20 years, she chose to change her practice to one centered on children as inquisitive builders of knowledge, capable of exploring and understanding subject matter conceptually. In the process of changing her practice, she came to see the process of teaching as an intellectual endeavor rather than simply an application of technical skills. She came to define herself more clearly as an intelligent, thoughtful woman who could learn and make her own decisions rather than always work in the shadow of more dominant others. Margret Buchmann, in her article *Teaching Knowledge: The Lights That Teachers Live By*, (1987), wrote about the prevailing culture of teaching that tends to limit teachers' visions and aspirations to change the way they live and practice their profession. She concluded the essay with the following assertion and quotation:

> A Tadpole Theory will account for most teachers' operating knowledge, for only exceptional individuals, under exceptional circumstances, as 'the more *fortunate* of the species will…shed their tails, distend their mouths and stomachs, hop nimbly on to dry land, and croak addresses to their former friends on the virtues by means of which tadpoles of character and capacity can rise to be frogs (Tawney, 1964, p. 105; emphasis added).' Most teachers live and die as tadpoles, nothing more. (p. 162)

Courtney took on the challenge to change from a tadpole who merely swims around under water, never questioning whether or where there may be brighter lights to live by, to a frog who climbs out of the dim water to live by the light of day. While real tadpoles do not have the choice to live and die as tadpoles or to change and become frogs, real teachers who have the will to change can choose to do so. Courtney's story is testimony that a seemingly ordinary teacher can take on the extraordinary challenge of change, struggling through years of confusion and self-doubt with courage and determination to attain her goal. The chapters that follow tell the story of her change.

This prologue provides some background of the social and institutional context in which to locate the beginning of Courtney's journey of change.

## Some Professional and Personal History

Courtney came to Adams Elementary School having spent her first year of teaching in a small town elsewhere in the state. Prior to that she did her student teaching in a fifth grade at the oldest school in the city where she was born. It was not the kind of student teaching experience she had expected. Her cooperating teacher had just suffered a heart attack and spent the entire semester recuperating in the teacher's lounge. Courtney was basically on her own to learn by the "sink or swim" method of teacher induction. She swam well, culminating her student teaching experience by having the class stage a show about the Civil War that displayed what they had learned from a unit Courtney taught. The show was a grand affair with music, sets, and costumes that also reflected Courtney's creative dramatics minor for her undergraduate degree. When Courtney finished her student teaching, parents requested that the district hire her, but she took her first position in the small town instead.

The second year of her teaching career, 1969-70, Courtney took a position with the district in which she currently teaches and has remained at Adams School during her entire tenure with the district. At the meeting for teachers new to the district in late August, 1969, the principal, who was also new to Adams, announced that Courtney Green was now Courtney Hanks, having married a couple weeks earlier.

Courtney taught in a team of three teachers. In January, Peg, a beginning teacher herself, joined the staff to replace a pregnant teacher on Courtney's team. The third team member was an older man who kept suggesting to Courtney and Peg, both newlyweds,

that partner switching would be fun. Courtney and Peg bonded naturally, partly to escape the other teacher's inappropriate pestering and partly because, as novice teachers and novice wives, they had much in common. The next year the older man was replaced by an ex-nun who also seemed a bit strange to them; Courtney's and Peg's shared ordeals served to deepened their friendship.

When Adams adopted differentiated staffing in the early 1970s, Courtney and Peg wanted to be part of the experiment. In keeping with reforms of the decade that advocated more teacher autonomy, differentiated staffing was a system of organization that allowed teachers more control of a budget and decisions about how to structure personnel for their team. Each team hired several people to assist with management and small group or individualized instruction. Courtney and Peg watched while the upper grade team and the lower grade team were re-structured to accommodate the scheduling and organization that differentiated staffing required. With envy they observed the other teams acquire credentialed teachers as aides, accept student teachers and make decisions about their staffing and curriculum. Courtney and Peg felt left out of the process and the stimulation of being involved in something "cutting edge." They requested that they be allowed to join the experiment and soon found themselves becoming masters at scheduling times, subjects, teachers, and locations for 125 students on a daily basis. Wanting to be on the forefront of "current best practice," they also incorporated individualized mathematics instruction in their program. The scheduling demands were tremendous, so much so that even when the district teachers went on strike, Courtney, Peg, and their teammates met in one teacher's basement to work on scheduling for the team.

After five years, differentiated staffing grant funds were cut and the teacher aides took regular teaching positions. The teachers' scheduling nightmares ended. Many of the teaching teams reconfigured as smaller teams, including Courtney and Peg, who were assigned to teach third grade. Their friendship had continued to grow both personally and professionally. They and their husbands socialized outside of school functions. They enjoyed football games and barbecues. Courtney and Jim frequently stopped at Peg and Dick's because Peg and Dick lived in Courtney's hometown where Courtney's mother still lived in the house where Courtney spent the bulk of her childhood. Her mother could not mow the lawn so Courtney and Jim did it for her. Courtney rather enjoyed it because it reminded her of one of the few ways that she and her father connected. When she was old enough, she had helped her dad mow their huge lawn. They were a team on those occasions and Courtney felt proud to be the only child in her family who could help with the lawn since her sister was allergic to the pollen and her brother was too young to handle the mower.

Courtney and Peg had classrooms divided by a moveable wall. They grouped their students across their classes by ability for reading and mathematics. They taught their own classes science and social studies but they planned the content and activities together. Courtney usually had the ideas while Peg was the decision-maker. They taught using activities that were fun and different for children. For instance, on International Chocolate Day, their classes make fudge and their lessons included some reference to chocolate.

Courtney explained what she thought her teaching was missing by describing one

of their favorite activities—taking their students to an island, having a picnic, and

experiencing what an island was like.

> We planned overall units but in a way it was still scheduling because we didn't
> talk about what we wanted kids to learn, what skills we were teaching, or why we
> were doing this. For example, we went into a unit on fantasy. We read *My
> Father's Dragon* (Gannett, 1948), which is a fantasy. We went to…an island to
> experience an island like in the story. We talked about doing it because it was a
> neat activity. We wouldn't talk about the value of the experience itself; just it
> was a neat activity because that's an island there.

Courtney and Peg did not talk about the purpose of a class activity beyond having the

experience of the activity itself. If the activity seemed to have some educational

potential, Courtney and Peg implemented the activity. Courtney perceived, however, that

Peg's students were learning something more substantive from the experience than her

students. Courtney thought Peg elicited deeper learning from her students. This created

a tension between the two that Courtney, at least, felt.

> Peg would present it one way and I would present it another way so there were
> gaps in what our kids got because we hadn't talked about it—the purpose…So I
> always felt there was a tension between our two classes because the perception of
> the kids came off differently. The tension was more mine that hers…I felt like
> my kids were not getting the same thing her class was getting. Maybe because
> she had done this thinking and I hadn't or she had verbalized the [reason] of why
> we were going to the island to her kids and I hadn't. There was always the
> tension that maybe the two classes weren't getting the same experience.
> Sometimes I felt her class was getting more or better.

Courtney felt her students were missing out on something that Peg's students

seemed to get from the activities they planned together. Courtney would have liked to

find out what Peg was doing differently and why her students seemed to learn more from

the activities, but Courtney and Peg did not talk about their own teaching with each other.

They planned their units together, they shared their personal lives with one another, but

they did not talk about their beliefs, thoughts, and feelings about their teaching practices. Courtney expressed her view of the situation:

> Peg was always good at getting quality in her class, getting kids to respond and I wanted to know that. But we never talked about it. There was something I saw in her that I couldn't do even though we planned all this stuff together. She was able to carry it forward...I don't know if she had the same feelings or not. We never talked about them. I didn't know how to talk about them. I didn't know how to question. I didn't feel comfortable questioning her...I didn't know how to push. I didn't know how to ask.

Courtney blamed herself for her inability to ask her teaching partner and best friend about her professional thinking and practices. The culture of teaching, however, was also influential. As Lortie (1975) observed, teachers work in isolation of one another's thoughts and feelings about their own practice. Teachers are seldom encouraged to have frank discussions about issues of teaching practice that open up opportunities to reveal areas of vulnerability or lack of knowledge (Feiman-Nemser and Floden, 1986; Little, 1990). In the culture of teaching, teachers are supposed to know what they are doing from the time they are novices. If they have problems in their teaching, they keep it to themselves and try to figure out how to cope. As a woman, Courtney also had been socialized into the more traditional female position of listener rather than speaker and peacemaker rather than debater or arguer (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Heilbrun, 1988).

Not only did Courtney defer to Peg's decision making and refrain from asking Peg about her teaching stance, she maintained a low profile at staff meetings as well. She participated, but only from a position of safety, seldom risking an opinion or idea that might offend someone or upset the status quo. As one colleague observed, "She was very comfortable in front of a group of second or third graders but not in front of the faculty,"

and another staff member noted, "The teams sat together and Peg spoke a lot, but Courtney didn't."

Courtney began to be dissatisfied with some of the teaching practices she and Peg used such as ability grouping. She thought segregating children by ability hindered the breadth and depth of learning possibilities and the possibilities for interactions with peers, but she was not aware of alternatives. Looking back, Courtney credits the initiation of her current dramatic changes in her teaching practice to a couple of experiences that exposed her to different perspectives on teaching and learning and different ways of functioning with colleagues as well as children. One experience was the formation of a teachers' study group in the late 1980s that was the result of having student teachers in the building. The other was the first summer institute in June, 1989, for teachers in Professional Development Schools[4] (PDS) associated with the nearby university. Having had a long association with the university, the move for Adams to become a PDS seemed like a natural choice from both the school's and the university's perspective.

**The Cooperative Learning Study Group**

In the 1980s cooperative learning appeared as an innovative teaching practice that held promise not only for academic achievement but also for addressing issues of equity and social justice (Cohen, 1986; Johnson & Johnson, 1975; Sharan, 1980; Slavin, 1980).[5] At the same time, the university teacher educators were introducing their student teachers not only to cooperative learning methods but also to a different perspective on developing

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[4] The concepts and principles of Professional Development Schools (PDS) were created by the Holmes Group and are elaborated in their publications, *Tomorrow's Schools*, (1990) and *Tomorrow's Teachers* (1986). In essence, a Professional Development School is a school that works in partnership with a College or School of Education at a research university for the purpose of educational research, implementation of innovative approaches to teaching and learning, teacher education program development and practice, and restructuring schools in an effort of educational reform.

[5] Cooperative learning was not actually a new idea but it had not been structured and evaluated as a teaching method so definitively before this time (Schwille, 1994b).

classroom cultures that called for greater student participation in decision making. They called it a learning community culture, basing it on Dewey's (1938; 1944/1916) notions of democratic classrooms and Schwab's (1975; 1976) interpretation of Dewey in practice which Schwab called "learning community."

The teachers at Adams knew little about cooperative learning or the notion of a learning community classroom culture. Likewise, the student teachers, who were expected to try out these teaching approaches and perspectives, were novices in their knowledge and experience. Although many teachers at Adams, including Courtney and Peg, used learning tasks in which children were actively involved, they maintained conventional, teacher-directed, rather authoritarian classrooms. Thus, when the student teachers placed at Adams tried to do cooperative group lessons or activities that were intended to teach children how to function in a classroom that embodied learning community attributes such as student responsibility, student-to-student interaction, and participation in decision-making, neither the cooperating teachers nor the children were ready for the shift in focus from whole-class, teacher-dominated instruction to small group, child-focused learning. When the student teachers tried to enact cooperative learning lessons, the lessons seemed inauthentic. The student teachers and children seemed to be "playing" school using this different approach. It did not seem like "real" school. The language and modes of interacting were strange and awkward to the student teachers, the cooperating teachers and the children. It was as though the teachers and children had a script to follow that was estranged from anything else that was happening in the classroom. As Courtney described it,

> [The student teachers] were trying to put kids into groups and the kids were
> supposed to make decisions and have these roles. They would go through this
> canned stuff without having anything else prior in the day or in the curriculum

that would support what they were going to do in these groups. And that would include all the things about learning community, about how we talk to each other. That's when we first started hearing about all this.

Frequently confusion and chaos resulted when the student teachers took over and tried to carry out these teaching strategies in a mechanical way. The cooperating teachers did not know what to do to help them. They could not even decipher the language used in the lesson plans well enough to provide help in planning these activities. Courtney noted,

> A lesson [plan] had to include all the learning community stuff and the cooperative learning stuff plus it had to include an introduction that was so long that you lost everybody before you got to [the lesson]. It was just a bunch of words. We [teachers] started talking more because [the student teachers] didn't know what they were doing and we didn't know what they were doing.

Naturally the cooperating teachers were distressed when their classrooms "fell apart" as the student teachers tried to orchestrate cooperative learning. The teachers could not understand the "bunch of words," as Courtney termed it, that were required in writing the lesson plans so they could not help with either the preparation or the enactment of these practices. They needed help themselves with figuring out how to enact these innovative practices yet keep their classrooms intact. Similar to the student teachers presented by Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1987) who thought they were really teaching because they were going through motions resembling teaching behaviors without thinking through purposes and rationales for their actions, the student teachers at Adams were trying out teaching strategies that made them feel as though they were performing the role of a teacher but missed the point of identifying and learning the intellectual aspects of designing and enacting teaching and learning.

The teachers decided to ask the professors who taught the classes on cooperative learning and learning community cultures to come to Adams and help solve this problem.

The professors were receptive because they wanted the teachers to incorporate these practices into their teaching so that the student teachers would have working models to observe and in place for their participation. The teachers, accustomed to trying out new practices all along such as the differentiated staffing experiment, wanted to be a part of these "cutting edge" approaches as well. Thus, during the 1988-89 school year, a study group formed composed of teachers who had student teachers and was led by two university professors. The group concentrated on learning how to implement cooperative learning and develop their classrooms as learning communities.

The study group read and worked from Elizabeth Cohen's (1986) book, *Designing Groupwork: Strategies for the Heterogeneous Classroom*, Gene Stanford's (1977) *Developing Effective Classroom Groups: A Practical Guide for Teachers*, and Vivian Paley's (1989/1979) *White Teacher*, a book that addresses issues of race and equity that cooperative learning was also designed to address. One of the professors had spent a little time studying with Elizabeth Cohen, a Stanford University professor who directed an extensive cooperative learning project in California. The study group started hearing the language associated with cooperative learning such as group roles, multi-ability task engagement, social norms, assessment, equity, and others. Although the words themselves were not foreign to Courtney or the other teachers, what they meant in these contexts was unclear. For instance, what did it mean for students to have roles in their small groups? What were these roles and what were students supposed to do in these roles? What was a "social norm?" Did they develop naturally as the group worked together or did norms need to be taught, and if so how? Both the teachers and the student teachers needed clarification and experiences that would make the language meaningful

and real to them. Without that, they did not know how to transform the language of cooperative learning into authentic teaching and learning practices.

As they read and talked about cooperative learning, they also used these strategies to organize groupwork in their classrooms; however, they were not successful. As Courtney reported, "We found we could talk about learning community and cooperative groups...but we didn't get it...It didn't feel right...It was very uncomfortable." There was something artificial about it all. In their classrooms, after they finished with cooperative group activity, they reverted to teaching and learning in conventional ways that seemed more real to them.

The teachers talked to the professor who was the cooperative learning expert about the discrepancies they were experiencing between what they talked about in the study group and what actually happened in their classrooms. He had suggested using some generic activities and some with some science content that did not relate to the teachers' curriculums. As Courtney put it,

> Listening to him, he would bring his stuff, his information out. We would read it; we would discuss it, and then we would try some things. And we would say, "This didn't work; this worked."

He also observed in one teacher's classroom in particular. One day, this teacher reached her frustration point. She got very angry with him. As Courtney said,

> Tessa got real mad one day because he said this, this, and this. She got real mad and said, 'You didn't see what happened before then.' She would blow up at him and he would say, 'Okay...You're right. I did not see all those things.'

The professor did not have the complete classroom picture. He observed only the cooperative learning activities and then blamed the teacher when things went wrong. When this teacher finally vented her anger at his shortsightedness, it opened the door for more frank and equal dialogue. The teachers told him that they wanted to apply

cooperative learning in reading, which was far more relevant for them, but they did not

know how to do that. He said he did not know how to do it with reading either but was

willing to work with the group to try to figure it out. The teachers got the reading basals

and tradebooks they used and the group, including the professor, began creating

cooperative learning tasks that applied to reading. The professor acted as a participant

observer when the teachers tried the reading tasks in their classrooms. Courtney thought

the professor was just as pleased and surprised as the teachers when the strategies

succeeded in provoking intellectually sophisticated discussions in the small groups.

Courtney noted that it was "enlightening" for him and she was impressed to see that there

could be "an exchange" between a university person and the teachers that seemed

"equal."

The study group opened Courtney's eyes and set a precedent in her mind for

collaboration between university people and teachers. Here was a professor who

admitted that he did not know all the answers but was willing to work with the teachers in

their classrooms to try to find some answers. Courtney felt valued as a thoughtful teacher

and a professional in this group. Shying away from direct confrontation herself,

Courtney noted the conversations could become frank and heated, but everyone's ideas

were considered seriously. She saw that disagreement could be handled with respect and

dignity. People's ideas were important. This experience of open discussion and debate

where she felt her own voice was important became the groundwork for her participation

in many future study groups. In addition, the talk about learning community classrooms

and cooperative learning resonated with her emerging thinking that teaching and learning

could be more child-oriented and equitable rather than segregated by ability.

**The First PDS Summer Institute**

The first Professional Development School summer institute sponsored by the university and other PDS funding sources was the other major event that acted as a catalyst for Courtney to begin changing her teaching practices. To launch its ambitious reform efforts embodied in the principles of a Professional Development School (Holmes Group, 1990), the university and other funding sources sponsored a two-week summer institute in June, 1989, for all school and university personnel who were being considered as PDS participants, approximately 180 people. Most Adams' teachers attended.

The PDS summer institute inspired many participants. The call for educational reform was strong in the United States (see, for example, Nation at Risk, 1983; Holmes Group, 1986, 1990; Carnegie Task Force, 1986) and the speakers at the institute eloquently addressed the need for change. Over the period of several days, participants engaged in reading, discussion, and doing learning tasks that presented innovative pedagogy and perspectives on teaching, learning, school organization and structure, and teacher education. Notions of teaching for understanding in classrooms developed as learning communities permeated the presentations and conversations at the institute. Participants engaged in subject-matter tasks that required problem solving through discussion and debate about people's thinking, solution strategies, and conceptual understandings. There were sessions focused on cooperative learning and there was talk about the characteristics and norms of learning community classroom cultures. The participatory tasks required partner or small group work as people learned about new perspectives in teaching subject matter. In other words, they did not just hear about

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innovative teaching and learning practices, they got a taste of it through first-hand experiences.

The summer institute experiences inspired many of the teachers who attended to try some of these practices. They felt valued as professionals who had much to contribute to educational reform efforts. Courtney was not the only teacher who felt that her opinions and experience as a teacher were respected at the institute. For her, though, it was especially meaningful because she did not think of herself as someone who had an important voice or knew how to attract attention to her ideas (see Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, 1986 or Heilbrun, 1988, amongst others for more on women's perceptions of their ability to be recognized and heard).

Courtney considered herself a non-assertive, indecisive person who preferred to listen rather than lead. She let Peg speak for both of them at staff meetings and went along with Peg's decisions related to their classrooms and teaming. Courtney had noted her tendency towards indecisiveness in an autobiographical essay she wrote at 22. In this essay she described her childhood as marked by insecurity and fear. She saw her father as a "functional alcoholic" and, although she did not realize it when she was young, her mother was also a heavy drinker. Her parents frequently had fights, usually about money, that involved yelling and physical abuse. One of Courtney's few, but vivid childhood memories, was of her sister, brother and her, huddled together at the top of the stairs in their house, listening and watching as their parents verbally and physically battled over money for forthcoming Christmas gifts for their children. As she and her siblings clung together, Courtney felt torn between her desires as a child for some Christmas packages and her feelings of fear, guilt and self-blame that her own wants

were the reason for her parents' fights. At 22, this is how Courtney wrote about her feelings.

> I can remember shuddering with fear when my parents quarreled. I'd try so hard to get away from hearing them. I'd run outside or to my room to hide and there I'd cry my eyes out. Even today when I hear people quarreling, fear overrides my body and mind. If I'm confronted with an argument, I'd rather give in to their side than stand up for my own rights and quarrel.

Courtney saw her inability to "stand up for my own rights and quarrel" as being passive. She thought she resembled a jellyfish whose features she discovered in an encyclopedia.

> A jellyfish…is characterized as an inverted bowl-like or bell-shaped body. An inverted bowl can hold nothing in it. Therefore, it cannot contribute any ideas of it's own…A jellyfish swims by slow pulsation. By swimming with slow pulsation it can take in the situation and decide on the correct reaction so it can follow through the way people want it to respond. In the larva stage the jellyfish swims around for a time then rests on a solid object. Isn't that strange [that] people do this too? It's easy to find someone that seems strong to idolize. Just latch on and you are provided with security. Who cares if the security is false; if you don't think about it, it won't hurt…How nice a jellyfish' s life can be…but I don't want to be a jellyfish.

Courtney understood some important features about herself including her feelings, her self-image, and how she clung to other people's ability to make decisions as her sense of security. She lacked confidence in her own ideas and like the inverted bowl of a jellyfish, could not hold any securely. If she did offer her opinions, someone might find something to disagree with and she would rather "give in" than quarrel. Even though she did not want to be a jellyfish, 20 years later Courtney's colleagues still characterized her as quiet, nice, and liked by everyone because she listened rather than took sides by asserting her own ideas and opinions. Professionally, she had found Peg to cling to, to make decisions for her, so she had a sense of security. In her personal life, she acquiesced to her husband's interests and needs. She was soon to realize, however, that she had lost a sense of who she was after living so long under other people's umbrellas.

Thus, when people at the first PDS summer institute encouraged her contributions as important pieces to conversations or help in a problem-solving task, Courtney felt good. The milieu or culture of the institute was exciting, uplifting, supportive. She felt listened to. She felt people cared about her ideas. She felt valued as a professional with worthwhile knowledge and experience that she could offer to others. She was excited about continuing to learn about using cooperative learning and developing a learning community classroom culture. She was intrigued by the first hand experiences learning subject matter and the observations she made of people teaching subject matter using a conceptual approach to foster students' understanding rather than just recitation of subject-matter content. Much of what she heard and saw struck chords deep within her. She began to recognize that her current approach to teaching did not accord with her beliefs about how children learn and should live together in a classroom. She wanted to change her teaching practices so that they aligned with her beliefs that children should participate in making decisions about how the classroom should function and take responsibility for their own as well as other's learning. She believed that children could help each other learn and that respect for each person was a necessity. She looked forward to the beginning of the school year when she could start making changes in her practices. She was an experienced teacher but in many ways she felt as if she were at a new starting point for learning and growth.

**The PDS Context at Adams**

In the fall of 1989, Adams began organizing their PDS effort with their university partners. While Courtney attended the meetings, she felt incompetent in expressing her ideas and wondered if she actually understood what other people were talking about. She

had expected PDS to be another attempt by the university to "plug in pieces" such as study groups and decision-making teams. Instead, the university people presented a more collaborative approach in which both teachers and they would work together on formulating problems to study and pedagogical issues to explore. Projects and activities would develop as joint work between Adams staff and university people. Bob, the principal at Adams, said that teachers would have to change the way they worked. For example, teachers would need to get comfortable delegating some teaching responsibilities to newly hired "reallocated time" teachers so that they could work on PDS projects. Courtney knew that it was not easy for her to delegate responsibilities. In fact, she was only just beginning to do this at home by assigning her own children, Andrea and Kevin, daily kitchen duties that they had done only occasionally before.

*Core Team.* Courtney was completely surprised when Bob, her principal, asked her to serve on the newly formed school management team called the Core Team—a vehicle for giving teachers more decision-making power in their schools. Schools were urged to create a management team composed of a few teachers, university coordinators of the PDS efforts at the school and the principal. The Core Team was established in fall, 1990, the second year that Adams was a PDS. At Adams, the team consisted of Bob, two teachers who volunteered, and a couple university people. They needed one more teacher. Bob and one of the university coordinators each asked Courtney to join. As Courtney described it,

> Martha [one of the university coordinators] came to see me. She said, 'You have to be very articulate. You have to be able to handle confrontation.' I thought, 'I can't do that.' Both Bob and Martha came to see me separately and asked me [to be on the Core Team]. [I thought,] 'What! Me?' They said they needed someone who had their pulse on the community and gets along with the whole staff. I said I didn't know if I could do all those things but they said, 'Oh, you'll be fine.'

As a member of the Core Team, Courtney became part of the leadership group at school. Although she was not comfortable in this new role, she began to participate in conversations that built on the ones about cooperative learning and learning community classroom cultures that were started in the cooperative learning study group and at the first and second summer institutes. Working so closely with people she viewed as authority figures such as Bob and the university coordinators intimidated Courtney, however. She recalled meetings the previous year with university people where she did not understand what they were talking about. At first, she felt incompetent. She wrote,

> Thinking back to the meeting with Bob, Martha, Grace [another university coordinator for Adams] and [others] I felt very incompetent in communication skills—expressing what I wanted to say or wondering if I'm comprehending at the same level on which they are communicating. As they continued, I felt more an equal part—professional.

On the Core Team, Courtney started hearing about the notion of school cultures and particularly about the culture at Adams. Although she did not always understand what the university people were talking about, being included in the conversations made her feel like a professional. The Core Team examined the norms for communication among the staff at Adams to see in what ways it supported or blocked changes in teaching practices and in school structures. During the early PDS years, the Core Team met endlessly. Courtney said, "We spent hours and hours and hours in conversations—after school, weekends." They uncovered patterns of dysfunctional communication among the staff and university people that avoided confronting people directly when there was a problem or disagreement. Instead, people tended to "talk about" rather than "talk to" the people involved. To help address this problem, an expert in interpersonal communication from the university began attending the Core meetings to teach participants how to

confront problems and conflict more directly and honestly. Some of the communication problems resided among the Core Team members themselves, so the university person put them through processes of problem solving and conflict resolution.

Ironically, as the Core Team met to explore the professional culture of their school and learn ways to make communication more effective, their very meetings were causing dissension and friction among the staff. Courtney talked about the effect the meetings were having on the staff.

> The rest of the staff wanted to know what those conversations were about. Why were we having so many conversations and what exactly [were we talking about.] [People said,] 'It's not fair that we don't know what you're talking about.' It was so controversial. We felt we were telling them but they thought we were talking about more than that.

The staff felt left out of the important conversations that were central to the PDS work. They could not understand what the Core Team was talking about and doing. Courtney said that the teachers who were not on the Core Team thought that "going through the process of learning to talk to each other was stupid." They thought that the Core Team was being secretive. Even Peg felt estranged because Courtney purposely put her meeting notes in a place where Peg could not see them.

Courtney, however, valued the Core Team meetings, crediting the conversations as the place where she began to learn how to talk to both children and adults differently. She recalled her mother lecturing her as a child but never really just talking to her or helping her think through a problem as her advocate. Courtney's model for confrontation was the yelling and fighting her parents did when she was young, often feeling guilty because she thought it was her fault they were fighting. Thus, when the Core Team decided they needed to learn how to resolve interpersonal conflicts using more wholesome and functional methods, Courtney thought it would help her both

professionally and personally. She felt a tension, however, between what she heard as a script and her ability to deliver it with personal conviction.

> [Core] was the beginning of my starting thinking about how to ask questions both in the classroom and with the people I'm working with. I was getting words but I didn't know how to do it. I felt scared a lot. How far can I push this? In my classroom I tried to make it happen. I'd tell kids, 'This is what you say,' yet in my own life I was trying to figure out how to ask those questions myself at a personal level.

Courtney wanted to learn how to talk to her students, her colleagues, her friends and her family so that she was heard. It scared her, however, because pushing for clarity, for problem definition, or for understanding might appear critical and confrontational. She recognized that, until now, she longed for acceptance more than she longed for her own voice, thus seldom challenged other people's thinking or asked about controversial issues.

> [It bothers me] not being able to ask the questions about, 'How did you get to that point? Why do you think that?' but wanting to, wanting to so badly. But not even knowing how to ask them. What to ask. I don't know if it was being afraid of being unaccepted. I was always dealing with being afraid of not being accepted.

It was safer to try out this different kind of talking and direct confrontation if she did it in her classroom. She could tell her students what to say because they weren't her and she felt comfortable interacting with children. It was difficult, though, because when she could not do this kind of talking herself, personally, she did not really know how to teach it to children. She tried asking Peg some questions about their relationship because Courtney was beginning to acknowledge to herself her dependency on Peg but "got shot down." Just knowing the words without knowing when and how to use them did not help Courtney move easily to different ways of talking and being heard.

For the first few years of PDS involvement, there continued to be tension on the staff. People were leery of too much change. The school already had a reputation for

innovation. Some people thought, "Why rock the boat? We're already doing okay as it is." One teacher commented that the staff was so absorbed in taking care of themselves "as a family" that they could not turn their attention to too many new projects. Teachers who were not on the Core Team suspected that Core Team teachers were keeping secrets. One teacher told Courtney she thought there was a hierarchy at the school with the university people on top, the principal next, and the teachers on the bottom. This teacher thought that the teachers were only included in decisions when it was advantageous to the university's purposes. Courtney disagreed with this perception. With her position on the Core Team, she felt included in discussions and decisions. She felt valued as a teacher and felt most of the university people listened to her and the other teachers on the Core Team. She still struggled, though, with what she saw as her own inability to understand what the university people said at these meetings, confront problems directly, and express herself assertively. In fact, Courtney thought that much of the discussions on the Core Team about dealing with conflict constructively and learning interpersonal skills could apply to her personally as well as to the relationships among the staff at Adams. She thought of herself as wishy-washy, indecisive, and having "suppressed my thoughts so much over the years that I can't get through the fog." She looked at the Core Team as one place where she could learn things that would help her grow professionally and personally.

*Courtney's PDS involvement.* The focus on problem-solving and school and classroom change remained dominant for many years as features of the PDS efforts at Adams. Since Courtney already wanted to change her classroom culture into a learning community, she was attracted to the PDS conversations about change and the various

groups or projects that were forming to study innovative practices. By the second year of the PDS endeavor at Adams, multiple options, each advocating some form of change in practice, vied for her attention. In the journal she started keeping, she listed them according to strands:

| K-12 Teaching & Learning for Understanding | Organization & Management or Restructuring | Teacher Education |
|---|---|---|
| Literacy group | Library options | Jr. year program |
| Alternate Assessment group | Time restructuring | Sr. year program |
| (Math mentors not a group) | Regular Ed.- Special Ed. | |
| Study of practice | Core Management Team | |
| Learning Community group | Lunch options | Field Instruction |
| | Student support team group | |

The array of PDS projects was impressive. Courtney participated in the literacy, alternative assessment and learning community groups. She took both junior year and senior year student teachers in her room but she refrained from becoming involved in their field instruction as a few other teachers were learning to do. She was interested in the student support team and participated on the Core Management Team. Like most teachers in the building, she had special education students in her class as part of the new inclusion project. Being involved in so many PDS groups and projects stimulated Courtney's thinking. The challenge of matching her visions to the reality of practice excited and scared her. She said, "I feel on the verge of growth," but recognized it could be a long, slow process.

The first study group, the first PDS summer institute, and the initial Core Team conversations started Courtney thinking seriously about her teaching practice. She realized that her current practice did not support her beliefs about children's learning or the kind of classroom environment she believed best supported the types of relationships, interactions, and attitudes she wanted to foster in herself and her students. Without

knowing exactly what she was getting into but having decided to change her teaching

practice, she began a process that would be messy, fatiguing, frustrating and long.

Reflecting later on the six years in which she endured the turmoil of professional and

personal change, she said,

> I don't think [change] is as painful as it is unnerving. Not knowing. There's risk
> involved no matter what. No clear steps to follow; no clear ending. It's risky,
> and at points it's painful. You're leaving the old and entering the new. Part of
> that is exciting but part of that can be painful. There is something you're leaving
> behind and that's a loss...but it's the risky piece, the piece you don't know, the
> unanswered piece [that's difficult.]

For Courtney, the risk of change was not only in becoming more assertive but

also not knowing exactly what she wanted her classroom to be like or how to get there.

Although she liked what she heard about learning community classrooms and teaching

subject matter for understanding, her vision of what that kind of teaching and learning

looked like was foggy. In order to gain the freedom she needed to take control of her

own teaching decisions, she found herself severing her long-standing relationship with

Peg, a painful process and a loss that left emotional scars. She was alone, scared at the

prospects of change, but determined and hopeful of success.

Over several years of struggle, Courtney found new professional relationships that

eventually sustained and guided her through the unknown parts of the process.

Personally she developed faith in herself as a learner and knower, able to express her

mind and feelings more forcefully and assuredly, albeit still hesitant to deal with conflict

directly. At the end of the most difficult years of her struggle, she realized there was no

end to learning teaching. She recognized that once she understood teaching as complex

intellectual work, she would always be a learner, always striving to change her practice in

some way or other. She would not remain a tadpole or an amorphous jellyfish; she would

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become a frog with a remnant of a tail that would continue to change throughout her

career. The next five chapters present strands of Courtney's process of "getting out of the

water."

**Chapter 3**

**THE GAP BETWEEN VISION AND REALITY: THE STRUGGLE TO CREATE
AND MANAGE A CLASSROOM CULTURE THAT SUPPORTS REFORM-
MINDED TEACHING AND LEARNING**

I think there is so much value in the struggle. (Courtney)

**Creating a Vision, Confronting Reality**

In August 1989, inspired by what she heard at the first PDS summer institute,

Courtney began to make plans for beginning the school year. She outlined activities for

the first few days of school and drew a map of her room. Instead of rows, children's

desks would be arranged in groups of four. In the middle of the space for the desk

clusters would be two tables to provide workspace. Clustering the desks provided room

on the floor where children could sit on the rug to listen to books or have discussions.

Supplies, book carts and tables would be accessible around the periphery of the room.

She added a sofa, some stuffed chairs, and several pillows to create a homey feeling.

Children would begin to get to know each other by interviewing a classmate and

introducing their partner to the class. Then the class would discuss how it felt to talk to

another person about themselves and also have someone else talk about them to the

whole class. Courtney hoped that the combination of the room arrangement that

facilitated student interaction and the introductory activities that gave each child a time to

be highlighted would create a safe place where open communication would develop.

Concerned about how to establish the "climate" she wanted, Courtney planned to talk with the children about a slogan she heard at the summer institute sessions on cooperative groupwork, "No one knows everything but everybody knows something" (Cohen, 1986). She would talk about everyone being free to state his or her thoughts while others listened.

As Courtney began to shape her classroom culture differently, she noted the changing demographics of her class. When school opened in 1989, she had 26 students. Half the students were in single family homes, one student was in a foster home, and half the students were minorities, largely African Americans with a few Hispanics. Adams served an increasingly diverse neighborhood thus avoiding the need for bussing students in or out of the school. Taking her cue from reading Vivian Paley's *White Teacher*, (1989/1979) Courtney wanted to address each other's differences, valuing each person's uniqueness. She found it difficult, however, to actually visualize how this would take place.

"What's my intent here?" Courtney asked herself. She wanted to establish norms, procedures, and rules that would be conducive to creating her notion of a learning community. In her journal she listed the dispositions she wanted the children to have. Good group members cooperate, help their teammates, encourage each other, and listen. They are responsible, self-disciplined, dependable, and organized. "But how do I get this across without putting everyone to sleep?" she wondered.

As she continued to refine her thinking about getting the school year started, Courtney realized that something in her thinking had changed already. She was planning activities like she had in the past. In fact, she had used some of the very same ones, but

this year she was thinking differently about them. She was focusing on creating this learning community environment that she had heard about in the study group and at the summer institute that had captured her imagination. Her reasons for doing the introductory activities had changed from simply getting the year going to building a positive, secure environment that would develop and evolve as the year progressed. In her head she could begin to hear herself explaining to the children not only what they were going to do but also why. Talking to children about the purposes for an activity was different for Courtney. Before, she had stopped at the what and how.

> I was still the authoritarian. I was still telling everybody in there exactly what they needed to do, how they needed to act. You know, I was doing all the directing. I'm trying to pull out of that role and be more of a facilitator. I want my kids to take some responsibility. It's their room.

The more Courtney heard about innovative teaching approaches, the more closely she looked at her own teaching practices. She realized how her practices actually discouraged children from taking some responsibility for themselves and for the classroom. She did not like the idea that she was the only one running the show and the children were expected simply to do what they were told. What was in it for them?

> I had a feeling my students weren't...making any investments. They weren't making an invested interest in what we were doing. It was just things I was handing out to them and they would learn and then they would just hand it back. There was not a vested interest from them. I didn't see them taking any part in this.

Courtney wanted her students to feel a real part of their classroom. She wanted them to think about school as a place where they had some say in what they did and felt "invested" in their learning. She also wanted her students to treat each other with respect and listen to each other's ideas with interest. She recalled her own elementary school days when, as an overweight child, she was called "Ellie" (short for elephant) by her peers. She did not want her own students to experience the sting of such barbs if she

could help it. She remembered her own humiliation and bone-deep embarrassment when she failed a phonics test in second grade and her teacher publicly noted her ignorance. Feeling academically inept, she understood her embarrassment and failure as her problem rather than any responsibility of the teacher's. At least she, as a teacher, could shape a classroom culture where it was acceptable to be different in some respect and still be recognized as a valuable, contributing member of the group. She could create a learning environment where it was safe to make mistakes, not know something, and still feel intact as a person. She could develop a classroom where children assumed some responsibility for themselves and shared in decisions about the classroom, creating a sense of vested interest in what was happening there. It would be a comfortable place where people could take risks in order to become "the best we can be whether learner, teacher, participant, doer, thinker, encourager…"

The first day of school for the 1989-90 year flew by. Courtney and the children accomplished only half of what she had planned but that meant there would be plenty to do the rest of the week. It had been a good beginning. Most of the children seemed eager to learn. One new boy who had arrived in the morning complaining about having to change schools so many times announced at the end of the day that he was sorry to see the day end. Other children wanted to know when they were going to start reading and one girl used her spare time to do some writing. It was an encouraging day.

By mid-September, however, Courtney was discouraged. The weather was hot and muggy. The children were not responding to her. When she had the class work in groups, she found herself raising her voice to be heard over the din in the room and even then she felt the children still were not listening to her or to each other. She realized that

she needed to lay the groundwork for cooperative groups more carefully. Seeing her

classroom slipping away from the supportive one she envisioned, she knew she needed to

refresh her own thinking about the norms she wanted in the class. In addition, some of

the children were asking if they could do more work alone. She told herself that she

needed to become more stringent about setting specific rules and limits for the children's

behavior. She decided to use a bell to get attention since raising her voice was not

working.

**Confusion Develops, the Struggle Begins**

*Participating in studying practice.* After Adams became a PDS, the cooperative

learning study group ceased and another, the "field studies" group, formed. Retaining

most of the same members as the cooperative learning study group, this group focused on

how to help novices learn to teach. The field studies group was a natural outgrowth of

the cooperative learning study group. Both the earlier study group and the field studies

group focused on how to help student teachers learn innovative teaching practices, but the

teachers themselves had to learn the practices also. The field studies group continued

their learning about cooperative groupwork and learning community classrooms,

concentrating their discussions on the later since it was supposed to permeate their whole

classroom life. In addition, they started to think harder about how to teach a student

teacher to create and sustain such a classroom culture.

The field studies group talked about the goals of a learning community: academic

outcomes, personal responsibility, social responsibility, and social justice (Putnam &

Burke, 1992). They discussed what "norms" a learning community had such as trust,

respect for other's ideas, taking intellectual and social risks, resolving conflicts

wholesomely, acknowledging differences, tolerating ambiguity, making decisions by consensus, giving help when asked and asking for help when needed. They talked about the roles people assumed in a learning community culture such as encourager, contributor, linker, organizer, synthesizer. Courtney filled her journal pages with the new ways to think and talk about classroom cultures, not fully understanding what it meant but intrigued by the possibilities it suggested.

*Locating control.* What Courtney heard about the roles and norms in learning community cultures sounded good and right to her. As Courtney began to hear about shaping classrooms more democratically, she looked at her own teaching and realized that something was missing for her. In her role as classroom leader, she saw herself as holding all the control and responsibility for the classroom. Children were excluded from much of the decision making about how the classroom should function and their responsibilities as participants. She wanted a better fit between her beliefs that children should be actively involved in decisions about their learning and the environment that supports it. Creating a learning community culture seemed to be the answer.

Courtney attended the meetings of the field studies group regularly. They talked about helping children take responsibility for their own behavior and outlined some strategies to use in the classroom to encourage this. The irony of the situation, however, was that while Courtney was at these meetings, which took place during the school day, her classroom "fell apart" under the direction of the student teacher and the substitute. To counter the situation, Courtney found herself reverting to authoritarian behaviors, raising her voice, and usurping all decision-making instead of becoming more adept at shifting responsibilities to the children. She realized that her own behaviors were a

negative model for how she wanted the children to behave. Her classroom was a stark contrast to the vision she had of a learning community. Rather than getting clearer, her vision was fading and Courtney was confused. She tried the techniques the study group talked about—not echoing what the children said, asking them to reiterate what a peer had said, asking them if they agree or disagree with each other--but these only seemed to work with some children. She was frustrated. Her classroom was not a comfortable place. One child in particular seemed to dominate and threaten the others. Tolerance, acceptance, and respect for differences seemed to be only a dream that she could not articulate to the children. By October, she had to admit that she had no learning community. In fact, the discussions with the study group highlighted for her that she really did not know what a learning community was, much less how to establish one.

As Courtney tried to figure out how to proceed, she thought about how she ran her classroom previously compared to what she was trying to do now. She thought that she probably had not made a shift in her role as the authority figure.

> It was a much more structured thing. I was in control of the curriculum. I would present curriculum and I would have my kids do things with manipulatives…but there was never encouraging them to communicate with each other, to share what they know and what they're thinking about. They would talk to me and then I would talk to them [but not to each other.] Now, when I see my kids I think maybe that's why [we're] having so much trouble in there. Maybe I'm really at the authoritarian end of the scale. And that upsets me because I don't think of myself that way.

Courtney tried to talk to her class about cooperation, talking and listening to each other, and taking responsibility for their own behavior but in the long run, she thought that she was probably still very authoritarian. She felt the tension of trying to give children more control in the classroom at the same time wanting to retain control in order to keep order. She was scared of letting go.

> Losing that control over what was going on in that classroom is scary. That's a scary thing. I'm still dealing with some of that. Letting up on some of that control.

At the same time she struggled with how to allow children some control without relinquishing her own, Courtney struggled to understand conversations in the field studies group. All year they talked about what they called the four functions of school: academic outcomes, personal responsibility, social responsibility, and social justice (Putnam and Burke, 1992). Looking back, however, she admitted, "I really didn't understand that." She often felt stupid at these meetings because she understood little of the discussion. The group discussion had neither helped Courtney clarify her concepts of a learning community nor actually establish and sustain one. The process had been frustrating for her. She said,

> We sat through a lot of stuff and I really didn't even know what was going on sometimes...What I was expecting from field studies was more like how do we get to the learning community stuff. It was so underneath all that stuff we were doing and that's not what I needed. I wanted practical stuff that I could go back and say, 'Oh, this is what I need to do. This is what I want to do in my class.'

Courtney maintained her participation in the field studies group because it seemed like a promising place to learn how to implement the practices she had heard and read about in the cooperative learning study group meetings before Adams became a PDS. As the 1989-90 year progressed, however, the group became buried in language about social norms and the functions of schools without any connection to real classroom practices. Although the meetings were often interesting, the discussions had not provided Courtney with the means to get closer to her vision in reality. She questioned whether she should continue with this group the following year if it was going to deal with abstract concepts rather than classroom practicalities.

*Practicing metacognition.* Although Courtney had problems with her classroom management all year, she was excited about some changes in her thinking. She told a PDS documentor that her thinking was different and credited it to the "awakening" she

had had at the first summer institute as well as the study group discussions she had

attended that year that built on ideas introduced at the summer institute. She described

herself as a "surface thinker" previously, but this year she found herself questioning what

she was doing, why, and what she was learning. These questions demanded thinking

deeply about her teaching from a perspective she had not taken before. They required

that she be able to justify her teaching decisions and practices beyond simply following a

teacher's guide, meeting district objectives, or doing what her teaching teammate, Peg,

was doing. Practicing metacognition, a concept introduced at the first PDS summer

institute, made Courtney aware of what she knew and did not know, what she thought

about herself and what she let others think about for her.

> I started to hear the word metacognition—how you thought about things. That was a big
> word. It meant a lot to me about not just going through a situation but thinking about it
> and thinking about my thinking. I'm looking at these things that people do because they
> have a tendency of roles they are playing. I'm thinking about what I'm thinking about as
> I look at these people. This is all stuff that's going on inside this woman, [me,] who just
> went along with the world but didn't really think about what she was doing. You know, I
> might plan ahead for dinner for the night and I might plan ahead where I was going after
> a meeting. But I didn't think about my thinking. Like telling Johnny to get back in his
> seat without thinking about it. I didn't start out in high school and plan to go to college.
> I didn't start out in college planning to teach. I didn't have goals set. There's still a piece
> that goes along with those changes and I just respond to those changes and whatever
> happens happens but there's another piece inside me that says, okay, I'm thinking more
> about what I'm thinking while I'm doing those things. I feel I'm at a different point than
> I was.

Metacognition opened up Courtney's mental world for her. She became curious

about her thinking and in exploring it, discovered that she had some control not only over

it but also the situations it affected. Unlike the person who, like a jellyfish, moved with

the currents and simply responded to opportunities rather than create them for herself,

Courtney began to see that she could take a more active part in monitoring her thoughts

and making decisions. She observed the people in her study groups, on the Adams Core

Team, or in staff meetings and saw their tendency to play roles, a revelation to her

understanding of the dynamics among her colleagues. While she could not completely shed her propensity to just let life happen to her, she was beginning to realize that she could determine some of its direction. She was at a different point than she had been in her life before.

Courtney was so taken with the power of metacognition that she introduced it to Andrea, her oldest child. Andrea was born under fetal distress, two months early, and was later diagnosed with a high intensity hearing loss as well as learning disabilities that resulted in a deficit of short-term memory retention. Courtney spent a lot of time with Andrea helping her with homework nightly. She was constantly aware of helping Andrea be sure of what she was doing. For instance, she always made sure if Andrea was going somewhere she knew the route and could remember how to get back home. Teaching Andrea to be metacognitive was already helping Andrea tackle some of her school tasks and have a better handle on her personal autonomy. Most likely, helping Andrea learn to monitor her thinking also helped Courtney understand the process better. "There is a big payoff here," Courtney thought, in both her professional and personal life.

*Awakening to gender issues and complexities of practice.* As Courtney became metacognitive she also awakened to the role her gender played in keeping her quiet and submissive both in her personal and professional life (Heilbrun, 1988). She had learned the stereotypic woman's role well. Courtney had become a teacher, a socially acceptable working position for a woman. She demurred to men, including her husband, seeking their approval which started with her father whom she adored and defended against her mother's innuendoes that her father was never good enough and no man could ever be trusted. She assumed the role of caregiver, becoming the wife who tried to keep home

life calm. She was the parent who attended school conferences, the children's athletic events, and oversaw their homework, especially helping Andrea every night. She managed the household, making sure that meat, potatoes and vegetables were ready for dinner every night. As she noted years later, it took therapy to accept a cleaning person because she felt it was her duty as a wife and mother to do the work herself.

Courtney did not consider herself a feminist and was not very interested in the movement per se. As she said, she was too busy, "being woman." The reading Courtney was doing and the conversations on the Core Team and in her study groups, however, included talk about the difficulties women had trying to find their own voices and break out of traditional role patterns. As Courtney started to attend to her own thinking, she saw that she was not only on a journey to change her professional practices but also herself as a woman who wanted to find the voice hidden within her. She noted,

> I have not thought much about how being a woman has helped or hindered me in any way. It's only through some conversations, some speakers and things that I see it as being more important...When I heard about that book, *Women's Ways of Knowing* (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986) and I'd hear feminists talk on TV and Karen (a colleague) had feminists views, I wondered what my role was in my family.

As she listened to others talk about women's roles and voices, Courtney starting thinking about her own situation, especially questioning her role in her family. Using metacognition as a key tool, Courtney thought more about her thinking. She questioned what made her think as she did about her personal self as well as about her trying to develop a learning community.

> How am I going to get this [learning community] in place for next year? I am really struggling with that. We're trying to study learning community and how we do that. But this thinking about what you're thinking about is exactly what it is. How do you relate to people? Why do you react the way you do?

Courtney began to see roles, responsibilities, psychology, cultural norms, problem-solving perspectives and language as a complex matrix epitomizing a learning community. On one hand, Courtney was frustrated because she did not understand the intricate nature of a learning community well enough to make her vision happen. She did not know enough about a learning community culture to get a clear enough picture of what it looked like and what it sounded like. She knew it meant that students would use problem solving skills to resolve conflict and be more cognizant of their behavior but she did not know how to teach metacognition and problem solving skills. She pictured her situation as being like a big wheel with some spokes missing. The wheel could not turn smoothly without all its parts. It was off balance like she was. She was looking for answers that she could not find in the study group and Core Team conversations.

On the other hand, the direction she was taking in changing the way her classroom functioned excited her. She was thinking differently about what she was doing, pushing herself to identify relevant purposes for learning tasks that went beyond simply being a fun activity. She was looking at her role in facilitating a learning community culture and how to provide opportunities for her students to take some responsibility for how things were done in the classroom. It felt good to be thinking differently even though it was such a struggle to figure out how to actually put the ideas conveyed by the language into practice.

By the end of the 89-90 school year, Courtney's classroom was "nowhere near where I want it to be." Although she recognized that she was thinking differently, she clung to her authoritarian management styles and teacher-directed learning activities because it was what she knew and it was relatively safe. At the same time, she ventured

cooperative learning tasks, telling her students how they needed to talk to each other

rently and trying to use the language of personal and social responsibility, social

ce, norms for interactions, and conflict resolution at least in her thinking and in her

nals. Talking about these vague concepts with children was harder.

In June as she reflected on the past year, she also projected to the next one. She

dicated herself to talking to her class about personal and social responsibility:

ren talking to each other with respect, being able to talk about their different ideas

opinions without fighting, and encouraging each other as learners. Although she was

rtain what standards to use, she was determined to make changes.

> I'm going to start at the beginning of the year and really talk to my kids about setting up
> standards of communication and how we talk to each other. I don't know what they all
> are yet, but I'm really looking into that. I want to look at problem solving. What are
> some ways that we can work through problems—personal problems, things that happen
> in this room? I don't want them to be calling each other names here. I want them to
> appreciate each other so that the community is stronger. It's a support system for them.
> They could support each other no matter who came into the situation. I want to do that
> very strongly—reinforce that. I did some of that, but I never did enough of it. I never
> reinforced it enough so that when we got to this point, it has fallen apart. So those are the
> things I want to really work on next year, from the beginning.

Courtney identified some of the areas she wanted to work on to build a strong

room community such as problem solving and creating supportive relationships.

ecognized that one reason her learning community had fallen apart this past year

hat she was not consistent with doing the kinds of things that would foster problem

ng and support. In addition, she did not adequately reinforce the positive

actions and appropriate ways of working in the classroom so that students

rstood what was expected. Her goals for the next school year seemed clearer to her.

## Struggle Intensifies

After the second PDS summer institute, where there were more discussions about

ing subject matter for understanding in classrooms that had a learning community

culture, Courtney was recharged with the feeling that this kind of teaching in this kind of classroom was what she had really wanted all her career but never had the vision articulated. As she noted in her "jellyfish essay," her personal need for acceptance and a sense of belonging stifled her own voice and blocked an alternative view of life in classrooms where everyone's voice was respected and heard. From the conversations in her professional life, she was learning that there were ways to interact with children and adults that allowed a person to be heard without destroying relationships or a sense of self-esteem. Ironically, in order for Courtney to fully realize she had a voice that was worth listening to, she had to destroy one of the most important relationships she had. The opportunity for her to confront her dependency on Peg and her own desire to find herself—what she believed in, what she wanted, what her own opinions were—came at the end of the 90-91 school year. To reach that point, Courtney moved through another year characterized by attempts to change herself and her practice, regression to past patterns of authoritarian interaction and conventional teaching practices, dissension and hostility among the staff, and continued internal dissatisfaction with her feelings of inadequacy and indecision.

*Looking for action.* As she prepared for the 1990-91 school year to begin, Courtney gave herself a pep talk. In her journal she wrote,

> Courtney, do it. Take a chance. Change. The worry is there, but in the fall, do it. Start, evaluate, adjust, keep going…Do it. See what it feels like. Reflect, evaluate, assess…[You] do not need to know all there is to know about learning community, developing problem solving…etc. Jump in and do what you know. Be metacognitive and reflective. Write a journal and learn as you go. Yea! Go for it, Hanks!

With her self-talk, Courtney gave herself permission to take action without having to know all the answers first. She pushed herself to risk change, try to enact a learning community, and engage in problem solving without knowing what would be successful.

She encouraged herself to learn through experiencing the feelings of change as well as practicing metacognition and reflection as professional processes. Keeping a journal was a tool for her learning. She began to shift her image of herself from a teacher who should have all the answers to a teacher who had things to learn.

The field studies group again met regularly during the '90-'91 year, discussing the characteristic behaviors of each stage of development of a learning community, focusing especially on the norm development and conflict stages. They discussed how to talk about expectations for appropriate behaviors and how to communicate feelings by using specific language such as "I" messages (Gordon, 1974). From this reading and discussion, Courtney acquired much of the language she used to talk and write about learning community concepts. She could recite the norms a learning community should have, the roles that participants needed to play in order to support each other's learning, and the stages of group development. The gap between what she knew in principle and what she knew practically, however, remained open.

On the first day of school, Courtney tried a balloon popping activity in which children did whatever was written on a piece of paper inside an inflated balloon as a way to introduce themselves. She was pleased with its success, but only one week later Courtney wrote that she was already far behind in developing her learning community. She was trying harder to tell the children why they were doing the tasks she presented, but she realized she needed to get better at being specific and encouraging. She thought she talked too much and needed to turn the talking over to the students. She needed to figure out how to get them more involved. A few days later she wrote, "I'm questioning my learning community. How do we listen to each other? Many kids have their own

agendas for messing with each other and talking." She knew she needed to attend to

setting the norms for respect and acceptance when she overheard two boys talking about

skin color and one of them got defensive. She told herself she had to turn discussion

back to the students and help them learn to listen to each other by asking them to link

their own ideas to others. She told herself to stop repeating everything that the children

said and say instead, "Does anyone else have any ideas? I'd like to hear more." In her

journals she repeatedly wrote phrases and language to use as she taught as though she

were trying to place them on the tip of her tongue. It was like rehearsing a script in her

head.

*Looking for clarity.* She envisioned her ideal classroom again as a way to get

clearer about her aim in hopes that would, in turn, help her get clearer about how to

realize it in her classroom.

> I want to see my classroom—the kids going about the responsibilities of the room with or without me there. They walk in, do attendance, read the agenda, go about specific tasks conversing with one another about the topic or subject at hand, asking for help from a classmate. [If that person is] unable to help, they refer the student to another source—a book, a person, a drawing—to assist. Multitudes of things are possibly going on simultaneously but all are involved in learning and teaching. Kids take shared responsibility if things get too loud, saying to another, 'I'm having difficulty concentrating. Could you please quiet down?' Kids are involved in an area of study, working with others, accepting, valuing—reader's theater, plays, writing, reading, science, social studies. Plants, lamps, books, experiments. Kids taking charge of conflicts, problem solving, natural learning instead of contrived sets of lessons—calm, flowing, energetic, active, learning centered, kids centered—involved—shared responsibilities. Me, the teacher, as facilitator and at times the contributor, linker, encourager.

Courtney's vision evoked images of children going about their learning with self-

direction, motivation, and control. As the teacher, she would be a facilitator,

contributing, encouraging and connecting students to each other and the curriculum.

How was she to reconcile, however, that in order for children to be more self-directed

and controlled they needed structure, direction, and control from outside sources such as

eacher. How could she accept the noise level such an active classroom would

uce when the norm at Adams was quieter classrooms? How could she model the

cipant roles in her version of a learning community if she did not understand what

meant? Enacting her vision seemed elusive. She realized that there were no easy

it" strategies for making this kind of classroom happen. At the end of January

tney wrote about the reality of her feelings and her classroom.

> I'm frustrated! Why is that? PMS, jealousy, anxious to see some results in my learning community? Tired of hearing Peg talk about how wonderfully her class is meshing together? What's happening in my class? The noise is driving me crazy. I think I'm turning responsibility over to them but [am I]? I see some very good things happening— I must stop comparing [myself] to Peg. My class is great. They are changing, getting better—more tolerant.

Courtney's sense of frustration, confusion, and intolerance for the noise in her

room contrasted with her longing for a different perception of her efforts to change

ractices. She had a need for some sense of progress and satisfaction. She could see

e her classroom was not working according to her vision, but she wanted to find the

it was. She needed something to help her maintain the work of change. She could

elp comparing herself to Peg, whose class seemed to function better than hers. Yet,

stopped to consider what changes she was making in her approach to her practice,

ould recognize several. She was thinking differently about teaching practices and

ing, trying to talk differently with her students, and trying to encourage them to

good decisions about how they function in the classroom and accept responsibility

eir actions. To a large extent, however, it remained language that had no meaning

ourtney or her students. She said,

> I'm talking to my kids differently because of this...I start out by saying, 'What is your responsibility? Are you acting in a responsible way?' And as I kept going over those questions, I was just saying the words. I was using the word responsibility. So that made me look at my role as a teacher...Where is my role in the classroom? I don't have that pinned down in any way yet. But instead of me saying, 'You sit down and do this work!' I'm saying, 'Okay, what should you be doing now? What are your choices? How do you

think you can fix that?'...I'm thinking all the time about how am I talking and how do I turn responsibility back [to the children]. I could easily go back to the lights and turn the lights off and say, 'Okay, put your heads down. That's it!' But I'm trying to fight that.

Courtney was experimenting with language and a way of talking with children that would encourage them to assume some responsibility for their behavior. Although she knew the script, she did not understand its meaning to make the delivery real rather than performance. What did responsibility mean for both her and the students? Courtney was beginning to look at her role differently yet was vague about what it should be. She saw herself still doing much of the direction in the classroom, but she said she was directing it differently. Instead of the authoritarian role she used to take, she was trying to assume a role that would help children reflect on their choices. She listened to herself as she talked to children, examining whether what she said fit the role she was trying to assume.

She told a PDS documentor that she realized that at first her talk was artificial because she did not understand its meaning and implications for practice. As the year progressed, however, she saw she was changing her role as disciplinarian. She was not being as authoritarian as she was even last year, not to speak of three or four years ago. She was giving her students some opportunities to make decisions and that was different. Not that it was easy—she still felt devastated at the end of a noisy day when many children resisted taking responsibility for themselves. But stepping back for a moment, she could begin to see that she was saying and doing things differently. She said, "I am learning and it is sort of exciting and I am enjoying it...It's hard work, though. It's awfully hard work. It's hard thinking."

Courtney found that she went home at night and instead of checking papers like she used to, she was reading more. She was reading books and articles about group

dynamics, developing learning community classrooms, and teaching for understanding. She immersed herself in the literature and the language of the conversations of the several study groups she attended, hoping to internalize the concepts, attitudes and ways of talking that she thought would transform her practice as well as herself.

**Alone in the Turmoil of Change**

In a dramatic shift that took place at the end of the school year in June, 1991, Courtney decided that she would stop teaming with Peg and join Karen, another teacher at Adams, in following students for two consecutive years. Because Karen had been teaching second grade and wanted to continue with her students as their third grade teacher, this meant that Courtney had to teach second grade during the 1991-92 school year to fill the open second grade left by Karen.

For the fall of 1991, then, Courtney confronted a curriculum that was new to her, a different age level than she had taught, and teaching alone for the first time since she came to Adams more than 20 years ago. She clung to her vision of a learning community classroom that supported innovative teaching and learning. She looked at the situation that confronted her not as a daunting challenge but as an invitation to institute the kind of classroom she had been working unsuccessfully to realize for the past two years.

*Struggling for structure.* Courtney planned for the beginning of the school year by setting some goals and designing some activities that would get the class moving in the direction of those goals. She listed 4 goals for herself and her students to start the year: feeling comfortable, feeling empowered meaning feeling a part of the room, getting to know each other, and learning routines. She planned an elaborate activity for the first day that involved having each child get a piece of a puzzle as they entered school. This

puzzle piece would be coordinated to finding their desks. The children would find materials to decorate their puzzle piece, work quietly on decorating it, then come to the floor where they would participate in a discussion. The whole sequence provided a means for Courtney to begin setting the desired norms for her learning community: encouraging each other, listening to each other, being helpful. She carefully planned each part of the first day so that she could take advantage of each event to begin developing the rules, expectations and norms of the class.

Courtney was very pleased with what actually occurred. Unlike the previous year when after only one week of school she was discouraged, in mid-September of 1991, Courtney wrote, "I've had some fabulous things happen with the beginning of the year." She thought her class was truly developing into the kind of learning community she envisioned. She focused on the norm of "encouragement." The class talked about how it looked and what it sounded like when people were encouraging each other. The puzzle activity that had involved groups constructing a whole puzzle from putting their pieces together cooperatively and by encouraging others, seemed to set the tone Courtney wanted.

By October, when Courtney noticed that her class was getting "down right rowdy" at times, she wondered what she needed to do to re-establish an environment more conducive to learning. She told herself she needed to look at the structure of classroom activities and figure out what she was really asking the class to do. She had the class revisit how to listen to and encourage others.

Courtney characteristically asked herself tough questions to force herself to clarify her thinking about what she was teaching and why. "One of the things I'm

struggling so hard with," she wrote in late October, "is trying to make my curriculum more responsive to the needs and interests of the students.". She noted that the children would be interested in certain content and wondered how she could use that content to teach the skills and concepts important for them to learn. She met with Ruth, a university professor who was guiding a small pilot program for the student teachers at Adams. Courtney was comfortable approaching Ruth because she felt as if she knew Ruth through their mutual work with the student teachers. In addition, Courtney knew Ruth was working with Karen and Karen's student teacher, Diane, on a mentoring project. Ruth helped Courtney see that she was still focusing on how to accomplish an activity itself rather than on how to teach concepts, skills, and understandings. For Courtney, it was difficult to move beyond structuring an activity that would flow smoothly to shaping an activity in progress in order to capture the conceptual learning lurking in the hustle and bustle of the action.

The decline of the learning community culture Courtney had worked so diligently to establish this year started after the Thanksgiving break. Seeing she had to re-establish the classroom norms, Courtney chose a cooperative group activity that required listening skills because she thought these were particularly lacking in her class. The activity also required that one person be the reporter for their small group who would tell the whole class what their group did. It took time but Courtney felt it was important. Pleased with the way some of the reporters presented their groupwork, Courtney noted others fell short of her expectations. She thought that she would have to do more of this.

She wondered how she could develop more social responsibility among her class and be less of a disciplinarian herself. So many of the children, however, seemed in need

of adult attention that whenever Courtney tried to talk about caring for and helping each other, someone would do something very inappropriate and upset the social balance once again. Even caring for the furniture and materials in the room was a problem as a couple lamps had been broken by careless behavior. In early December, Courtney was feeling defeated. She wrote, "Where is my learning community? What are my kids feeling about everything? Am I tired of bothering?" Just before the winter break, however, she revived. She had been absent one day and the children said the substitute was mean. The children said they missed Courtney which made her feel more appreciated. She felt more relaxed and comfortable with the class and thought that the children were treating one another better.

Soon after the break, when she overheard someone say that a learning community was a system to facilitate cooperative groupwork, Courtney realized that she had changed her thinking about what it meant to have a learning community classroom culture. Courtney acknowledged to herself that she used to think it was a management method that centered on cooperative learning, but now she realized that it was a whole stance and way for a classroom to function. For example, at a field studies group meeting she was asked to write about the relationship between a learning community classroom and teaching for understanding (Cohen, McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993; Prawat, 1989; Wiske, 1997). She wrote,

> In my head I don't think you can do one without the other. Developing as a learning community to me is building a community together—a safe place to take risks, ask questions, participate as a full-fledged member, listen to others—a place where all learn and teach; a place to push our thinking, support one another, confront, help, and assist each other. Teaching for understanding needs application of prior knowledge and questions with experiences, readings, etc. that construct knowledge from the old and the new to create concepts. Children need to talk, listen, question what they are learning; construct and reconstruct their knowledge. In order to do this a learning community must exist.

In seeing the symbiotic relationship between a learning community classroom culture and teaching for understanding, Courtney also recognized that it took time to develop the norms of a learning community that supported teaching and learning for understanding. Without developing norms of listening, questioning, encouraging, she could not engage children in the discourse necessary for exploring ideas and generating creative thinking that was vital to innovative approaches to teaching and learning. She wondered if she gave her students enough time to do the process tasks she wanted them to do such as experimenting with ideas, writing, discussing, reflecting, and revising their thinking and beliefs. She wondered how she could structure content and learning activities to allow for time to develop concepts while still holding children's interests, especially the children that year who seemed to have such short attention spans.

Discussions in the field studies group and reading she was doing that focused on helping children develop responsibility and politeness reinforced Courtney's desire to have a caring classroom (Charney, 1992; Noddings, 1984). She saw her emphasis on giving her students choices and on listening to each other as a means to developing responsibility. The class meetings she established were one way she did that, but she was also realizing that she could not just assume the children would be polite and courteous without being specific about what that meant.

*Searching for strategies.* Courtney hoped her students would be glad to be back after the winter break and would look forward to learning, thinking, and participating in the class. She wondered what the new student, whose parents were in prison, would be

like. She wanted to have the class reacquaint themselves by sharing things that happened during the break. She wanted to re-establish her classroom norms of listening, speaking to be heard, and respecting each other. She asked the children to write about something they did during the break and then take a few minutes in their group to share what they wrote. Unfortunately, several of the children again foiled her plan by being uncooperative in their group, interrupting others, and one child even started yelling. She was concerned because several children were starting to use offensive language.

Throughout the spring, Courtney continued to be plagued by the fact that the children still did not seem to listen to each other, even in small groups. The situation continued to frustrate her and she seemed unable to make progress on remedying it. This was especially trying during mathematics lessons when Courtney was working so hard to gain some ease with guiding a thoughtful and stimulating discussion. She wondered, "What can we do to value discourse, discussion, sharing of ideas, listening, thinking, patience? What is it we need to do?"

Courtney devised some strategies to use to try to improve the situation. She was pleased with the discussion she conducted in which she talked with the class about working together to solve the problem of not listening or attending to each other. The class decided that they should earn some recreation time if they listened well. Unfortunately that did not work because the class soon lost any time they earned over the course of a few days. Next the class decided on a system of consequences that would affect those who were interfering with the learning of others. A person's name would be posted on the board and if they interfered again, they would get a check by their name and would have to write why they got the check. Another infraction and they would miss

recess and yet another would elicit a call home. They talked about how the class could help each other by telling someone they were bothering them but that brought out fears of people getting angry with each other. Courtney thought the discussion was good but also felt nothing would come of it if the appropriate behaviors were not modeled.

Courtney talked with her student teacher, Sandra, about the situation. Courtney wondered if the reasons to which she and Sandra attributed the growing noise level were actually excuses for a situation they could not get under better control themselves. They reasoned that it was a change and adjustment for everyone to have Sandra teaching full-time; they had just finished three weeks of standardized testing; the weather was changing and getting nicer; it was towards the end of the year and everyone was tired of school. Courtney wondered if these were the real reasons for the management problems or if it was something else. Could it be that she and Sandra were giving the children too much room for making choices and assuming responsibilities without teaching them what that meant and how to do that?

In May Courtney had the opportunity to visit an elementary school in another city where she saw classrooms that looked like her ideal. She wrote,

> There are exciting things going on in that building for kids. Many of the rooms did not have desks but tables. Kids real work is on display everywhere. Kids were engaged in projects in different parts of the room. In many rooms it was messy stuff all over everything but there was a responsive feeling to it all. The kids' touch was evident; not necessarily the finished, beautifully exciting stuff so encouraged in our school. There were animals everywhere and on-going activities everywhere. The place was covered by books. I wanted to know how they taught reading. What were they doing to build kids' reading? One team room we entered had K, 1, and 2. The kids decided the agenda for the day but the first 15 minutes was an opening and greeting time to just talk to each other. One wing appeared a little more traditional—desks set up while the other was no desks just tables with some storage space under the tables. One room had created a huge space shuttle right in the room. The children's artwork was everywhere and spilled out into the halls. I saw the closest thing to what I'd like to create in my classroom—that real kid feeling.

Having seen this school, Courtney knew that a version of her vision existed in reality. If it could be created and managed in this school, why not in hers? After she had digested her visit and reflected on the year behind her, Courtney took time in mid-July to re-envision her ideal classroom. It built on her previous child-oriented classroom vision and was strikingly similar to the real ones she had seen. She wrote,

> My vision of my classroom is children engaged in numerous things around the room. It is messy, *not* neat little rows with children all listening to one teacher, but children engaged around the room involved in curriculum design and implementation. One group may be involved in constructing a volcano. They are working diligently, surrounded by books, notes, their diagrams of how they can make a volcano and have it erupt. Another pair is interested in bug identification and are surrounded by bug books and jars of bugs, charts, etc., to help them identify them. Two groups have spilled out into the hall, painting a mural for the play they have written. Another group is drawing body systems and learning about the systems of the body. One or two people are at the computer writing a story. Another group is engaging in conflict resolution. They have multiple ideas about how to proceed and are trying to resolve how they should go about it. Another group is constructing a space Challenger and above their area is a replica of the planets. A fieldtrip to the space museum is developed by this group for the class. Partners outside are measuring shadows of trees at different times throughout the day, recording and charting their data. There are multiple reading, writing, science, social studies, language arts skills, communication skills happening simultaneously in the room. Each child must also teach the rest of the class what they have learned. Children listen to one another, asking questions, constructing their own answers, making conjectures, revising, explaining...In this room parents come to help a group that's interested in working with tools and building something with them. The room is filled with materials, lists, questions, projects kids are directing. Kids are excited about their learning and other's. In this room, the student teacher is another head and pair of hands that helps facilitate and manage all these things going on at all times.

Courtney's vision was getting more specific. She could see areas of the classroom and even the hall where children were engrossed in learning tasks. She imagined the involvement of parents and a student teacher, necessary because of the multiple projects occurring at any one time. Children were resources for each other and were skilled in handling conflict when it arose. They were responsible participants in their own and other's learning. It was an active room but the noise was productive, purposeful.

Reflecting on what actually happened the past year in her classroom, Courtney figured that maybe half the school day was spent in activities that would resemble her ideal. She did start the day with a class meeting and she did spend a lot of time in mathematics with problem solving and forming conjectures. She read daily to the class and they took a good number of fieldtrips, including going to camp for a week. She surmised that she was moving closer to her vision each year.

*Defining boundaries.* To her chagrin, Courtney's struggles to develop a learning community classroom culture intensified during the 1992-93 school year. She moved to third grade with her class, so she was familiar with the curriculum and the age level. The changes she was trying so hard to make in her teaching practice continued to elude her, however, and she felt alone in her efforts.

By mid-September Courtney's characteristic beginning school optimism had subsided. In fact she wondered if she were the right person to follow this group of students for two years. Her doubts stemmed from the seeming lack of respect the children had for each other. In addition, Courtney was not happy with her relationship with a few of her students. The students accused her of not paying attention to them and Courtney took it to heart. Last year Courtney had to adjust to teaching alone without Peg for company. To fill the void, Courtney turned to her students as a source of social and emotional contact. She started questioning her relationship with some of the more problematic children when one of them said that another teacher was the best teacher in the world. She took this as a personal rejection and wondered what this other teacher was doing that she wasn't. She realized that she responded to this child's misbehavior with anger and was unsure why, but she did not know what to do to help this child anymore.

Courtney took her relationships with each of her students very seriously and in her journals frequently recorded observations of children's behavior, what they said, what they did, their moods, and with whom they interacted. She kept track of their behaviors over time and tried to figure out how to handle the children who drew attention to themselves in negative ways.

Courtney was also discouraged by some of the children's lack of effort in their schoolwork and their rejection of school in general. Some of the children were arguing, fighting, having temper tantrums, refusing to do their work, pushing their weight around, and walking out of class. The overall tone was disruption, hyper-activity, and impatience. Courtney wrote in her journal, "I'm feeling very defeated—very ineffective. What do I need to do to make this classroom work? Kids are not feeling free to talk about problems, risk asking each other questions, or problem solve."

Ruth talked to Courtney about the problems in the room. She asked Courtney a simple question: "What boundaries do the children have for making their choices?" Ruth pointed out that some of the children were making choices that were not conducive to learning such as sitting in a dark corner under a table to read a book. Courtney felt foolish. She realized she had talked about wanting her students to make choices but had not set any boundaries for appropriate decisions. She needed to help students make responsible choices, as Ruth put it. Ruth helped Courtney see that Courtney was a member of her classroom community and had a right to veto inappropriate decisions made by the children. Ruth observed that Courtney's class needed structure and suggested Courtney be proactive in her management—teaching students how to make choices that were legitimate. Ruth pointed out that Courtney needed to clarify in her own

mind what she wanted the children to do and what steps to take related to her curriculum and building the learning community culture.

Courtney re-envisioned what various class activities, such as class meeting and DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) time, should look like and what that meant in terms of establishing reasonable boundaries. She needed to re-think her goals for all the subject-matter areas to get clearer on what she really wanted her students to learn. She wondered, "What decisions are they going to have to make and how do I limit them so everyone is successful and can choose responsibly?" She knew she had to think about these things but how to enact them was still unclear to her.

On October 2, Courtney wrote,

> This was one of those Fridays from Hell! What happened? Why am I feeling so helpless, out of control, on the verge of a breakdown, able to cry at the slightest thing? What is going on? This is an emotional time for me. Is it all hormones or being a lousy teacher, over tired, unresponsive kids, or a combination of it all?

The day had started out by her being later than usual to school because she had to pick up a graduate assistant who was scheduled to observe her mathematics lesson that day. The mathematics graduate told her that maybe she should change the way she had planned to do math that day. Then Tracy, her student teacher that fall, did not show up. Courtney felt unsure about the direction for the morning. The bell rang and the children came bouncing in while Courtney was still writing the agenda on the board. They were loud and rambunctious. Before Courtney could calm them down, the class meeting facilitator started calling classmates up to the floor before everyone was ready, adding to the mounting chaos.

After Courtney confronted a couple children about their behavior, the class calmed down and moved through their class meeting. Then Courtney began

mathematics, feeling as if she was stumbling through her explanation of the task because she was not clear about what she wanted the children to do. The graduate assistant and Karen were observing the lesson in order to help Courtney examine her teaching. Karen tried to help by stepping into the lesson and saying that she did not think everyone knew what to do which prompted Courtney to realize the children were confused, but she was uncertain how to clear it up. It did not help to have the office call three times over the PA about lunch count and then another time to say that Tracy reported she would arrive later that morning. Each interruption opened the door for more disruptions in class. Finally, after Karen helped to explain the task, the children went back to their seats to work. The fooling around continued, however, and the noise went unabated. Tracy eventually arrived but worked with only one student rather than circulating to help keep all the children on task. When it came time to discuss the mathematics problem, the children jumped on each other and seemed to be looking only for the right answer rather than focus on the processes involved in solving the problem.

The day continued with the children's unfocused, restless behavior and Courtney's growing frustration and anger. At the end of it, Karen advised Courtney to clarify what she wanted her classroom to look and be like. How many times had Courtney heard and followed that advice? Once more, she wrote a vision.

> I want my class to be a place where exceptional learning and teaching by all members is going on; a place where we treat each other with kindness, both by our actions and our words. I want my kids to be able to make decisions and choices which are good for the group as well as themselves.

Unlike the activity-based image she had created during the summer, this time Courtney gave a concentrated view of the social and emotional climate she wanted to create as well as the inclusiveness of the learning environment. At church the following

Sunday, the reading said, "Write a clear vision and it will happen." Courtney thought

Karen had been prophetic when she said the same thing about what Courtney needed to

do to straighten out her classroom. Courtney resolved to get really structured when the

week began by starting with being outside when the morning bell rang and then moving

through the day with clear, concise directions. She would set rules and procedures

clearly and strictly. She planned the day thoroughly from beginning to end and Monday

went rather well.

Tuesday, however, was another bad day. There was a dead fish in the fish tank

and one child retrieved it as a helpful gesture. Before disposing of it, however, he waved

it in the faces of several children which started the morning off problematically. The

children proceeded to push and shove each other at the lunch chart. Courtney asked them

to sit down, and had them leave the room in order to re-enter in an appropriate way. She

then solicited ideas about how they could do the lunch chart in a safe and considerate

manner. Several children continued to be disruptive, however, calling each other names

and yelling. Courtney broke the class into three groups—Tracy, the student teacher, took

one, a PDS helper took another, and Courtney the third. Each group blamed others for

the uncooperative behaviors of the morning. The discussion stopped without a specific

resolution to the situation when they had to break for a scheduled activity. While the rest

of the day went a bit better for most children, one or two continued to act out, being

particularly unruly.

*Staying committed to change.* With determination and courage, Courtney

continued to tackle the seemingly insurmountable problems she faced in forming and

managing a learning community classroom where she could practice approaches to

teaching for understanding that she was learning in the several study groups and the PDS institutes, conferences and meetings she attended. Ruth and the university people who coordinated PDS work at Adams tried to provide Courtney with help and guidance when they could, but Courtney needed more consistent, sustained support than what was available. Although often feeling alone, Courtney's struggles were apparent to many of the staff. She looked tired, drawn, and depleted. One of the PDS university coordinators later observed, "She was struggling there for awhile. At the time, I don't think we were all that helpful to her."

Towards the end of April that year (1993), Courtney reflected in her journal on following her class for two years and what she had learned. It had not been the panacea she had envisioned. It did not correct all misbehaviors or resolve all problems. There were several positive outcomes, however, that she could identify. Because she already knew her students to a good extent, she felt freed up in some ways to focus her attention on her teaching practices. She could look at curriculum on a broader, two-year continuum. Her shy students were more at ease and out-going the second year when they knew her, the other children and the classroom routines. Courtney felt very connected to her students after two years. Being able to think about her class over the summer and what she wanted to do with them the second year had been more powerful for her because she knew the children and what they had learned the previous year. She did not have to spend so much time reviewing subject matter in the fall because she already knew the points in the curriculum that needed refreshing from the year before. She could assess more readily where children had regressed over the summer and where they had grown because she knew what progress they had made the year before. She observed that

some children who seemed to have little mathematical understanding in second grade had gained a lot of understanding in third grade, making up the difference. The two year period allowed her to watch children develop at their own pace, reaching a satisfactory level of intellectual growth by the end.

Most parents were supportive of the two years together, noting that adjustment to school had been easier for their children the second year because both they and their children knew what to expect. They said they felt more comfortable talking with Courtney the second year because they knew her. Many felt comfortable enough to call her at home if they had a concern. One parent felt especially positive because her child went through a difficult period during the beginning of the year and the parents thought that a new teacher would have judged the child on his behavior at the time rather than knowing that it was unusual. The parents felt that because Courtney had prior knowledge of the child, she knew he was not normally a problem child and the parents thought this most likely helped him come out of this period faster.

Courtney also thought that she could spot troublesome behavior patterns or deviations more quickly and could address them sooner. She acknowledged that the class had been a difficult one to keep for two years. There were many high need individuals in it. The dynamics of the class bothered her all along and she often thought about whether she did things inadvertently to encourage it or what she could have done differently to change it. She doubted that she had managed to challenge all her students. She wondered if the ones with high emotional needs might have done better with another teacher.

Courtney also recognized that she had experienced two rough years of learning and substantial change herself in which positive, negative, and confusing feelings played themselves out like a kaleidoscope. But in her characteristic way, in the end Courtney was accepting and upbeat about her experience. She wrote,

> I have enjoyed many, many parts of these last two years and look forward to doing it again. Hopefully, with all I've learned, maybe a lot better. But this is life and hopefully I have learned from my mistakes and successes.

Courtney reflected on her own learning and the changes she was making. She said she was looking at teaching and learning issues much differently. She was looking at child-centered teaching with a new lens, especially regarding management and strategies to deal with it. She said she learned that the interest, engagement, discourse and learning were in the task, thus the need to shape tasks that would elicit these elements. She learned that it was important to have a clear vision to create a classroom that functioned like a learning community. She acknowledged that she had not completely learned how to do that yet, but she felt she had started to figure it out. She learned that children know a lot about many things and that if she trusted them and listened carefully, they would tell her what they needed. She recognized that she was still learning to listen well enough to decipher what children meant. She was learning that the teacher needed to lead and be in charge so that the classroom could be child-oriented rather than child-controlled. She was also learning that in order to create a classroom learning community she needed to listen and respond to students' needs. She was learning that punishment is not effective in helping a child and that positive reinforcement, natural consequences and time outs were ways to get where she wanted to be with her class.

## The Gap between Vision and Reality Begins to Close

*Getting some help from colleagues.*   Courtney knew she needed help to figure out how to manage her classroom in the way she envisioned since she was not able to realize her vision by herself.  Within the PDS context, most teachers making changes in their practices worked with a study group, tried things out in their classrooms by themselves, then went back to the study group to reflect on what had happened. Courtney had tried this process for a couple years, listening intently at Core Team meetings, the PDS summer institutes, and in study groups that focused on learning about developing learning communities.  Still she did not know how to shape her classroom into a learning community that functioned fairly smoothly.  She reflected,

> I had the words but I didn't know how to connect them to anything.  I had heard about learning community, but it wasn't happening in my classroom.

An important factor in Courtney's ability to make changes in her approach to managing a more student-oriented, learning community classroom was talking to and observing Karen and Diane, Karen's former student teacher.  During Diane's student teaching, Ruth worked with Karen and Diane on developing Karen's mentoring skills. After her student teaching, Diane was hired as a PDS resource teacher at Adams.  With Ruth's guidance, in spring 1993, Courtney, Karen and Diane began to establish a special relationship in which Karen and Diane became mentors for Courtney.  Courtney had access to their classrooms and they hers.  Watching them in their classrooms helped Courtney see what she needed to do to make her learning community function in the way she envisioned.

Since Courtney, Karen, and Diane were accustomed to keeping journals, they decided that writing should serve as one piece of the discourse among them.  They wrote

journal entries almost every week, recording thoughts and reactions to their discussions and observations of each other. They exchanged their journal writings and responded to each other's entries either in writing or in subsequent conversations. The journals offered each of them a means of expressing some thoughts and feelings that were difficult to articulate in person.

In early March, 1993, Courtney took a day out for herself, even though there was a PDS institute to attend. She worked out with some exercise tapes and went for a run. She realized she had been so busy attending Kevin's and Andrea's sports activities, dealing with her mother's problems, or handling something else that she had not spent a Saturday just for herself since school started in September. She felt good doing some physical exercise that she enjoyed. As she relaxed, she could not keep from thinking about her classroom, however. She had been reading Dodson's (1978) book, *How to Discipline with Love: From Crib to College*, and watching Karen teach, listening carefully to how Karen talked to children to encourage positive behaviors. In thinking about this, Courtney wrote,

> I am coming to the conclusion that I have not known how to talk to children without sounding punitive, dictatorial, or demanding. This is really shocking and unsettling for me.

Courtney's unsettling realization that she did not know how to talk positively to children sharpened her observations of Karen and Diane. She liked the way Karen talked to children to convey that learning was serious work and no one had the right to disturb it. She liked the preciseness and directness with which Diane communicated to children what they were supposed to do and how to do it. She liked the way both Diane and Karen were calm and did not raise their voices when disciplining. She experimented with these strategies herself—even trying them with her teenagers at home. She realized that

her voice got loud when she was frustrated so she tried to whisper when she got too agitated and that calmed her down as well as her students. It was not easy—old modes of responses were hard to break. She wrote she was trying to,

> ...orchestrate or direct the actions and behaviors before they happen—like setting a stage by talking about what should take place, organizing it ahead and laying out the plan to the children so they have a clear idea about what it is they need to be doing and then trying to reinforce what I want to happen in positive ways instead of trying to pick up the pieces in the midst of the activity.

By concentrating on rewarding children's positive behaviors, Courtney felt better going home each day. She also thought that the children were responding very favorably, although there were still some children who misbehaved in ways that Courtney found hard to handle. Although Courtney could see some good coming from this positive approach, it still felt somewhat unnatural to her. She found herself repeating the same words and phrases. She wondered if her discomfort stemmed from newness of the approach for her or if she was still not clear enough on what behaviors she wanted to see. She also questioned whether she was modeling the behaviors that she wanted to foster. She wondered if the children had trouble being kind to each other because she, herself, did not model this behavior enough. She realized how powerful this approach was if her expectations for the children's behavior and her own behavior were complementary.

Ruth saw Courtney at the beginning of October and asked, "How is it going with you?" Courtney replied, "Good" and then backtracked. "My curriculum isn't flowing. It's awkward and feels like an imitation." She told Ruth about how hard it was to start over with a new group and wondered why this year was different from the many she had started. Courtney had written in her journal only a week earlier,

> I have a wonderful class this year. There are only 23 children. They are all nice kids. Why am I feeling such uneasiness? My curriculum seems contrived, unnatural, stiff, and clumsy. I keep getting flashbacks of last year's class, the noise level, the unsupportiveness, and I worry that this class will become like that.

Courtney was wary of having another year of turmoil and struggle. She felt awkward with her new class and wondered if it was due not only to having a new class but also because she was trying to figure out another piece of curriculum. While she was struggling with developing a learning community classroom, she also worked to change her mathematics and literacy teaching practices (see chapter 5). This year she wanted to focus on an additional area, the writing process, and wondered if she had the energy to do yet another subject-area change.

Shortly afterwards, Karen and Courtney talked about Courtney's perception of her role as the teacher and disciplinarian. Courtney reflected that she was often, "trying to pull the scene together instead of setting it up from the beginning." Karen responded that she thought it had to do with Courtney's role and how she used power. Karen thought that Courtney did not want to tell people what to do, trusting that children would do what they were supposed to without being told. Courtney reflected,

> Wow! Is that it? I am always disappointed when kids act mean to each other or don't follow our norms in the room or get carried away with working in groups and forget the task.

Courtney knew second graders needed lots of guidelines but she questioned if she really felt comfortable telling them what to do. For someone who usually followed another's lead and avoided conflict and direct confrontation, it was not easy to assume the role of disciplinarian who used power to guide and structure rather than compel and dominate. Courtney was also trying to figure out what her individual students needed to learn. She thought she was at a deeper level of understanding of what it meant to provide for individual differences. She was seeing what individual children needed to help them get started with an assignment, what she needed to do to help them engage in learning

rather than just enforcing consequences when they did not finish their work. A simple strategy she had learned was to just ask children who were not getting started what they needed in order to start. Courtney thought that there were so many things she was working on that she might be touching only the surface. While she had made gains, she knew she needed to continue to dig deeper into her learning.

In mid-November a couple things happened that helped Courtney see her role as a teacher in a classroom learning community more clearly. One of them was helping two children work through some antagonistic feelings. She listened to both of the children involved, acknowledged their anger with each other and then asked them how to remedy the situation. She said they could talk and then let her know what should be done. Within a few minutes they were friends again. In this instance she knew how to make the problem explicit and then gave the responsibility for resolving it to the children directly involved.

The other incident was one in which Courtney recognized the need for more structure and provided it with successful results. One day as the mathematics lesson started to crumble, Courtney said she was going to set a timer for 25 minutes. By the time it went off, the class was to have finished math and had their snack and break. The class responded by attending to their mathematics efficiently, finishing up with their snack and break on time.

Courtney thought that these two incidents might seem trivial to others but to her they "felt right" and signaled to her that she was beginning to understand when and how to provide the structure and guidance that children needed to accomplish something responsibly. She saw herself as the facilitator of these accomplishments rather than as a

policewoman or dictator. She felt she was getting a handle on how to pace things in the classroom, too, which had evaded her these last couple years. Before, the schedule was set for the school and she had to adjust her classroom schedule to it. Now she managed her own schedule, except for lunch time, so needed to learn how to pick up cues from the children that they were becoming tired, needed a break, or a change of pace. Even in subject-matter discussions, she was learning to convey the expectation that everyone was accountable for thinking about the ideas surfacing in the discussion, not just the people explaining their thinking.

The mentoring project had proceeded very tenuously during the spring and fall of 1993. Although Ruth had encouraged the three teachers to enter into this mentoring relationship, Karen and Diane did not know how to break the ice. Karen wanted to protect her relationship with Courtney so she did not want to seem too critical of Courtney's teaching. Diane also felt reticent to address Courtney's professional learning very directly. It was not until a confrontational discussion the three had during a lunch date they made during the 1993 winter break (described more fully in chapter 4) that they could talk more openly and directly with each other. Their confrontation opened the door for more serious mentoring based on critical conversation and examination of practice (Lord, 1994).

A few days after school resumed in January, 1994, Diane observed in Courtney's classroom and helped with the management by reinforcing children's appropriate behaviors. The class was doing a unit on immigration and Courtney was having the students label the continents on the map, which they seemed to enjoy. Courtney tried to be very specific with the directions, going slowly so everyone could complete the task.

Diane sat with one group who needed close attention. Between the labeling of each continent, there was a lot of talking and noise with a few children out of their seats. To continue to the next continent, Courtney needed to re-establish attention and order, which disrupted the flow of the lesson.

At lunchtime, Diane, Karen and Courtney talked about the lesson. Karen asked Courtney how she would teach this again so that she maintained classroom order. Diane mentioned setting expectations before beginning and Karen agreed. Courtney wondered how Karen knew exactly what she expected from the children.

> Did she think it out in her head? Does she plan it ahead of time? Does she have this 'moving picture' like an internal video of all the things that might go wrong and another version of how it should be with the right things to say to make that happen?

Courtney decided to write a script that she could draw upon when she resumed the lesson that afternoon.

> Some people write slower and we need to wait before going on. Sometimes it gets boring but it's important to sit and wait quietly. While you're waiting, practice reading the continent names. Sometimes there needs to be teacher instruction time. You need to listen, it's part of being in school. I don't mind giving reminders, but if I get ignored, I get upset.

When the afternoon began, Courtney returned the maps to the children and explained that they were going to use them to find the origin of the characters in the story they were reading. She delivered the script she had rehearsed about waiting patiently and listening. In retrospect, she thought she should have just abandoned the lesson then because the children were inattentive and restless. She proceeded, however, and as she worked through finding the countries on the map, the noise level got higher and higher. Even when she held out extra free time minutes as incentive to stay quiet and on task, the class clung to that for a few minutes and then got noisy and restless again. Courtney realized it was a more difficult task than she had anticipated and should have done a map

ahead of time to see what the task entailed. Courtney reflected, "The discussion at lunch with Diane and Karen sounded so good. I would go in and do these things and everything would fall into place." She acknowledged, however, that she lacked time to really think about the changes in her approach to the lesson. The class finished the task but Courtney felt defeated. Learning to structure lessons and anticipate the guidance children needed to accomplish complex tasks was arduous and exacting work. As the children finished, Courtney told them they could write, draw, or read quietly. She thought it was the best part of the afternoon.

Courtney reflected that the mentoring at lunch felt good because she received suggestions on how to change the way she approached setting expectations and realized she needed to plan these before actually teaching a lesson. Courtney expressed her greatest revelation from this experience, however, in her final words in her journal entry that day, "I need to find my own ways of doing this. Plugging in words just isn't enough!"

By late January Courtney began to feel like she was getting a handle on how to include children in making decisions about how their classroom would function at the same time that she also retained control in the process. The class had been very lackadaisical in cleaning up after "choice time" and paid no heed to her attempts to get them to do it more efficiently. Courtney talked to the class about the importance of putting things away in a timely manner and then pointed out that it seemed like the children did not think having choice time was very important. She told them they should each write her a letter about their feelings about choice time and if they thought it was important, they would need to convince her in their letters. She wrote one herself, also.

er sharing their letters, it was clear that the class highly valued choice time. They

ced about the responsibilities it involved in order for it to go well. After this episode,

urtney felt she had found a way to help the children see that they had some control

er what happened in the room, that it relied on people helping each other and on

ryone taking responsibility for themselves and that she had the power to guide this

d of student participation in the decision making.

Trying to help Courtney learn different ways to teach was not always comfortable

easy for Karen and Diane, even after they gained some momentum. In early March

)4, Courtney wrote that there was a feeling on Karen and Diane's part that they had let

urtney down. Karen and Diane expressed that they felt they had come into Courtney's

)m, messed around, and then pulled out without providing the support Courtney

ded. In looking back on their own learning, Karen and Diane realized that they had

nt a long, hard, intense year working very closely with Ruth to learn the intellectual

nension to planning and enacting innovative teaching. Courtney found the idea

ssuring that at one time Karen did not know how to do this kind of teaching either.

Courtney also felt that she was letting Karen and Diane down because she was

king such slow progress. Courtney felt bad that they were taking a lot of their time to

< with her, write journal entries to her, and come into her room when they had their

n things to do. She felt she was not giving them anything in return. Courtney wrote

t now, if a day went badly, she felt she was not only letting herself and her students

wn but also Karen and Diane who were trying all they knew to help her figure out how

do things differently.

The remainder of the spring had its ups and downs. She continued to do some self-talk about providing structure, verbal expectations and a serious stance about behavior. She noted that there were times when she felt clear about her role and being in charge, but at other times felt very dictatorial. She continued to try to find a balance between setting behavioral boundaries while giving children opportunities to take responsibility for their behaviors.

Courtney began to include more proactive strategies in her interactions with her students. She practiced looking them straight in the eye when she talked to them. She began to play with them during their break and recess times. She made the behaviors she wanted to see more explicit. She admired children's work more publicly.

At the urging of several people, Courtney wrote about the changes she thought she had made during the year. She felt at a different point in May than she had even a few months before when things had gone out of control again. She felt she had clarified her role as a teacher in a learning community. She clarified her thinking about what children needed in order to learn and she was more successful at transforming those ideas into actions. For example, in class meeting Courtney wanted her students to feel comfortable telling their stories and wanted students to listen to each other. She tried to set expectations for what should happen before the meeting started by stating what the class meeting should look like and sound like, behaviors the class talked about and agreed on previously. If someone misbehaved, Courtney thought about a way to signal that the behavior was inappropriate and what the student needed to do instead.

In late August 1994, Courtney met with Ruth, Karen and Diane to think about the direction the mentoring project should take that school year. They asked Courtney

directly what she wanted to work on in terms of her learning. Jumbled thoughts began to race through Courtney's head. Her palms began to sweat and her eyes dropped as a general feeling of nervousness took possession of her body. She recalled earlier discussions when she felt intimidated and stupid because she could not respond to their questions. She felt as if she needed a specific answer to their question, which they had repeated, and she did not have it. It was the familiar sense of not knowing what she wanted that overwhelmed her. She had started personal therapy that summer to address issues of autonomy and self-definition. She wanted to feel more decisive, less ambiguous, about controlling her life.

As Courtney thought about the question confronting her, some ideas slowly began to take shape. She saw clarification of her vision of her classroom as an issue—being able to see it clearly, articulate it, and break it into tasks to make it happen. She thought that she and Karen had already started this process. Karen had helped Courtney look at the details of the first day of school in terms of observing and assessing who were the new students and which of the returning ones were ready to go off in directions that might not be helpful. What were things that would engage the group or disturb the group? What were the things to say or ask for that set the tone for the learning community? Diane suggested that if things are not going the way Courtney wanted them to, she should simply stop and change the activity, telling the class that she didn't know what was happening, but the class needed to stop, think about it, solve it or move on to something else. Karen pointed out that Courtney needed to be aware of her own feelings and act on them rather than hide them to protect herself from something unnamed—hurt maybe. This was a powerful message for Courtney at the same time when she was trying

to understand her own self through personal therapy sessions she began that year. Karen and Diane helped Courtney see that if she stopped the class when things were not going well, then she sent a message about how the class worked but if she let things go, then she sent a message that anything goes in the classroom and that was not what Courtney wanted. They talked about the notion that Courtney tended to teach the norms in isolation rather than developing them in the context of subject-matter instruction and learning tasks. They went on to talk about Courtney's curriculum, how she could teach each subject and which pieces of management Courtney needed to anticipate.

*Working on sustaining the momentum.* As usual, Courtney fretted and worried about the first day of school for the 1994-95 year, but the moment she saw the children and their parents, she felt all right. This was the second year with these students. In her mind she held the adages she had gleaned from institute speakers and her summer reading. She recalled them as, "Children need to be called into a community and they need to discover over and over again that they have observations to make, stories to tell, lessons to teach," and "Look at what children can do, not at what they cannot do." (Carini, 1986)

The morning went smoothly and quietly. The afternoon was noisier but not disturbing. Courtney was relieved when the day was behind her and she could tell herself it went well. In fact the whole first week went smoothly in spite of having to adjust to getting up at 5:30 in the morning again. The class started on fantasy literature that had a dragon in the story. Courtney incorporated art into the activities and had children paint dragons. She talked to them about shape, texture, and points of view. She also taught

them some painting techniques. They looked at professional artists' depictions of dragons and read stories of knights who slew the beasts.

Courtney was also applying what she had learned about providing off task children with positive alternatives to their behavior. This year she began using a positive approach to management and children's inappropriate behavior from the start. One day one upset child started kicking his desk. He continued even after Courtney talked to him three times about it. Instead of sending him out of the room or trying to ignore the behavior, hoping it would pass as she often had done in the past, she went to the board and started writing down everyone's name who was doing what they were supposed to be doing. She kept saying that so and so was serious about learning, was listening, was waiting for others to share ideas, etc. Soon she had almost everyone's name on the board when the child who had continued to kick his desk stopped. Courtney had that feeling of success. She had figured out a way to handle the situation in a positive way. Even though she did not know if it would work when she tried it, she was not stuck, not able to come up with a strategy to attempt as she had been in the past. For her, this was a sign of progress and change in her teaching.

Some days, however, were a step backwards it seemed. For instance, one day in mid-September, the children were unruly coming into the room in the morning and refused to work on writing. Courtney hated to start the day with such a struggle. "What can I do to make this work? Why is this so hard?" she wondered. A few days later she had a class meeting in which she and the children talked about the changes that were happening in the class. They talked about the difficulties associated with change but Courtney made it clear that she would continue making changes and in the long run she

thought people would like the results. They talked about the separation that was becoming apparent between the children who were new to the class and the ones who were continuing from last year. "How did it feel to be left out? What could the class do about this problem?"

Karen overheard this class meeting, sent Courtney an encouraging note and talked with her about it later. She helped Courtney see how she could make the problem-solving sessions with her class even more open-ended so that the children could add their own perspectives, interpretations, and solutions. Karen told Courtney to pay attention to what she wanted to have happen in the room and let children know what she valued. They proceeded to discuss Courtney's plans for the next day and how she could manage the activities. Karen suggested some alterations in some of the activities so they allowed for more initiative by the children. She also helped Courtney think through the fine points of the management such as how to give clear directions and what rules to state before doing some activity.

Courtney went home with her head spinning from all that she and Karen had talked about, but the next day Courtney felt that she had a clear plan, especially after taking time to write it down. The day went well. Courtney kept things structured and was clear with her expectations. She attributed this success to having talked about her plans with Karen, then writing out her plans. She felt clear about what her role was—what she needed to do to make things happen as she envisioned. She was also clear about how to encourage children's appropriate participation and how to move from one thing to another. She could keep the behaviors of the few children who were uncooperative in perspective and deal with those better. She was able to help the children who had

difficulty getting into a task do something productive at an acceptable level. The studious atmosphere that permeated the class pleased Courtney.

Although Courtney was fairly consistent with her positive approach to management, some days and some children were more trying than others. Late in October, Courtney returned after having had a substitute in the class. Courtney knew that she would have to keep things very structured and use her management strategies to reinforce appropriate behaviors. In the afternoon the class was supposed to make name tags from wood but it took a long time to get children to listen to the directions. When they finally started working on their nametags, the room got so noisy and chaotic that Courtney had to stop the activity. She recognized that she needed to work on transition times with the class as well as getting children settled down and listening to directions quickly. She mentally inventoried the children in the class who were usually more disruptive than the others and also recognized that they needed her attention since she had been gone. She still had many questions about how to put together curriculum that was both relevant and interesting for the children and maintain a management approach that would keep most children on task most of the time.

In mid-November, the class went to camp. This was not just an opportunity to learn about nature and participate in outdoor activities but also an opportunity to continue developing the trust, respect, and responsibility that Courtney wanted to characterize her learning community. Courtney used the bus ride to camp to catch up on her journal. She was anxious that everything go well. They had spent a lot of time planning and usually when she took her class to camp things fell into place nicely, but she could never be too sure. Fortunately the week was successful. On the way back from camp she felt good.

She thought that something had been accomplished and things had turned out great. Getting back into the classroom routine after camp and Thanksgiving break, however, was not easy for several of the children.

In December, Courtney stopped by Karen's room to say good night. Karen looked discouraged and Courtney asked what was wrong. Karen talked about feeling like a failure; maybe she should not be teaching; she was not reaching her students. For Courtney this was familiar territory but hearing it from Karen was a surprise. She admired Karen for her courage to talk about her feelings and wondered how she could be supportive of her after all the help she had given Courtney. Karen was having particular difficulty engaging her students in genuine mathematics discourse. It seemed that the discussion time was simply a competition for turns rather than talk about mathematical ideas. Courtney remembered Karen always suggesting to her that she explain to her students how the discourse would operate—that some people might be at the board several times to explain their ideas while others only once. She offered these ideas back to Karen, using the reflective questioning that Karen had done with her. They were reversing their roles. Courtney had grown to the point where she could be Karen's mentor when needed. The collegial mentoring project had come full circle.

The day before winter break the class made gingerbread houses. Even though the task was frustrating and difficult, the children worked cooperatively and shared materials. Courtney was pleased with the progress she thought the class was making developing caring and trust. She had just written a list of learning community attributes in her journal to keep them visible. She recorded that a learning community has responsive curriculum and needs structures for discussion, validating ideas, learning, and listening.

In a learning community people take care of each other, help and ask for help. She reiterated, "Listen to children. What do they need? They will tell you." Courtney was getting better at listening to her children and providing the structures they needed to be responsible participants in their classroom community.

*Continuing to make progress.* Courtney noticed the changes she was making. In January 1995 she wrote,

> A year ago I was depressed. I felt like the most horrible teacher of the year. Every strategy, technique, or procedure I tried failed. I had no other recourse. I had Karen and Diane who were on my side. Otherwise, it was me against them, the class. I tried everything, anything. This year I feel much more confident and ready to go forward. Things don't go perfectly but I feel I have strategies to work through with my students-- what we need to learn and do together.

Courtney felt better about herself and her teaching. She was grateful for Karen and Diane's help. She thought one of the most important things she learned from last year was to think about specific children's problems separately from the group as a whole. She could then better clarify problems that arose and figure out how to address them. She was also learning to know children in ways that helped her connect curriculum to them. Karen and Diane helped her look at how she could provide the students who could move ahead and learn in positive ways with challenging learning tasks. By providing for this majority of students, she could also better concentrate on the children who needed closer attention. She wrote,

> I was learning who my learners were, what they needed [in order] to feel and to connect. I was learning to appreciate each child for him/her self. I remember breaking down and crying so many times last year in front of Karen and Diane, on the way home, or on the way to school. I didn't know what to do.

No longer feeling helpless, Courtney was learning to look at each child uniquely and holistically. Knowing her children better allowed her to shape the curriculum in ways that allowed them to connect to it at their level of understanding. Courtney

recognized that other factors also supported the progress she and the class were making.

She enumerated several in her journal:

- she had only 21 students in January after a couple moved
- some of her most troubled students moved during winter break
- since it was her second year with these students she knew more about what they needed
- if she couldn't figure out what a child needed she asked
- there is a building of trust over the past year and a half
- she liked the children
- she felt she had strategies to move on

With these factors in her favor, Courtney drew on her emerging knowledge when she decided to take the class sledding in January. Not everyone brought a sled and she anticipated problems. Rather than just provide extra sleds herself, she presented the situation to the class and opened it up to their discussion. She used a problem-solving framework she had learned in which the first step was to clearly identify the problem, then imagine the best possible ending, and finally think about the means to get as close as possible to that resolution.

The class identified the problem as not everyone having a sled and the best ending as everyone having a good time. They generated ways to achieve the ending such as sharing a sled, offering a sled to someone who did not have one to use, and encouraging those who needed a sled to ask for ones not being used. The sledding adventure turned out to be a lot of fun. Courtney loved how the class played together. People were laughing, frolicking and everyone was involved. She heard things like, "Would you like to use my sled?" "I'm going to go down the hill with X, would you like to use my sled?" Courtney thought that people showed they cared. If there was a spill, they asked if anyone was hurt and apologized for running into another sled. Children acted responsibly. They returned the sleds to the top of the hill that they borrowed and

continued to share rides all afternoon. Even the children who were the most problematic

in the classroom were sharing. People who needed a sled felt it was okay to ask for one.

Courtney hoped these acts of kindness and acceptance would carry over into the

classroom.

By spring Courtney had to tighten the rules and she felt overly directive. She

thought the children were not taking their work seriously. They dawdled, took advantage

of opportunities to manipulate situations to postpone learning, and picked at each other.

Courtney reminded herself that she needed to continue being explicit about expectations,

even through the final months of the year.

Courtney started with a new group of students in second grade the following fall,

1995. She had a busy classroom with the university pre-interns coming a couple times

during the week, the district gym and art teacher doing their stint at Adams at this time,

and students from the College of Music were coming to work with the class. Courtney

felt it was hard to bring everyone on board and make it all work cohesively. While she

felt her learning community slipping at times because of all the interruptions caused by

the coming and going of the additional people in her room, Courtney maintained a grip

on guiding its development. Although things were not perfect, the fall went better than

the past several through which she had struggled.

Courtney accepted an intern from the university this year after not having one for

a couple years. She was glad to have the help but more than that, she knew she learned

more herself by having someone to think with and talk to about professional issues and

concerns within the classroom. Courtney continued her involvement in study groups and

on the Core Team, for the most part finding them sources of information, professional

stimulation, and connections to colleagues. She also communicated more closely with the parents of her students through a parent journal she started, which became an important intervention for addressing questions and concerns. These and other factors highlighted in the chapters to follow worked together to eventually support Courtney's efforts to change her practice. To a good enough degree, she had learned how to put what she heard into action, how to speak the language with meaning rather than simply from memory to effect a change in the classroom culture. The reality of her classroom was coming closer to her vision.

In January, Courtney wrote that she thought the class was responding to her and her intern well. Yes, there were some emotionally needy students but there was not an emotional crisis everyday as there had been the past several years. Courtney felt calmer knowing that she had strategies to use when students needed special attention or misbehaved. She saw things a little more philosophically, which helped her put children's acting out in perspective. She wrote, "It's all in the journey, part of the process, to learn about each other and how we work together." She continued,

> One teacher and 27 students is so lonely and you can really start to doubt yourself. I wonder if it becomes survival. When you have a difficult class, things that used to work don't work anymore. Things drive you over the edge and things get harder and harder to deal with. Is that what happened to me that forced getting help from Karen, Diane and others? I do think that was part of it.

It was 1996. Courtney acknowledged that she had many things still to learn, but she was no longer discouraged, groping for ways to interact constructively with her students or muddling through attempts to teach innovatively that left everyone confused and frustrated. Although it had been tumultuous, she could look back and find value in the tremendous struggle she had endured to change her teaching practices. She knew that she was not done changing, but she felt good about the classroom culture she was able to

develop and where she was in her teaching practice. She had more good days than not and was able to take pleasure in her work. She wrote, "Mark B. asked me yesterday, 'Are you still excited about what you do?' I could honestly answer him, 'Yes!'"

# Chapter 4

## LEARNING TO FUNCTION AUTONOMOUSLY: THE STRUGGLE TO CLARIFY PERSONAL SELF-DEFINITION

> Courtney: This is all a part of a journey and these are all some of the pieces. There are pieces that I'd like to dig into deeper and figure out what they meant. Like these pieces about these friendships I had in school or these boys who lived next door and we did a lot together.
> SAS: When you think about school being an important place for you to connect socially...
> Courtney (laughing): Look at how I run my classroom now—social interactions, working with your peers. That's what I'm trying to create in my classroom. That's why this [learning community idea] has become so powerful for me these last five years.

When Courtney was young, she thought of herself as a tomboy, playing cowboys and Indians, climbing trees, and playing baseball with the neighborhood boys. She went through an "Annie Oakley phase" when she wore a cowgirl hat all the time until her father finally told her to take it off, claiming she would go bald. Courtney thought these childhood memories helped define who she thought she was and regretted that she had so few. She wondered why she did not have more than the ones that consciously existed. Curiously, two of the most vivid she could recall involved teachers rather than peers. One memory was of her second grade teacher publicly stating that Courtney had failed a phonics test. Courtney felt humiliated and ignorant, incapable of doing school work. She felt a personal sense of guilt not knowing the phonics. It was her fault that the teacher acknowledged her failure so publicly.

Another memory was more positive. Courtney had contacted whooping cough in fourth grade and missed approximately six weeks of school. She struggled with academics anyway, which her mother attributed to her beginning Kindergarten at the age of four because her November birthday just made the cutoff date for school enrollment, making her almost a year younger than most of her classmates. Because of her extended absence and her academic struggles, Courtney was retained and repeated the fourth grade. It was one of the best things that could have happened. Her second fourth-grade teacher was a very kind, sensitive woman. In contrast to Courtney's second-grade teacher, the fourth-grade teacher took care to not embarrass students in front of others. For instance, the teacher weighed the children once a month as a way to track their growth. Courtney was heavy for her age and felt very self-conscious about her size. Sensing this, the teacher always weighed Courtney out of sight of the other children, which Courtney greatly appreciated. In addition, this teacher cast Courtney in the role of the smart pig in the play, *The Three Little Pigs*, that the class performed. Courtney was impressed. She felt really important in this role. Courtney reasoned her teacher must think she was actually smart if she put her in this role. Courtney started to bloom under this teacher's caring attitude (Noddings, 1984). Even though Courtney was overweight, she started to feel good about herself. Just the year before she had told her mother she was going to kill herself with a kitchen knife. Her mother persuaded her not to and by her second fourth-grade experience, Courtney began to see herself differently.

## School as a Place to Find a Social Identity

By the second fourth-grade experience, Courtney's family had moved four times but all within the same town. Once settled in the house by the river that became her

home until she left for college, Courtney began to make friends who would form the basis of her important peer relationships for several years. Jenny, a heavy-set girl like Courtney, was the most prominent. Jenny invited Courtney into a colorful, young-adolescent world that Courtney had never envisioned. For instance, when they were in middle school, Jenny took Courtney to a high school basketball game. Courtney had never been to an event like this and suddenly her social world began to open up. She, Jenny, and a few other friends went to the games to walk around, as adolescents do so skillfully, to see and be seen. Jenny had slumber parties as well as almost every 45 rpm record ever produced. Jenny taught her friends how to dance the twist, the swim, and the pony. She ate potato chips with mustard and taught Courtney how to bleach her hair. In high school, Jenny was the first to get a car and she invited Courtney to spend time during the summer at her family's cottage on a lake. To Courtney, Jenny was rich, strong, outspoken, outlandish and fun to be with. For a shy, unassuming, less affluent girl like Courtney with little exposure to the world beyond her own family, Jenny was someone to be envied and emulated. She and Jenny remained friends well into high school.

Courtney's social world continued to expand when she met her first steady boyfriend, Ben, who fell in love with Courtney's lavender coat before he fell in love with Courtney. They dated for a couple years in high school, going to the high school dances, out to restaurants, and to other places Courtney had never been, like the boat show and the county fair. Ben was two years older than Courtney, graduating when she finished her sophomore year. They broke up when he went to college and Courtney felt a social and emotional void.

Courtney joined all the high school clubs and worked on the yearbook as well as the newspaper. Her popularity grew and she seemed to know everyone. She was basketball Homecoming queen and was voted most optimistic and most popular. She became friends with the other people who were involved in the same extra-curricular activities as she was. They were mostly a college-bound group of friends. Courtney was one of the few people in the group who was in the business track at school. She planned to be a secretary like her mother had been before marriage and did not envision herself attending college. She drew much of her identity from these newer friends, however, and they convinced her that she could and should go to college. When she told her father she wanted to go to college, he said that it would be a waste of time because she would only get married and she did not need college for that. Courtney was hurt by his response but applied to colleges in spite of it.

First she attended the local community college where she met Jim, her husband. In college she took some of the courses she missed in high school because she was not in the college track. She discovered areas like sociology that, for the first time, excited her intellectually. Previously, school for her meant making social connections, not intellectual discoveries. Academic learning was not her forte, but by the time she was in high school, she excelled in social skills. It was not until she took some college courses that piqued her curiosity that she began to think of school as a place for learning. She wrote her "jellyfish" paper (described in the Prologue) for one of these courses.

In short, Courtney traced her life history through the relationships she had with people from whom she drew her identity rather than by events, ideas or philosophies that influenced her thinking. The only thing she could remember about school prior to fourth

grade was failing the phonics test in second grade. After fourth grade, school became the place to connect to peers and learn how to get the attention she wanted through social means. Later, her peers called her vivacious, likable, empathic and socially skilled. She learned to smile at everyone as she walked through the high school halls. She learned how to parade around the school grounds, looking at the football players practice. She was experienced at walking through the bleachers at basketball games, only stepping on the toes of someone she wanted to notice her. It should not be a surprise, then, that years later she would try to create a culture in her own classroom that resonated with her inner sense that school was a place for social learning. In trying to develop a learning community in her classroom, she was attempting to provide opportunities for her students to interact in ways that would support a positive self-image and develop peer relationships that would foster confidence and self-esteem.

## Choosing a Career Identity by Default

Following community college Courtney went to a state university to complete a Bachelor's degree and later a Master's degree in education. It wasn't until late in her community college program, however, that she decided to become a teacher. When she entered community college Courtney focused on becoming a legal secretary. Then she took a job working in a landscape architect's office doing secretarial work and learned from experience that she did not want to spend her life doing that. She enjoyed the intellectual stimulation from her courses. Learning became interesting to her.

Courtney decided she wanted to go on for a Bachelor's degree but was undecided on a major with a career goal in mind. In the 1960s, few career choice options were available for women who adhered to the stereotypic female roles (Spencer, 1986). She

went to see a counselor at the community college who told her that with her chemistry grades she probably should not go into nursing. Courtney found blood and guts, even in the movies, unappealing anyway. Courtney did not know anything about social work or what social workers did. She said, "Even in my family, we didn't have a connection with a social worker." She knew what a teacher did, however. As Lortie (1975) highlights, almost everyone who has been a student thinks he or she knows what a teacher does. She had the highly positive experience with her fourth-grade teacher whom she credited with turning her self-image around. She also had teachers in high school she enjoyed. She liked children. She had done a lot of babysitting. There were no teachers in her family to follow, but becoming a teacher seemed like a good choice. Later, when she was well into her career, Courtney heard someone say that teachers were born, not made. She felt she wasn't born a teacher. She only just decided to become a teacher a couple years before she became certified. When she heard this notion, she wondered if it were really true and if so, what was she doing in this profession? Teaching did not just come to her naturally; she worked at it. She had to learn a lot to become a teacher. When she was having problems with her teaching she thought, "Maybe that's why [my teaching] isn't working real well. I wasn't born a teacher."

## Defining Herself through Dependent Relationships

Following college and her marriage a year later, Courtney's next significant relationship was with her teammate Peg. To Courtney, Peg seemed more like a "born" teacher. Courtney thought that Peg's classroom was more organized and quieter than hers. Peg seemed to get quality work from her students that went well beyond what Courtney got from hers. Courtney wanted to learn more about what Peg knew about how

to teach, but, true to the culture of teaching, they never talked about their professional

beliefs and practices (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986). Instead, they shared almost

everything about their personal lives, becoming close friends in the process.

Peg was there to help Courtney grieve when Courtney's first child died during the

last few hours of labor. She listened to Courtney's anguish when Courtney talked about

her next child, Andrea, being taken by Cesarean two months early because she was in

fetal distress. Andrea was rushed to a premature baby unit at another hospital that was

better equipped to treat her while Courtney had to remain at the birthing hospital

receiving daily reports about Andrea's progress, unable to see her until she was released a

week later. The pain and guilt that Courtney felt during that first week of separation

when she yearned to hold her new baby and touch her as a mother lingers with Courtney

even now, eighteen years later, when Andrea is a strong, attractive, self-assured young

woman.

Peg celebrated with Courtney when Courtney's son, Kevin, was born at full term

by Cesarean two years after Andrea. Courtney and Peg shared their ups and downs with

their marriages and they socialized as couples because their husbands got to know each

other, too. People who were new to Adams had a hard time remembering who was

Courtney and who was Peg because they were together so much and seemed so much

alike. It came as a shock to everyone, then, when Courtney and Peg severed their

relationship in what people later said was like an unexpected, bitter divorce.

The "divorce" began in late May, 1991, when Karen, Courtney, Peg, and another

Adams' teacher had a meeting to discuss restructuring. Karen, who taught second grade,

wanted to follow her students into third grade. She was supported by some university

people who wanted to see how continuity with one teacher would improve children's learning and the development of a classroom learning community culture. Each teacher gave her opinion of the options being considered. When it was Peg's turn, she said she preferred to keep teaching third grade but if she had to teach a split 2/3 she would agree to that. Courtney said that she had two "gut wrenching" fears—one that she would have to drop to second grade level and the other that she would not work with Peg. She had worked with Peg for at least twenty years. They had shared life experiences such as the throes of beginning teaching, pregnancies, deaths of children and parents, lack of money, moving, fixing up their homes, marital concerns, family outings, Friday night recreation. Courtney felt she could confide in Peg about any problem she had, especially personal ones. She sensed that Peg did not want to change either, yet Karen's teammate had said something interesting. She said that she was not Karen's caretaker and Courtney realized that that applied to her relationship with Peg, too. She wasn't Peg's caretaker, nor was Peg hers. Courtney's note, "Change is painful," in the margin of her journal was prophetic.

Feeling that she lacked decisiveness, constructive problem solving skills, and the gumption to speak her mind, Courtney was already in a process of self-appraisal. She wanted to learn more about who she was and what she thought as a distinct individual. Peg appeared to be the dominant member of the team and Courtney was beginning to see this during the year before their separation. Courtney wanted to become more self-defined. Perhaps this was a mitigating factor in the divorce that was hidden from the participants at the time. In any case, the divorce seemed entirely unexpected, sudden, and incomprehensible when it happened. Although Courtney and Peg's relationship

experienced tension in the preceding year and they did not meet socially as frequently as they had, it seemed inevitable that they would continue teaming.

After the discussion about restructuring so that Karen and possibly Courtney could follow their students for two years, Courtney wrestled with what she should do. She and Peg decided to go to lunch to discuss the situation. Courtney talked about her concern of going to second grade and having to learn a whole new curriculum and new age level. At the same time, she was also concerned that if she and Peg stayed as a team, they needed to talk about how to approach their curriculum and working together differently. Courtney expressed her fear of changing and Peg said that she wanted to continue teaming. Courtney was glad she and Peg took the time to talk. Later that day when Karen asked Courtney what she had decided, Courtney said she did not want to change. She was worried about parents' perceptions, about her lack of knowledge of second graders, and her lack of confidence in knowing the second grade curriculum. When she left school that day, she told Bob, Karen, and Peg how she felt.

On the drive home, the lump in Courtney's stomach that had been there all day had subsided a bit but in its place was a nagging fear of disappointment—of letting herself down. She felt she was back in the old pattern of letting Peg do her thinking and talking for her. She wondered if it were possible to change and do her own thinking and talking if she stayed where she was. Was her decision based on fear of not wanting to hurt Peg, she wondered? This would certainly reinforce what she was coming to understand as a major motivation in her functioning with others all her life. She never wanted to upset other people. She felt it was her fault when people argued or got angry. She capitulated to others rather than risk disagreement.

The next day, which was the last day of school, Bob told Courtney there was a meeting before school at 8:00 to talk more about the restructuring. Karen began by saying that she really wanted to follow her students to third grade to look at learning patterns, continuous curriculum, and the possibility for some multi-age grouping with a teacher who would teach second grade with that idea as well. She hoped Courtney would accept that position. Courtney told the group about her feelings as she had driven home the day before. She was disappointed in herself and thought that a change would actually be good. She was concerned about how Peg would feel. She had been mulling over what she had heard about change being risky and difficult but that it could be the beginning of growth. Karen said she thought Courtney intended to shift and teach second grade. Peg was surprised that Courtney had changed her mind.

Tension and anger was building among the participants at the meeting. Abruptly the morning bell rang and time ran out on the note that Courtney would teach second grade next year. The teachers had to go greet their students without dissipating the emotional charges that the discussion had generated. Courtney and Peg returned to their classrooms in thick silence. The air of conflict in the meeting seemed to seep into their work. During the long day, they talked only of procedural things. If Courtney asked a question Peg answered. Courtney thought it was the longest day of her life. She hoped when the situation settled down, she and Peg would be able to salvage their relationship.

Bob called another meeting after school in which participants presented different interpretations of the restructuring. To Peg it was apparent that Karen pushed for moving to third grade with her students. Karen acknowledged that she was determined to try this out and presented sound reasons for it. In the end, Karen's determination prevailed. She

would teach third grade with her current group of children and Courtney would move to second grade, keeping that group of children for third grade the following year, thus creating a cycle and a partnership between Karen and Courtney that could open up possibilities for working together on curriculum development, sustaining a learning community classroom culture, and studying children as learners over a longer period of time.

In the aftermath, Peg felt angry and hurt that Courtney had not talked to her about her change in thinking. Courtney felt it was the right decision for her but regretted the swiftness with which it was done and the fact that the 8:00 meeting on the last day of school had caught them all in a whirlwind of pressure to bring closure to this issue. School was over, the students were gone, and the summer preparations, including PDS academies and meetings, for the next school year would begin shortly. Courtney and Peg made little time or conversation for each other for years to come.

**Defining Herself in Relationships with Professional Colleagues**

In the fall of 1991, Courtney taught second grade for the first time in a score of years. She was alone, except for the student teacher she had that year. Courtney and Karen had adjoining rooms with a common moveable wall, but if they opened it at all, it was just space enough for Courtney and Karen to move between their rooms, which they seldom did except at lunchtime. Karen taught third grade that year, keeping her students from the previous year as planned. Thus, she and Courtney did not share a common curriculum or have students at the same grade level. Yet there was some vague expectation that they would somehow work together because they had both disengaged

themselves from their previous teaching partners in order to reconfigure the way they moved through two years with their students.

Courtney and Karen already knew each other because of their work together on the Core Team. They had both experienced the staff's animosity towards the Core Team members for seeming to keep their work secret and their conversations exclusive. Karen was seen as a "rebel" anyway because she often was the first to try out new practices and suggest alternative ways to having a classroom function. She attracted the attention of the university people because she was willing to take risks in her teaching and she not only welcomed opportunities to talk about her practice, she was also insightful and articulate. Karen had the courage to question the school routines, procedures and norms that seemed obstacles to making changes at the school and classroom levels. Courtney admired Karen for her ability to take a stance and express her opinions with conviction. She wished she could do the same. She also recognized that even though Karen had not been teaching as long as she, Karen knew a lot about working with children and designing curriculum that responded to her students' intellectual and social levels of understanding. Karen was not afraid to venture into unknown teaching territory such as the conceptual teaching approaches they were hearing about through the PDS academies and school study groups. Courtney was trying to use these ideas in her teaching, too, but she was struggling with how to do it much more than Karen.

For these reasons, Courtney thought that she could learn a lot from Karen about developing learning community classroom cultures and teaching for understanding. She welcomed the opportunity to get to know Karen better and observe her teaching more closely, even if only through a slight opening in the moveable wall between their rooms.

Several staff members thought that Courtney was only shifting her previous dependency on Peg to Karen. They thought that Courtney would soon find herself in Karen's shadow, trying to teach just like her. Courtney, however, saw the opportunity to get to know and work with Karen differently. She said,

> With Peg I wanted all things. She was my best friend, she was my sister. But there was a different purpose in mind and that had to do with acceptance, I think. For my own personal acceptance. With Karen it's not the social piece, not that acceptance piece. It's more [a relationship] with a colleague that I can think with about this complex thing called teaching. It's about how to get smarter about working in the classroom. It's about how to get smarter about communicating. It's about questions—pushing myself, me, Courtney Hanks, into the intellectual part of teaching. I think I can gain that by being a colleague with Karen.

In her relationship with Karen, Courtney was looking for a professional colleague who would join her in exploring the questions inherent in conceptually based approaches to teaching and learning (Little, 1987; Lord, 1994). She was determined not to develop a personal dependency with Karen built on her desire for acceptance. She knew as she was going through the process of deciding to end her teaming with Peg, that she wanted to be able to function more independently, more autonomously, as a way to force herself into positions of having to think for herself. Partly it was a personal search for who she was and what she believed in. What she had not anticipated in terminating her teaming with Peg was that it would also result in the termination of their long and valued friendship. No one quite understood the abruptness and brusqueness of that early morning meeting where it was announced that Courtney and Karen had decided to move into a cycle of keeping their students for two years. But everyone agreed that the decision could have been handled much more sensitively and professionally.

As it was, for the school year 1991-92, Courtney found herself estranged from Peg with no one else on the staff to connect to very readily. She had to learn a new grade level curriculum, figure out who second graders were as students and children, and

continue to try to change the focus of her teaching from teacher-directed and telling to student-responsive and socially constructed (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Wertsch, 1989). Although she participated in a number of PDS sponsored study groups that gave her some support, Courtney was not singled out for individual attention like Karen was. Karen was available to her, however, and Karen, feeling somewhat a loner on the faculty, welcomed Courtney's acquaintance.

Karen's student teacher that year, Diane, was especially precocious. She was not a typical student teacher in that she was in her 30s with a family of her own. Like many schools, it was customary at Adams for teachers to gather in the teachers' lounge for eating and talking at lunchtime. Soon after school began, however, Karen and Diane decided to eat their lunch in their classroom. They wanted to be able to have time to talk about teaching and learning occurring in their classroom. Lunchtime was convenient and their classroom was quiet so they started to eat and talk there regularly.

Courtney noticed that Karen and Diane spent a lot of their non-teaching time in serious conversation about professional practice. Courtney saw Diane, under Karen's tutelage, learning not only about teaching but also how to look at and talk about her own practice. She wanted to participate, too, so she started joining them at lunchtime. The three of them frequently spent their lunch break eating and talking about their teaching. It was one of the building blocks of a professional relationship between the three of them that would grow and support their learning over the next several years.

A professional development opportunity arose that brought Courtney, Karen and Diane into closer professional contact. This was an invitation to join a study group at the university focused on teaching mathematics for understanding. Led by a university

professor, the group was funded by a research center, not by the PDS initiative. Through the group Courtney connected not only with other teachers who were experimenting with teaching for understanding but also with mathematics as subject matter and with herself as she became an outspoken participant.

## Defining Her Voice through Professional Inquiry with Colleagues

In fall, 1991, a university teacher educator, Lee, was interested in working with a group of teachers to look at videotapes of mathematics teaching for understanding to see how teachers might benefit from these and other materials available for helping them learn to teach mathematics conceptually. Lee contacted Karen, whom she knew, and Karen talked to Courtney and Diane. They decided to join the group. (After completing her degree, Diane continued working at Adams where she was hired with PDS funds to provide teachers at Adams with what was called "reallocated time.")[6]

Courtney was already having students discuss mathematical problems, focusing on a few problems rather than assigning a page or two of repetitive ones in the textbook (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1989, 1991). She incorporated the use of manipulative materials to help children work more concretely with mathematics concepts. At PDS summer institutes, she saw videotapes of Deborah Ball guiding third graders in sophisticated discussions of mathematical ideas.[7] Courtney thought that the children in the videotapes grasped the mathematics with much more understanding than when taught to simply memorize an algorithm and plug in numbers. She saw the teacher in a different role—a facilitator and guide to learning rather than simply a purveyor of

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[6] Reallocated time was a way to restructure time for teachers so that they could participate in professional activities away from their classrooms during the school day.

[7] While a researcher in mathematics education at Michigan State University, Deborah Ball spent a year videotaping her mathematics teaching in a third grade classroom and keeping a detailed journal about her teaching and the children's responses to the mathematics problems she posed. She engaged the students in extensive discourse about the problems and mathematics concepts they engendered.

mathematical recipes. In addition, Courtney thought the discussions among the students

reflected norms of a learning community culture that were still evading her grasp. Thus,

she wanted to move her mathematics teaching in this direction.

When Karen told Courtney about the Teaching Mathematics for Understanding

(TMU) group, Courtney decided to see what it was about. Although the group was not

sponsored by PDS, several of the teachers who joined came from schools that were PDSs.

It was a rather small group, less than 10 teachers, a few graduate assistants who

documented the work of the group, and Lee, the university professor who organized the

group. Courtney went partly because she wanted to learn more about teaching

mathematics for understanding and partly because Karen and Diane were going and she

wanted to join them.

The group had a problem. Most of the teacher participants were intimidated by

doing mathematics themselves and uncomfortable exposing their thinking to others.

They not only were expected to talk about approaching mathematics teaching and

learning from a conceptual stance but they also did mathematical problems so that they

could discuss the mathematical ideas involved from first-hand experience. Most of the

participants had difficulty admitting that they did not understand the mathematics

involved in the problems they worked on.

Although Courtney was not very vocal in groups, she was one of the first to speak

out about the confusions her students had when she was trying to help them discuss a

problem and her inability to guide them through the misconceptions to some better

understanding of the concepts involved. This confession was an unusual move for

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The students prepared for these discussions by writing about the problem that Ball posed in their own mathematics notebooks, diagramming and working through solutions that they would then present during the discussion of the problem.

Courtney. She was not used to admitting publicly that both she and her students were confused. With the ice broken, the group began to coalesce. After the meetings, Courtney, Karen, and Diane would stand out in the university parking lot and talk about what went on in the meeting. This shared experience added to the professional relationship that was growing among them.

The group was supposed to stop at winter break but they entertained the option of continuing to meet. All the members thought about it over the break. They had not been satisfied with the mathematics content they had addressed, negative numbers, but most felt that the discussions they had in the group were making them think about teaching mathematics in new ways and they were beginning to feel attached to the group as a place where they could confront some of their own teaching problems with honesty and support from colleagues. For Courtney, although she felt somewhat ambivalent about continuing with the group, there was a budding sense of belonging to a group of people who shared her interest in learning to teach differently and who also seemed not to have all the answers about how to do that. She felt the absence of Peg's friendship acutely so the camaraderie of the group was an antidote to her sense of loss as well. At the same time, she was expressing some of her thinking and needs in the group and finding a voice that she had suppressed for a long time.

From its shaky beginning, the group evolved over several years of functioning into a place where Courtney felt free to express her feelings about her inability to understand some of the mathematical explanations presented by group members and her feelings of inadequacy in teaching mathematics for understanding. The group developed the trust necessary for Courtney to offer her ideas and even counter other's thinking with

her own. It was truly a learning community and Courtney awakened to how it felt to belong to and build the norms for such a culture. Looking back, Courtney recognized that this group had a profound affect on her understanding of what a learning community was in reality and on finding her voice and herself in her voice.

As the TMU group developed over the next couple years (1992-94), so, too did Courtney's relationship with Karen and Diane. Courtney, Karen and Diane valued their talk about their teaching and their questions about practice. Often their conversations at school focused on mathematics teaching since they were all in the TMU group. They also talked about other subject-matter areas, however, since they were trying to teach conceptually in all of them. Amongst the three of them, it was okay to admit uncertainties about how to teach something and talk through the situation. They continued to have conversations during their lunchtime frequently.

As Courtney got more and more entangled in management problems, it became obvious to Karen and Diane that she needed help in working through the growing quagmire. It not only affected her ability to sustain a mathematics discussion during a lesson, but interfered with Courtney's attempts to change to teaching for understanding in other subjects. Diane knew what the class was like when Courtney taught because, as the reallocated time teacher, she went in Courtney's classroom to help out. Karen knew what was happening in Courtney's classroom because, through the moveable common wall, she could hear the noise and Courtney's voice above it. Additionally, Courtney looked drawn, tired, and even depressed. Other staff members noticed it, too. Karen observed that frequently after school Courtney was in her room with the lights out, just sitting and occasionally in tears.

**Defining Her Professional Self through Mentoring from Peers**

By spring, 1993, Courtney and Karen had developed a close professional

relationship. Courtney looked at Karen's teaching as a model for her own so it seemed

logical that Karen, who had been developing her mentoring skills for several years, could

help Courtney. Since Diane was still the reallocated time teacher at Adams and

continued to work closely with Karen and Courtney, she became involved as well. With

Ruth's encouragement and direction, they decided that Karen, with help from Diane,

would act as a mentor for Courtney, taking time to talk specifically about Courtney's

teaching, observing her teaching occasionally, and coaching her through the problems

that arose. Because they had already formed a professional relationship in which they

felt free to talk about and question each other about teaching, this project to help

Courtney was feasible to them. It was risky because Courtney was the most experienced

of the three teachers and as the most experienced, she was supposed to know the most

about teaching and learning and should be in the position to mentor the other two not vice

versa. It was also risky because it meant Courtney had to open up her practice to the

scrutiny of colleagues, even though they had already shared much about their teaching

practices and their beliefs about teaching and learning. This was uncharted territory in

the culture of teaching in which non-interference is the norm (Lortie, 1975; Feiman-

Nemser & Floden, 1986;). No one knew quite how to proceed.

None of the three participants knew what to do to get the conversation started in

an open, honest, and helpful way without jeopardizing the camaraderie they felt in their

relationship. No one wanted to hurt anyone's feelings. They were already a group apart

from the rest of the staff. For Karen, Courtney was the only regular faculty member she

felt was a friend at school and she did not want to risk losing that friendship by hurting Courtney's feelings. Thus, Karen avoided talking too directly to Courtney about Courtney's management problems. In addition, with all the other projects and study groups occurring at Adams as part of PDS work and other efforts like the TMU group, there simply was not enough time to concentrate on yet another endeavor that, to do it well, deserved focused attention. Because of these barriers, the project to mentor Courtney limped along during the spring and following fall of 1993. Then a critical event happened that would provide the turning point needed to mentor Courtney in earnest.

During the winter break in December 1993, Courtney, Karen, and Diane decided to meet for lunch at a favorite restaurant just for fun. They had not done something like this before that verged more on developing a personal dimension to their relationship, but also Karen and Diane had decided that maybe by getting to know Courtney better in a social context, they would find a way to enhance their mentoring relationship. At lunch they talked about themselves as people, their families, and even shared some personal confidences. Eventually the conversation turned to professional matters. Courtney started to talk about a unit she was teaching on immigration. She wanted students to accept each other's differences and learn to be tolerant of people. The immigration unit would provide some opportunities to talk about students' racial, ethnic, and cultural differences, but Courtney was not confident that she could do it in a way that would genuinely touch the children.

Karen said that she thought the unit sounded like a good idea and she did not know how to teach about prejudice and tolerance either. Courtney pounced on her. She said quite directly, "Oh yes you do, Karen, and I want to learn how to do it from you!"

The aggressive nature of Courtney's response to Karen caught everyone by surprise. This was not the mild-tempered, unassertive person they were used to. Courtney was speaking out for herself and demanding that Karen reveal what she knew and seemed to do well in her classroom. It was the opening for Karen to become Courtney's mentor that they had been skirting around since the prior spring. Karen felt forced to dig into her thinking about how she taught and explain it to Courtney. Working with Ruth, she had learned to do this with Diane when Diane was her student teacher. Ruth helped both of them learn to question and make their thinking explicit. Since then, Karen had been continuing to learn how to articulate her thinking about teaching and learning, especially related to her work with a student teacher. She had learned not only how to talk about her own ways of thinking and doing teaching but also how to question her student teacher's thinking to push that in directions that helped them clarify purposes and actions. Helping Courtney hinged on Karen's ability to apply her mentoring knowledge to Courtney's situation.

When Courtney challenged Karen at their holiday lunch, Karen began talking explicitly about how she purposely looked for opportunities both in classroom situations and in subject-matter content that would allow for addressing concerns about prejudice and for teaching tolerance. Courtney's insistence forced Karen to examine what she did and talk about it in ways that would help someone else learn from her thinking and her examples. Under Ruth's guidance, Diane had learned how to ask Karen questions that would open up Karen's thinking and expose it for the purpose of helping Diane learn to teach. Teaching an experienced teacher to do that did not seem obvious to them until Courtney forced the issue at their luncheon. It was as much an opportunity for Karen to

articulate what she knew as it was an opportunity for Courtney to experience the success of asking for what she needed. By learning to ask questions that probed her colleagues' thinking, Courtney provided opportunities for herself to learn from their thoughts.

When the three teachers returned to school after the break, Karen and Diane were ready to help Courtney design the immigration unit and think through the management of the learning tasks and activities. The mentoring relationship began functioning in earnest. Karen and Diane observed Courtney's teaching and spent time helping her examine what was happening in her room. Karen helped Courtney look more closely at her students in order to design responsive curriculum. Courtney noted, "I would look at the curriculum and she would say, 'No, we're going to look at what X needs today in order to get on with his learning.'" As the mentoring connection developed among the three participants over the next year, Courtney also grew in her ability to look closely at her teaching practice and articulate its facets with rich detail. As she became better able to develop a learning community in her classroom, she also became more aware of her role in shaping and guiding it. From Karen, she learned to ask questions that would push her thinking and clarify how to enact her visions. The relationship eventually became reciprocal. When Karen experienced some difficulties in her teaching, Courtney became the mentor, asking Karen the kinds of questions that Karen had used to help Courtney change her practices. This mentoring relationship, then, was another important relationship in which Courtney learned to articulate and assert questions about practice that eventually led her to see herself more clearly and confidently as a reform-minded teacher and viable participant in critical colleagueships (Lord, 1994).

**Defining Herself and Discovering Her Voice Through Writing**

Courtney's search for greater self-definition was supported not only by relationships with friends and professional colleagues but also by looking inward. She was trying to connect with herself, her childhood memories, her self-identity. In searching for this connection, she also was searching for a voice that would function in both her personal and professional life to explain her thinking, ask questions, and challenge ideas. She noted,

> Even as close as last year [1995-96], I was still fumbling with ways to talk about what I was doing in my classroom and how I was having success doing what I was doing because I was coming off four hard years…and I kept questioning what I was trying. It was real rough, and it was messy. What I was trying was real messy so it wasn't clear. I didn't know how to talk about it in depth.

Courtney wanted to talk about her teaching and the messy process of changing her practice with clarity and depth. In retrospect, she realized that the only way she could move forward in her effort to become an articulate teacher herself was to sever her relationship with Peg. She saw that she had repressed her voice and self because she let Peg do the talking and decision-making for both of them. At home, she also suppressed her voice because she didn't want to upset her husband. She usually acquiesced to what he wanted to do rather than assert her own desires. She did not know how to talk to him in ways that would open up conversation rather than shut it down or get him angry. Although he supported her professional career, he seemed uninterested in her work so she seldom talked about school with him.

Through the PDS work and in talking with other women, such as Karen, Courtney heard about the suppression of women's voices in both personal and professional domains (see, for example Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1977; Grumet, 1988; Heilbrun, 1988). She started to think about herself, her tendency to

follow other people's lead, her need to avoid conflict, her inability to confront others with opinions and ideas that might differ from theirs or her hesitancy to ask questions that might be interpreted as criticism or confrontation.

Courtney read books and listened to self-help audiotapes, especially on her commute to and from school, to build her confidence and self-esteem. At the same time, she searched inward for childhood memories to help her figure out more about who she was and what she believed in. It surprised and bothered her that she had only a few memories from her elementary school years. She wanted to be able to tell her own children stories from her past but she thought that she didn't have any to tell. Her parents did not tell family stories either, unlike Jim's family who told lots of family stories that helped to give some definition to who they were. Courtney felt that she did not have that kind of self-definition. Without memories that were the basis for stories, she felt she lacked a key to defining who she was, what had shaped her, and what had formed the groundwork for some of her beliefs and responses to life. Somewhere she heard the phrase, "Life is made up of stories, not atoms." Firmly believing this, she sought, sometimes with the help of a therapist she saw during 1994-95, the stories she was missing and also created stories for herself, her two children, and her students so they would have stories to tell.

> My stories were coming out with the counselor...so stories were becoming very powerful—the stories we tell along the way. And I would try to get my students to tell their stories in their journals every morning. I would say, 'What is your story for today?' I didn't mean a fantasy story. I meant what happened to you between yesterday and today? What are the things that happened in your life? Those are your stories. So that phrase was real powerful for me. Life is made up of your stories...This isn't just passage through time for me...What you're doing right now is a part of you.

Courtney felt the power of exploring and knowing herself through digging up stories of her life that she thought were lost. She also discovered that writing journals

was one way to keep a record of happenings. It was a way to record memories, important ones and common ones, that could become stories. When the PDS effort began at Adams, the university people encouraged everyone to keep a journal. Courtney decided to try it and found it was an outlet for her. She did not write in her journal faithfully everyday, but she wrote often enough to keep track of how she was thinking about the ideas she was hearing and how she could change her practice to reflect these ideas.

By the 1993-94 school year, Courtney was keeping journals about work of the mentors circle, the Core Team, the development of a learning community in her classroom, the TMU group, the mathematics they were doing, and about the mentoring she was getting from Karen and Diane. She also kept notes on classroom discussions and particular situations in which children misbehaved in class. At any given time, she often had two or three notebooks in which she recorded her thoughts, observations, frustrations, and satisfactions. Writing became a tool for clarifying her thinking, figuring out what she wanted and articulating what she believed in. She started accumulating memories in her journals from which she could shape stories of herself and her teaching practice.

Courtney also started using journals in her classroom. The writing process was one focus of the PDS literacy work so Courtney began incorporating some writing into her literacy curriculum. As Courtney pondered the power of keeping journals for herself as a tool to record memories, she also realized that she wanted her students to be able to recall memories as stories of their school days and if they wrote a journal, they would have these memories intact. By the 1994-95 school year, Courtney's class devoted time to journal writing almost every morning. Courtney stressed that a story could be made

from what seemed like the most insignificant incidents, such as walking to school in the morning. During writing time Courtney also wrote her own stories, recording memories both as a model for her students but also as a way to practice shaping them into stories that could be told as keepsakes. For instance, one day during writing time she wrote her recollection of a birthday gift that became her protector.

> It had a red head with large, dark, sad eyes, pointed nose, long droopy ears and a plaid body. It fit in my lap hanging over the sides of each of my thighs. It was the first stuffed animal I owned myself. Mom had taken me to the city and I was allowed to pick out one present for my birthday. There wasn't much money, but a birthday was special. Holding my big red dog in my lap as I sat in the front seat, both arms wrapped lightly around this precious cargo, I looked out over the dash. On the front windshield, snow was falling heavily on the glass. The wipers were burdened with an accumulation of a heavy white line. The inside of the car was tensely quiet as the three of us sat quietly looking out of the window. Suddenly the car swung around, back and forth. It crashed abruptly into a telephone poll. The nose of the car pointed to a ditch. I was thrust forward to the windshield, but my protector, my newest precious cargo, had saved my life. It prevented me from being thrown through the windshield.

Courtney valued writing for herself and her students. She and her students created stories from simple memories that helped her and, she hoped, her students see themselves as people with stories to tell that helped to define who they were. Courtney wanted to become better at writing and helping her students learn to write. She heard about a special summer program at the university for teachers to improve their own writing and apply what they learned in their classrooms. She decided to apply for the 1995 summer program. This was something she was ready to do on her own. She did not tell Karen or Diane that she was applying; she just went ahead and did it by herself. She was somewhat surprised that she was accepted.

***Teacher Writing Project.*** Courtney thought the introductory dinner for the Teacher Writing Project was somewhat like a religious revival meeting. She had received her acceptance to the project and dinner invitation after faxing her application on the day they were due and enduring an interview with other teachers that same

afternoon. She went to the dinner with trepidation, not knowing if there would be anyone else there that she knew. This was unlike her—to enter into a major endeavor by herself. She was exercising a fragile but growing sense of autonomy. As she walked into the room she noticed the tables set formally for dinner with seating assignments. Courtney found her table and reminded herself that what she needed to do was make polite conversation with whoever sat there.

The welcoming speech by the project director was peppered with jokes and laughter shared only by the "inner circle" of key players. Courtney was definitely a member of the outer circle, trying to look engaged and connected but feeling much the opposite. The participants were asked to introduce themselves. This was when it took on the tones of a revival meeting. The past participants who were there started making long and powerful explanations about how they had come to be in that room that night. They said they had received something into their lives from the project that transformed them into something more than they had been. Courtney felt skeptical. She wondered, "Will I be the first project flunky? Non-believer? Someone who doesn't get the spirit? Oh, I hope not."

When it came time for her to introduce herself, she stood up, said her name, her school and grade level and sat down. "How stupid," she thought. "Why didn't I stand poised and confident and talk about some of the projects I've been in?" It was that lingering inhibition in front of professional peers again, strangling her voice box and numbing her tongue. She scolded herself for not presenting herself more expressively and extensively.

She learned that many of the participants were middle school and high school English teachers who already had highly developed backgrounds in writing, which unnerved her even more. Once the first day of the project was over, however, Courtney felt good. On the first day following some initial introductory activities that helped her feel more at ease, there was a writing period that culminated with sharing in the form of peer conferencing (Calkins, 1986). For the past several years, Courtney's writing had largely been journal writing, not very organized or refined, about things that were professionally or personally meaningful. She had not shared her writing with many people other than her students and close colleagues like Karen, Diane, and Lee. As the other participants in her peer conferencing group shared the pieces they had written that day, Courtney was astounded at how eloquent some of them sounded. With apprehension she read her own piece about a childhood rafting experience and was relieved to find people very accepting. They offered her suggestions and explained some techniques that she could use to extend her piece. She felt like a hungry child,

> standing at a bakery window, looking in at the different sweet, sugary treats. The baker comes and says, 'You may have one.' But there are so many delicious treats. I can't pick one. How can I pick from all the wonderful treats available today? I couldn't separate them out.

Her head was exploding with ideas that she could use to write her piece. It had been a tiring day but she felt good. Her writing needed work but the group was supportive and Courtney sensed they wanted everyone to succeed.

The project was from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. each weekday for 3 weeks. Courtney spent much of her "free time" writing in the computer room. She attended the demonstrations each day that the participants had to present. These demonstrations were meant to be applicable to classrooms and Courtney found them invaluable as a source of

ideas for her own writing program for her students. Gaining impetus from these demonstrations, she put a parent journal, a classroom newspaper, and a class magazine in place the next year. She gave her own demonstration on the last day of the project, rather hoping that people would be tired and lack interest, therefore not be too critical. She had an attentive audience, however, and she was scared to appear in front of them dressed as a wayward fairy Godmother, which she hoped would catch their eye. From the comments she received, everyone thought her entrance was great. She went on to present various versions of Cinderella and had people write about their reactions to the versions in terms of characterization in fairy tales as well as related gender and cultural issues. Courtney was pleased with the lively and long discussion that followed.

A lot of reading was encouraged as a complement to the writing. The suggested reading was current thinking about the writing process such as Calkins, 1986; Lane, 1993; and Routman, 1988. Groups met each day to discuss their reading. One day the group discussed Wilson's *Attempting Change: Teachers Moving From Writing Project to Classroom Practice* (1994) and Courtney was struck at the seemingly surface level of change the other teachers mentioned about themselves. Her point of reference was her own struggle of change. Courtney knew intimately the arduous, often lonely, process. She was grateful for Karen and Diane's extra eyes to look with meaning at her classroom and for their conversations that went beyond sympathetic support to digging deeply into their thinking. She valued the experiences and conversations she had with the TMU group that helped her understand mathematics as well as teach it from a conceptual base. The other writing project participants seemed naïve to Courtney in their lack of understanding of concerted, prolonged, and rigorous attempts at changing their practice.

Most of them may have been better writers than she, but she was the expert on what change meant and what it took to change teaching practice. From the discussion on change, Courtney realized how much she had learned and grown in the last few years.

The Teacher Writing Project business meeting at the end of the project seemed to last forever but it reinforced Courtney's thinking that well functioning groups, such as a classroom, needed to take some time to discuss how they would operate. She realized that participants needed to talk about the mechanics and technicalities of a project in order to clarify expectations and identify potential problems. It reminded her that all the time she took with her students to talk about how they should talk with each other, treat each other, work hard, confront difficult issues, compromise and share was necessary and worth it if it resulted in developing a functional learning community in which children have a voice.

As her final writing project, Courtney chose to develop a short story about the rafting experience she wrote about on the first day. As she tried to craft her story, she was urged during the peer conferences to "explode her ideas" and unveil the details that give richness to the rendering of the story. She realized that learning to write could not only help her record current events as memorable stories but also help her uncover hidden memories by delving more deeply into them on each draft revision.

Although Courtney compared her Teacher Writing Project experience to a roller coaster ride with slow ascents while composing and rapid descents returning pieces for revision, she finished with a portfolio of several pieces crafted from personal experiences and with new ideas for her classroom writing program. She realized that publishing acknowledges the value of someone's writing. She learned ways to provide publishing

mediums in her classroom that seemed workable to her. Experiencing peer conferencing and revision herself and reading and talking to others about it, she realized she had been sidetracked on both of these processes in her classroom. She saw that her emphasis had become spelling and punctuation instead of revision of expression of ideas. Because of the writing project, she saw how to lead her students through the process in order to achieve stories that would provide lifelong memories.

Courtney also learned about herself. At the end of the experience, she wrote,

I have become a writer. By going through this process of the writing conference, revision, publishing myself, I see I am a writer...Wow! What a process. What an experience in writing. I am an author.

## Defining Herself, Developing Autonomy

At 50, Courtney experienced the satisfaction of expressing herself through published writing. At 22, however, she already used writing to gain insight into who she was. Her "jellyfish" essay explored her inclination to "go with the flow" while it also recognized the importance of social connections for her. As she pointed out in this essay, she valued school experiences because they provided opportunities for her to make social connections that gave her a sense of security and belonging. In high school she was involved in activities that connected her to peers who influenced her thinking about going to college, which, in turn, provided her opportunities to connect to academic learning that was exciting and absorbing for her.

Her desire to develop a classroom based on social responsibility and social construction of knowledge reflects the perspective she held that school should be a place where learners work together, building on each other's knowledge to explore questions and ideas. Later as she got involved in PDS and other professional activities, the interactions she had with colleagues, especially in the TMU group and with Karen and

Diane during the mentoring project, connected Courtney to professional conversations, images of practice, and first-hand learning experiences that became the basis for her own participation in socially constructed knowledge. These conversations also gave her opportunities to find and express her own thinking about teaching and learning.

In addition, her growing self-confidence in her professional life was enriched by the emergence of her personal self-definition. Her writing helped her begin to recover some hidden images of her past that helped her clarify who she was, what she liked, and how she wanted to be. By defining herself more clearly and gaining a growing sense of personal autonomy, she was also better able to shape her teaching practice so that her students could move towards self-definition and personal autonomy also. She said,

> I want to do these things and build relationships, build a history, build experiences with each of my classes. I think that's so important. I think, what do they remember? Will they remember the stuff we create? I think school should be the place. It's memories of learning. It's having fun.

# Chapter 5

## LEARNING REFORM-MINDED TEACHING: TRANSFORMING ROLES AND PRACTICE

> I don't see myself so much as a giver of information. I'm still a learner. (Courtney)

Learning reform-minded teaching practice meant that Courtney had to change her stance towards how she thought learners acquired knowledge and the role a teacher played in helping to make learning happen. From her participation in study groups, on the Core Team, and from reading literature on reform-minded teaching, Courtney realized that her more conventional teacher-directed, textbook-oriented practice did not match her beliefs she was beginning to clarify about learners needing to actively construct knowledge. For 25 years she had been functioning essentially as a "giver of information," presenting her students with knowledge she possessed. When she heard and saw reform-minded subject-matter teaching at the first PDS institute, she realized that this kind of teaching was how she wanted to shape her practice. What she did not fully comprehend at the time was that she had to become a learner herself in order to change her practice. She had to learn subject matter herself in ways that deepened her conceptual understanding of it. She had to learn how to listen and talk to her students differently. She had to learn how to create conditions that supported learning for conceptual understanding. She had to learn different ways to help her students

understand subject matter and she had to learn new roles as a teacher who guides thinking, shapes conditions conducive to her students' learning, and facilitates interactions among learners and more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1978).

Being a teacher at the same time that she was a learner of innovative teaching practice meant that Courtney had to play dual roles that frequently seemed incongruous. One role was that of teacher who, Courtney thought, should know what she was doing, have a sound grasp of subject-matter knowledge, and have "all the answers" so that she could give them to her students. Another role was that of learner, a seeker of knowledge who did not have "all the answers," but many questions instead. As a teacher, she thought she ought to be the authority; as a learner she felt vulnerable to doubt and uncertainty. As a teacher, she was the major resource for her students' learning, a repository of information and a model for them; as a learner, she found herself searching for resources for her own learning and looking to others such as colleagues and university people for answers. Courtney frequently experienced the tension between these dual roles, feeling frustrated, confused, and inadequate as she struggled to maintain her equilibrium. Learning engenders dissonance and the disruption of the status quo. Trying to dramatically change her practice according to what she was learning while still maintaining a well-functioning, organized, clearly directed classroom was, Courtney said, "like trying to change a bicycle tire while riding the bike."

For many years, Courtney considered herself an impostor in the classroom. Like many teachers, she knew she lacked all the answers, yet the culture of teaching seemed to communicate to her that she *should* have all the answers (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986). She said,

Most of my teaching career I have felt like an impostor. People would say, 'Well you're a teacher, you should know that.' There's a piece where a teacher is supposed to know all the answers. So when someone would say that, I would think, 'Oh my God, they're going to find out I'm not really a teacher because I don't know all the answers.' So I've played this impostor role for years and years and years.

Feeling like an impostor added to Courtney's sense that she was not really teaching as she wanted to teach. She was searching for a sense of authenticity in her practice that would allow everyone in the classroom, including herself, to be a learner on some level. Yet, she also recognized that in the role of teacher, she had to be the primary person to design opportunities for learning and shape the kind of classroom culture that would encourage and support it. As highlighted in Chapter 3, she desired a classroom culture in which both teacher and students could work for their benefit and growth as learners. Each could be at times a learner, at times a teacher for others.

Not knowing what her role as an adult teacher and learner in a learning community classroom meant or looked like, Courtney continued to struggle to define it. She wrote,

I think my confusion lies in role...I'm seeing clearer (at times) that, being the adult, I need to facilitate an atmosphere, climate that is receptive to children's needs, ideas, interests but must include direction and organization from me. This is not just a black and white, either/or issue but a very complex and many layered issue. Breaking down...MY ROLE!!!!!!!!!!

How was she to operationalize a different teacher role effectively until she understood it better? How could she understand it better if she did not try to operationalize it in her classroom and make mistakes in the process of learning? What did it mean for her and her students to have her in the learner's role while she was also trying to be the "all knowing" teacher? How could she learn new teacher roles such as facilitator, designer, or guide without trial that inevitably involves confusion when there is no clear direction on how to enact those roles? How could she enact roles she had

never seen or experienced? Courtney struggled as she learned to teach subject matter for understanding because it meant knowing the subject matter, her students, her role, and how to engage her students in their own learning differently than she had previously.

## Changing from Transmission to Transformative Practice

Learning to teach subject matter for understanding meant that Courtney had to learn not only new ways of looking at and interpreting the subject matter itself from a conceptual perspective but also different ways to represent the subject matter for children (what Shulman, 1986, calls pedagogical content knowledge) Teaching for understanding meant learning new teaching roles as well. An early PDS discussion focused on Jackson's (1986) distinction between what he calls the mimetic or transmission teaching tradition in which knowledge is seen as an entity that can be reproduced and transmitted from teacher to student and the transformative tradition in which teachers aim to transform students and possibly themselves through philosophical means such as discussion, demonstration, and debate. The transformative tradition supported roles and practice associated with teaching for understanding.

As Courtney listened to the discussion about transmission and transformation approaches to teaching, she recognized she had been teaching from the transmission perspective. She felt that she was supposed to possess knowledge that she passed along to her students. Questions had right answers and her role was to correct student's wrong ones. She was never completely satisfied with teaching and learning from this tradition, however. From the discussion she realized that the transformation approach described how she had been wanting to teach but did not know how. This meant changing her role from holder and giver of information to designer and facilitator of educative experiences

(Dewey, 1938) who took account of who students were, what they already knew, and what might arouse their curiosity. In her determination to teach subject matter differently, she worked specifically in literacy and mathematics for several years.

## Learning to Teach Literacy for Understanding

*Learning to teach literacy using children's literature.* Courtney had begun teaching literacy from a conceptual, holistic perspective when she converted her language arts curriculum to the whole language approach (see, for example, Kiefer, 1990; Newman, 1985; Tiedt, 1989; Weaver, 1990) before Adams became a PDS. When she heard more about the symbiosis between reading and writing, speaking and listening at the first PDS summer institute, she was ready to dig more deeply into these areas of practice. In fact, the entire Adams staff was expected to participate in the literacy study group and examine their teaching in light of what they learned in the group. Literacy was initially the primary subject-matter focus of the PDS work at Adams. University professors who had expertise in reading, children's literature, and later writing worked with the group for several years.

The literacy effort particularly focused on using children's literature as a basis for teaching reading and appreciation of text. The emphasis was on learning to ask questions that went beyond literal understanding of text. The aim was to promote discussion of literature from a more conceptual and philosophical stance including attention to illustrations as an aesthetic dimension of understanding text. As part of the literacy group's learning process, professors observed the teachers doing a literacy lesson. Courtney was unprepared for her observation scheduled in early December of 1991, the second year of the PDS literacy effort at Adams. She did a literature lesson but had not

had time to reread the book before the lesson. Both she and the children became lost in the lesson. Embarrassed, Courtney knew she should have planned better. She knew she needed to do better with understanding the literature herself. At the same time, she had conducted the lesson from the traditional transmission approach. She recognized she needed to work on relinquishing her teacher-centered methods as well.

After this incident, she did a self-assessment. She still considered herself too authoritarian, trying to have all the answers herself when she thought she should let the children explore and investigate in order to find answers of their own. She continued to question how she could shape discussions so that children would focus on each other rather than just her and how she could help children express their thoughts and feelings about what they were learning. She was still the center of attention in the room. She stood by the board when she taught and the children faced her. They faced her rather than each other when they sat on the floor to have discussion. She paraphrased and repeated softly spoken comments rather than having children do that. She also thought she still avoided conflict even when it could lead to stimulating intellectual debate.

At first, Courtney concentrated on the reading and literature aspect of her literacy program. By trying out the questions that the PDS literacy professor advocated and observing her students' responses, Courtney learned how to formulate questions about pieces of literature that would stimulate children's thinking rather than simply recall the story. She learned how to foster interpretation and speculation of the author's purposes. She also learned how to help children look at illustrations as integral parts of the literature. Drawing on her proclivity for activity-based learning, she used literature as a springboard for engaging her students in projects that provided them experiences that

brought relevancy to their learning. For instance, she still liked to take her class to a nearby island in association with the book, *My Father's Dragon* (Gannet, 1948), but as she learned to talk with children about authors' purposes, so too, she learned to talk to her class about her purposes for taking a trip to an island. As in other subject-matter areas, this was a gradual learning for Courtney, but because she had started changing her reading program to the whole language approach before PDS work started, she already had shifted her thinking about teaching reading differently. She had moved to a literature-based program. Through the work in the cooperative learning study group, she had tried different discussion structures such as small group tasks and whole group conversations about a book. She was familiar with children's literature that lent itself to rich intellectual work and she enjoyed the literature herself. Adams supported the emphasis on literature by inviting a children's literature author to the school each year as a guest. Classes prepared for the visit by reading and studying the author's work, preparing questions to ask the guest, and creating illustrations in the style used in the texts. With this kind of support, Courtney changed her teaching of reading so that it more closely aligned with the transformation approach and teaching for understanding.

*Learning to teach the writing process.* Courtney found herself as both a learner and teacher as she tried to develop her writing program based on the processes of drafting, peer conferencing, and revision. Courtney established the habit of keeping journals about her professional work as well as occasionally writing about her personal life. She wanted her students to write not only because the PDS literacy group stressed involving students in writing along with reading, but also because she discovered the power that writing had as a tool for clarifying her thinking and for acting as a historical

record of her experiences. It was a way to "save" her memories in some form that she could retrieve at will.

As part of her PDS work, she read Routman (1988) and subsequently delved into some of Lucy Calkins's books, *Living Between the Lines* (1991) and *The Writing Workshop: A World of Difference* (1987). Calkins's images of writing and the writing process struck a chord in Courtney, resonating with her personal interest in writing and in helping children record their thoughts and experiences. The mentoring project with Karen and Diane, as described earlier in chapters 3 and 4, was also instrumental in supporting Courtney's attention to her writing program. They all read Calkins and discussed her stance towards writing, each finding direction and inspiration in Calkins's work. Their interactions around Calkins's work bolstered Courtney's conviction that she wanted her students to become serious writers. During the summer of 1993 when she was busy putting her mother in an adult foster care center, sending Andrea to camp for the first time, and living with the stress Jim felt the summer of 1993, Courtney had little inclination to concentrate on professional matters. Reading Calkins, however, was an antidote to Courtney's feelings of directionlessness. Calkins validated the power of writing that Courtney was beginning to experience. Supported by Calkins's work, Courtney turned to her journal writing as a refuge for her thoughts and feelings as she moved through the personal concerns she faced. Throughout the summer, she picked up Calkins when she had a snatch of time and read pieces of the book which spurred her on with her own writing and her determination to expand her classroom writing program.

In the fall, Courtney had her students keep writing journals based on what she had read in Calkins. She wanted children to experience the power of making experiences

become lasting memories through writing. She wanted to teach her students to be observant and appreciate the fine points of life. She wanted her students to feel that their stories were important as a reflection of their lives. In turn, she hoped this would help them feel the importance of themselves. She told her class that writing was a way to remember important things. Writing something down is like recording history. Once written the records become like ancient clay tablets.

Courtney intended to write daily in her journal but she was so busy that even when she was sitting down it was because she was driving, eating, doing school work, or attending a meeting. She used the time in school when her class was writing for her own journal time, sometimes recording observations of the children and sometimes composing narrative text about personal thoughts or experiences. From her reading of Calkins and her conversations with Karen and Diane, Courtney knew that learning to write meant regular practice so she took advantage of the time she allotted for writing in her classroom to work on her own skills. She also knew that if she wanted to help children become writers, she needed to be a writer herself so that she could intimately understand the process. Frequently she read her narratives to the class as examples for them of turning ordinary experiences into interesting accounts of life. Her writing also revealed her humanness and her life outside the classroom, aspects of a teacher that children often do not realize exist. For instance, the day a student brought a tarantula to class Courtney wrote,

> The tarantula is still on bent, heavy legs, looking like she will attack at any second. Looking at her gives me a slight shiver and yet spiders are supposed to be helpful to our environment. They certainly do get a bad rap. Of course, I sure wouldn't want to find one crawling across the table here as I write! In some ways Elvira is beautiful. Her body has a distinct structure which is admirable. It's segmented and it appears as separate, distinct parts. She is silent. There is no voice even as she crawls over the gravel. She hasn't moved since I started to

write. I wonder what she is thinking. Do spiders think? What is she waiting
for? The attack—the wait—silent, quiet, WAIT, WAIT, WAIT!

Sometimes her journal entries gave a glimpse into her role as a mother of active

teenagers. One fall day she wrote,

> Peanut butter! When I said the word peanut butter I flashed back to this morning,
> rushing around getting everyone ready. Kevin wanted PB&J sandwiches, three
> of them because he has a football game tonight and won't be able to eat until late.
> Andrea needed a salad made for her pasta party with the cross-country team, so I
> made a jello salad. While I was in the kitchen I put some cinnamon rolls in the
> oven. Thanks to the Pillsbury Dough Boy, we had hot sweetrolls for breakfast.
> They smelled wonderful baking there in the oven—the sweet smell filled the
> upstairs.

With this practice, she combined her dual roles of teacher and learner. As the teacher,

she modeled writing and talked about how she decided on her subject and crafted her

piece, while as the learner, she practiced her writing, honing her skills and clarifying her

thinking on what it took to write.

Continuing to work on her writing program the following year, 1994-95,

Courtney concentrated on learning to establish a classroom atmosphere conducive to

writing—part of her learning community. On the days when the children settled into

their writing, Courtney sighed with pleasure and listened to the quiet thinking occurring.

On the days when the children seemed restless, Courtney wondered how to push them

past the fidgeting so they could concentrate on writing. Sometimes the children started

their writing well but then got restless later and Courtney wondered how to push them to

write just a few minutes longer. She wondered what writers needed when they *thought*

they had finished but actually needed to write more. What could they do to make their

writing better instead of talking and disturbing others who were writing? Sometimes it

was hard to discern what caused the restlessness because, after a few minutes, people

would settle into their writing again.

As part of the mentoring project, Courtney observed Karen's class in the writing process. She saw the children looking interested in other's writing, listening quietly as children read their work loudly and clearly. They seemed to be kind and caring; no one hit anyone else. Courtney thought the children had wonderful stories and hoped she could bring her class to a similar level.

By mid-January, 1995, writing time functioned well which pleased Courtney. She wrote,

> This morning sounds so calm—people can really think. I'm so proud of my class. They all seem like serious learners today. Many people are writing, others are thinking, a few are in quiet conversation—hopefully about writing. I can see someone spelling a word for someone else. How supportive to help a classmate's learning. I like it when my students feel they can ask each other for help.

Although the children's progress pleased Courtney, she also wondered how to move them forward with their writing, helping them to expand their thoughts and express them descriptively. She thought that maybe she needed to refresh her own thinking by reviewing Calkins's ideas. By the end of January, however, writing time had degenerated. Courtney did not think the children were being productive, only writing to fulfill the requirement to write.

Courtney thought perhaps the unstructured time to get ready for school and chat with classmates first thing in the morning was more than the children needed. Maybe she should limit it to fewer minutes. By the end of February she was feeling like a referee and noise controller during writing time, rather than a teacher. She decided that each child should produce a book by the end of the year as a product of their writing. She thought this would give them motivation to use their writing time more productively. The children needed to write, revise, type, edit, illustrate, and share their books. She

wondered what the children needed to become proficient writers. Their writing time should be precious to them at this point.

At the end of the school year, only a few children had succeeded in writing finished stories. From this discouraging result, Courtney knew she needed to learn how to structure the writing process in her classroom so that children completed a cycle of writing, conferencing, revising, and publishing. As described in the previous chapter, Courtney decided to participate in the Teachers Writing Project offered at the university the summer of 1995 where she learned writing skills herself as well as ways to help children improve theirs.

The next school year, 1995-96, Courtney continued reserving time each day for children to write personal journals and share their writing with the class. Having gathered many new ideas for her writing program from the Teachers Writing Project, Courtney also instigated other writing projects in her room that year. She found ways to publish children's work by starting a newsletter that the children wrote periodically about class activities as well as a class magazine that included student's research reports. She also started a parent writing "journal" in which parents wrote a letter about their thoughts about the classroom or what they would like their child to do that year in school. Each time a parent made an entry, Courtney responded with a letter addressed to that parent. Courtney sent one copy of her letter to the parent and put another copy in the spiral notebook that comprised the journal. Parents received the notebook on a rotating basis. By the end of the year, each parent had made an entry in the journal and Courtney had written a response. In their entries, the parents were enthusiastic about this means of communication and brought up issues of parenting and school, such as doing homework.

Courtney's responses addressed parents concerns and she urged other parents to write about the issues when it was their turn to have the journal.

## Learning to Teach Mathematics for Understanding

At the same time that Courtney was learning to teach aspects of literacy for understanding, she was also experimenting with teaching mathematics differently. Compounding the need to learn to teach this subject matter differently, Courtney struggled to learn the mathematics itself. She had to understand the mathematical concepts she was trying to teach and she had to learn a different teaching role of guide, supporter and facilitator of learning. At the same time, she still had to move her class through the mathematics curriculum she was expected to cover. Being a learner while simultaneously trying to teach what she was struggling to understand herself in ways that were unfamiliar and awkward to her was difficult for Courtney.

At the first PDS summer institute, Courtney saw demonstrations of teaching mathematics for understanding that convinced her she should change her mathematics teaching practices. The videotaped lessons in which children engaged in sophisticated mathematical thinking and discussions intrigued her. She saw children exploring a single mathematical problem in depth, discussing solutions and their thinking processes that they had detailed in writing in their mathematics journals. She also experienced working through some problems herself, talking with other participants as she worked on the problem rather than having to wrestle with it alone. She realized that if she wanted her own students to grasp mathematical concepts rather than simply memorize facts and algorithms, she needed to provide opportunities for her students to grapple with

mathematical ideas, articulating their mathematical reasoning through discussion and debate of the different facets of a particular problem.

The academic year following the first PDS institute, 1989-90, Courtney attempted to infuse more discussion into her mathematics lessons. She quickly realized that it looked easier on the videotapes than doing it herself. Again, she needed to become a learner, discarding traditional teaching roles for ones she did not yet know. The lack of classroom decorum that accompanied her trying out different approaches to teaching and learning unsettled Courtney, however. Her uneasy attempts to foster discussion disquieted the class. Too often they talked out rather than shared the floor. It was hard to keep everyone's attention on the speaker and children ignored each other's ideas. Courtney also thought her students were making too many calculation errors and did not really understand what they were doing. She felt her only recourse was to get out the old slates and chalk and have the class work through repetitive problems until they could do them correctly.

By mid-January of the new decade, 1990, a mathematics education professor started a study group as part of the PDS effort. His love of mathematics impressed Courtney. He asked the participants to list five things they wanted to know how to do in mathematics teaching. She could think only generally. Courtney did not know exactly what she wanted to learn. The more she listened to this professor talk, the more she questioned her own mathematics teaching. Why was she trying to teach "borrowing" in subtraction and particularly with a zero in the middle when the children could just learn to use a calculator? "Was the only justification to pass the standardized tests the children

were required to take?" Courtney wondered. Innovative approaches to teaching

mathematics caught Courtney's attention and curiosity.

Mathematics lessons seemed to get better as Courtney tried some of the activities

that the university professor suggested. Some children did well expressing their thinking

about how they did the problems. When Courtney introduced multiplication, several

could draw a picture of what it meant. Children were learning to "play" with numbers

and their thinking excited Courtney. Yet, her own lack of deep mathematical

understanding continually hampered her ability to guide children's thinking to conceptual

levels. She was simultaneously a mathematics learner and teacher. She had to learn the

subject matter and different pedagogy, at the same time teaching mathematics from this

precarious position.

Even though a mathematics study group had formed, the push to teach

mathematics for understanding was not strong at Adams. The university PDS

coordinators for Adams favored concentrating on the literacy work first. They did not

encourage teachers to attempt changing too many aspects of their practice at once. By

the second year of PDS at Adams, the mathematics study group at Adams did not meet

regularly. Courtney was enthusiastic about teaching mathematics differently but her

novice status in understanding how to do this kind of teaching hindered her attempts to

put it into practice.

Courtney's fledgling attempts, however, buoyed her commitment to keep working

on this approach. For the 1990-91 school year, she began by introducing a coin problem

in which the children had to list combinations of coins to equal a given amount. Some

had difficulty adding the coins, others did not know how to get started, one colored a

picture, and one commented that this was boring. Courtney's inability to get the children started on the problem upset her. She realized that she needed to think through the problem and the flow of the lesson more before trying another problem-solving lesson. She needed to figure out how to get the children curious about the problem and learn what questions to ask.

> I feel very inadequate. I want some more questions, more probing questions that I can [use to] help kids think better because I'm still dealing with [that] myself. It's hard for me to always do that with them because I don't know…what's the next question we need to ask. It's a slow process for me because I'm going through it at the same time.

What looked rather easy when someone else was teaching was hard for Courtney to enact. She tried to figure out the questions that would guide children's thinking in understanding the mathematics concepts she was teaching, but she was only just starting to learn questions that pushed her own mathematical thinking. She felt that she lacked the knowledge she needed to support her students' learning and learning it herself was inevitably slow. She wrote, "I feel like I'm trying to climb a rope but I keep losing my hold and fear I'm slipping back."

About a month later Courtney tried a problem in estimation using raisins. First children estimated and then counted the raisins. They worked in small groups. Courtney noticed they all grouped the raisins in 5's and 10's to count them but then added the groups to get the sum in different ways. She felt encouraged by this experience but discouraged the next day when they did a problem that built on the first one and the children failed to refer to the previous day's learning at all. Through probing questions, Courtney helped the class connect to the prior lesson and they moved ahead. Courtney persevered with this approach to teaching mathematics but when she tried to emphasize problem solving and mathematical discourse, she did not know how to guide the

discussion fruitfully and did not recognize the clues in children's explanations that were leads to conceptual understanding. The class discussions were often unfocused, confusing, and loud.

By the end of the year, however, Courtney felt that she was doing this kind of teaching better. Her approach to teaching mathematics had noticeable changes. For many lessons, students explored one "story" problem during a lesson rather than do a page of calculation problems following an algorithm. Students started to use their mathematics journals to write about their thinking and draw diagrams to help them represent their thinking rather than rely solely on a standard textbook in which everything was already written for them. They also participated better in discussions in which they justified their agreement or disagreement with a peer's ideas rather than just put their problem solution on the board for approval by the teacher.

When the Teaching Mathematics for Understanding (TMU) group formed the next fall, 1991, Courtney took advantage of the opportunity to learn more about teaching mathematics differently. In the company of her colleagues, Karen and Diane, with whom she was forging a professionally satisfying relationship after her separation from Peg, Courtney participated more actively in the group's discussion than was her custom. She began to risk exposing her uncertainties about her own mathematical understandings along with her doubts about how to teach it conceptually. Courtney soon realized that her own feelings of inadequacies were not unique. She discovered that the other group members did not have all the answers either, even Lee, the professor who organized and led the group.

> They were all talking and I couldn't understand what they were saying. It
> rekindled old feelings of not being able to do that. I wasn't necessarily good in
> math...I saw the struggle was okay. Lee was struggling, too. She hadn't done

this with kids. Seeing people struggle over and over again and not having the answers made it okay to me.

Courtney saw that she was not alone in feeling as if she did not have answers she should have had. She watched the other group members struggle with mathematical concepts as well. Although it did not make the struggle easier, Courtney took solace in recognizing that other teachers did not have all the answers but could work together on trying to solve the problem. Seeing Lee also as a learner helped Courtney accept her own position in that role.

The Ball tapes viewed by the TMU group dealt with third graders exploring negative numbers. Thus, the TMU group focused on negative numbers as their first topic, one which Courtney never envisioned teaching elementary students and which she understood only minimally herself. The only sense she could make of them was temperatures that dip below zero. On October 16, 1991, she wrote,

> I'm not sure where negative numbers are going yet, or what the purpose of teaching negative numbers to my second graders is. Negative to me is the absence of something. The only way negative numbers make sense to me is the temperature—the absence of heat. When I think of money, I don't think of it as negative. I just think of it as there's not enough to go around.

After spending much of the fall on negative numbers in the TMU group, Courtney continued to be confused about how she would teach them to second graders and doubted that she ever would.

As Courtney became involved in the TMU group, she thought about how different this kind of teaching was even from the previous year, when she already had been experimenting and struggling with teaching mathematics conceptually. As the group explored negative numbers and how elementary students might understand them, Courtney reflected on her approach to teaching mathematics. She realized that she still

taught a "traditional" mathematics curriculum (i.e., following textbook and curriculum guide topics). She said she was "teaching the curriculum, not the learner," meaning that she was paying more attention to the mathematics curriculum and teaching skills rather than looking to her students to see what they were understanding or misunderstanding and teaching accordingly. Although she used manipulative materials, she told the children how to use them, as though knowing the mechanics of their use was the primary learning objective rather than learning a concept through the use of the materials as tools to understanding. She usually demonstrated a few problems on the board and then assigned multiple repetitions of the problems for practice. To assess a child's mathematical ability, she looked for the number of right answers rather than at a child's thinking. Last year she began to waver from this approach when she tried the single-problem lessons involving in-depth discussions, but her understanding of how to guide these discussions to conceptual understanding was tenuous.

Courtney saw her mathematics teaching this year, however, as truly different not only from traditional mathematics teaching but also from her previous attempts at teaching mathematics differently. Her students kept mathematics journals in which they wrote and worked out problems that Courtney presented. They used manipulative materials only when they seemed appropriate help for thinking through an idea. Courtney tried not to look so much at the finished product but rather at the children's reasoning and understanding in arriving at a solution to the problem. She tried to make her curriculum more "open-ended" so that all her students could work from where they were in their reasoning to complete the problem. This meant she had to find problems that would allow for multiple solutions or multiple answers. She asked children to

explain their thinking both orally and in writing and encouraged them to talk together about how to do a problem. She was also trying to learn to watch and listen to her children more closely so that she could assess how they thought about the mathematics they were doing. In turn, this helped her decide what to do next.

Courtney wondered if she could actually construct a coherent curriculum with her limited mathematical background, however. She found it difficult to find time to think about her curriculum and really know what her students were understanding. In her journal Courtney wrote,

> What watching and analyzing Deborah Ball's tape is doing for me is making me look at a more open math curriculum. I'm trying to look very hard at teaching *kids* the curriculum and not just teaching the curriculum. What I am feeling unsure about (because of my lack of math background) is where is the understanding my kids have and how should it [be used to] lead us?

Courtney had started the 1991-92 year looking at and constructing patterns from various materials such as macaroni, and unifix cubes. She noticed that some children had problems classifying and "counting on." After several lessons highlighting patterns in a variety of places such as in words or in art, Courtney felt insecure in her knowledge of how to push the work on patterns further. In her role as a learner of the mathematics and how to teach it differently, she was caught short in her ability to take the class beyond what she was comfortable discussing. She decided to move into what she called "problem solving" with the class. She introduced a problem such as, "How many legs and tails were there on 4 cows and 6 chickens?" The children worked on solving the problem in any way they could. Some would draw elaborate pictures and others would use marks or symbols to represent legs and tails. Then the class would share their solutions. Courtney was satisfied that those children who shared their solutions had reasoned well. When she looked at other children's journals, however, she saw

misconceptions and no attempts to change solutions even though the children heard more sound reasoning. She thought the children wanted just to share their own thoughts and move on rather than listen to other's ideas and really understand the mathematics involved.

Courtney worked on facilitating mathematics discussions with her class but was unsure of what to say that would help the class push their thinking and reach some conceptual understandings. She recorded phrases, questions, and comments she heard from watching the tapes of Deborah Ball and listening to her colleagues in the TMU meetings.

> Any other comments? I would like everyone thinking about this. This is a problem we must think about. We still have a lot of different thinking on this. Is everyone thinking? We need to come to some conclusion on this. Do you want to revise your thinking?

Having some language to use helped Courtney get a feel for ways to guide the discussion and probe for deeper thinking, but it did not provide the internal direction she was searching for nor did it transform the discussion so that everyone was actively listening to others and building on each other's ideas. Courtney said, however, that watching the tapes was helping her ask questions that encouraged children to explain their thinking instead of letting it pass.

Characteristically, as Courtney thought about how to enact new teacher roles and ways of teaching and learning differently, she had a lot of questions.

> What do I do to help those whose processes are incorrect? Where is my whole math curriculum? How do I relate one content area such as patterns, where we started, with the problem solving and number concepts we are doing now? I can see some connections but how do I connect it for my kids? How can I connect it with the rest of the curriculum and with real life skills? How do I assess all this? What is the teacher's role?

Courtney's questions did not have ready answers, but Lee provided some help for

Courtney in her responses to Courtney's journal. She offered some suggestions about

how to structure lessons to give some latitude for children to work alone or with others as

they tackled a mathematics problem. She thought Courtney should see if there was any

connection between the way the class worked together and the types of problems

Courtney selected. She also gave Courtney ideas about how to shape curriculum from

what Courtney was learning about what the children knew and did not know as well as

looking at the NCTM Standards (1989, 1991) and the school district's mathematics

objectives. Courtney, herself, realized that she needed to work on the norms for the

learning community classroom culture she was struggling to develop, focusing especially

on listening to each other, in order to support mathematics discussions. Courtney picked

up on Lee's help and by mid-November she was able to identify mathematics content that

her students needed to learn based on her close observation of their journals and

discussions. She was also able to talk to her class about the "sidetrips" in their

discussions that they could revisit at a later time.

Additionally, Courtney got some help from Ruth, the professor who worked with

Karen and Diane. After the work on patterns and on problems that required going

through problem solving processes, Courtney moved to estimation with her class. After

one extensive lesson involving estimation in which she saw some interesting discussion

and the emergence of some rich mathematical ideas, she met with Ruth to talk about the

lesson. Ruth asked Courtney what her purpose was for the lesson and Courtney had

difficulty explaining it. This made Courtney realize that she needed to be more clear

about her purposes, which would help her guide the lesson and keep it more contained rather than let it go off on unproductive tangents.

After the winter break, the class was more comfortable with the problem-solving and discourse processes. They seemed to know what to expect and what to do, but they were not consistently responding to their peers or seriously debating ideas. Courtney felt that the children were not bothering to take more responsibility for holding a good discussion. She was still in the midst of learning how to guide mathematics discourse and continued to take notes in her meetings and from her readings on what she could say and do to facilitate the discussion.

Karen's ability to discern where her students were and how to use that knowledge to plan a coherent curriculum impressed Courtney. Karen seemed to know how to respond to her students' understandings one day and follow up the next with appropriate content. Courtney acknowledged that she had great difficulty figuring out how to "read" children, design responsive curriculum, or think about the needs of her students and connect those to curriculum. She saw Karen's class as being engaged while hers was struggling to learn to listen and follow along as someone was explaining his or her thinking. "How can I get my kids to validate what their classmates say or just listen to each other?" she queried. She saw the mathematics curriculum as very open-ended and dependent on children's understanding, but she did not know how to assess children's understanding in a way that would connect more closely to curriculum development. When she could not guide the discussion productively, she also hindered opportunities to learn to listen to and assess children's thinking. At the same time, in her role as teacher, she wondered what her students were actually learning.

Some days were more encouraging. One mathematics discussion in mid-February went especially well. Courtney asked the children to "guess her number" by figuring out attributes of the number. She felt the discussion was interactive and the children's reasoning was good. She thought that many of the children were comfortable with their thinking and rationale and did not really have to know the right answer to feel like they had accomplished something.

In April, however, Courtney felt her class was still not listening to each other. She was under the impression that the other teachers in the TMU group were having engaging, in-depth discussions with their classes while she continued to struggle with management. Discouraged but determined, Courtney saw the power this mathematics teaching approach had for capturing children's intellectual attention. She wanted to continue learning how to do this despite the frustration and difficulties she encountered.

Courtney continued with the TMU group the next academic year, 1992-93, the same year that she kept her students as they went into third grade. At the TMU meetings in September, the group worked on developing their understanding of what it meant to involve students in discourse and what that discussion should be like. Courtney recorded the phrases and questions that she heard other teachers ask as a way to internalize them herself. She tried to think about what she wanted her students to know and let that be her guide for figuring out how to shape her lessons and the discussion. The TMU group also continued to work on mathematics concepts themselves so that they developed their own understanding of the mathematics better. Courtney recognized that becoming skilled at guiding mathematics discourse required not only an ability to ask questions or make comments that push students' thinking further but also an intimate knowledge of the

mathematics involved so that the teacher can recognize and grasp a teachable moment from students' explanations and discussion.

The graduate assistants that participated in the TMU started to visit Courtney's classroom to help her. They suggested that she try smaller groups for discussion, but Courtney still did not know how to go about facilitating rich and effective discourse. She wrote,

> How can I do this? Who's willing to donate full-time math discourse help and
> follow up so I know what's happening? There are not many standing in line. I
> have [my student teacher], but I don't know if she's ready. [One of the graduate
> assistants] pushes for right answers, *not* thinking. I'm trying to figure this out,
> too.

Courtney felt that she needed sustained help to move her learning further. Unfortunately, no one was available to work with her intensively and one of the graduate assistants who came seemed to be struggling with breaking her own habits of looking only for right answers. Courtney felt that, as a learner, she was groping for guidance and direction that was not readily forthcoming.

Before the winter break, the TMU participants took time to reflect on their learning. Courtney remembered how mathematics had always seemed black and white to her with only one right answer to a problem and little relevance to life outside of school. Since joining the TMU group, however, Courtney thought that mathematics had taken on new dimensions for her. She wrote,

> It is now an on-going creation of the meaning of numbers and mathematics and
> how it all fits together. It is no longer a one answer problem but a way of
> thinking or creating or figuring out how to solve a problem or develop a concept.

Courtney also saw mathematics as something that groups could do rather than only individuals. When her students had the opportunity to explore mathematical ideas together, Courtney was amazed with how they thought about numbers in new ways that

were unencumbered by some algorithm or rule. Courtney reflected on how vital the discourse was to this kind of teaching and learning, but she thought that she still did not do it well. She wrote that she had only just begun to understand the complexities of discussion that elicits reasoned debate that leads toward conceptual understanding. Most of the time, she felt very inadequate trying to figure out what the children were saying and what the questions were that they needed to investigate. She worried that she was moving too slowly for the children who did well with mathematics. She also worried about the quiet students. How did she know what they were thinking and understanding? How could she encourage their participation?

The following year, 1993-94, Courtney started with a new group of second grade children, giving her the opportunity to develop a classroom culture and norms that supported reasoning, problem solving, and discourse anew. Courtney continued trying to find a balance between directing behavior and facilitating creative thinking during discussions. One day when Courtney told one child that she had to wait until two others had had a chance to explain their thinking, the child plugged her ears and started crying. When the two others had finished, however, the girl gave a long, clear explanation of her own thinking. Courtney saw that marking boundaries for behaviors did not squelch good thinking but often gave it room to surface. She wrote a litany of reminders for teaching mathematics for understanding:

> Math needs openness of task to move the discourse—there are many ways to think about solutions; math needs conversation—explain your solution to the group if you don't get it; ask about a part you don't get; the group needs to understand each other; the teacher walks around writing notes on group discussions and connects groups to each other with questions.

Courtney wrote that part of her problem in facilitating coherent and productive discourse was that she often got so involved in thinking about the mathematics herself

that she forgot to "bring the children along with me." She was uncertain what to do with children's misconceptions, even knowing exactly when they had them was difficult. Pushing for understanding through discourse when children's thinking was so fragile was uncomfortable for Courtney and seemed to stop ideas from flowing. Courtney wondered how to distinguish between the fruitful ideas to follow and tangents that led to dead ends. How did Karen figure this out? How do you know when to tell and when not to tell?

The mentoring project between Courtney, Karen and Diane touched on all aspects of Courtney's teaching, including teaching subject matter for understanding. Teaching mathematics for understanding became a central topic in their conversations. They decided to plan a unit together that they would each teach in their classrooms. After teaching, they reflected on what happened in each classroom. They chose the Egyptian number system as the content as a way of helping their students look at systems of numeration. Since Karen had been closely mentored by Lee in learning to teach mathematics for understanding a year earlier and since Diane worked with Karen and also had recently been in classes that focused on reform-minded mathematics teaching, they were both in good positions to mentor Courtney. Courtney had not had the same close mentoring by either Lee or Ruth that Karen and Diane had and she was hungry for help.

Karen and Diane had learned to question and reflect on their teaching, clarifying purposes and assessing children's understanding, perspectives and experiences to guide curriculum decisions. As the three of them designed the Egyptian number unit together, Karen and Diane pushed Courtney's thinking in these directions also. They challenged her to consider what she would tell her students about why they were going to learn about

Egyptian numbers. Karen rehearsed aloud what she might say and Courtney saw how

Karen transformed her own articulation of purposes about the unit into talk with children

about numbers and the Egyptian system. She was also impressed with the rehearsal

component itself, thinking that she, too, needed to try out a script, but one that she

composed herself.

As the Egyptian unit evolved, Courtney, Karen and Diane met to talk about what

happened in each of their classrooms as they taught it. Courtney was troubled by her

students' understanding and decided to watch Karen's class. She saw the nuances

between the way Karen engaged her students in thinking and discussion to help explore

ideas and concepts and the ways she did. She saw how Karen led her students into

intellectual play (Dewey, 1964/1904) with the Egyptian system, manipulating the

numbers as they came to understand the symbols. She realized that she had been much

more directive, that she had actually planned her lesson in a way that put her in a

directive position and this hindered developing a discussion that pushed children's

thinking. She reflected in her journal,

> I'm still not opening up the discussion someway, somehow. Is there something I do or
> say that does not encourage that discourse? Do I, in some way I'm not aware of, stifle
> that exploration? I want to audiotape myself and try to hear what I say or how I invite or
> do not invite my students to share their thinking. Maybe it was the way I planned it. I
> wasn't free to let it go?????

The comparison between her own planning and teaching and what she saw in

Karen's class helped Courtney see that she continued to need to move from her ingrained

stance of directing children's learning to opening up discussions and letting students

explore their thinking. With Karen's guidance, her students considered ideas and

alternative ways of working through a problem. Courtney tended to close off discussion

rather than nurture ideas into fruition. In talking with Karen and Diane about her

concerns, they grappled with the question of what to tell and what not to tell students which stimulated Courtney's thinking further. She was still not clear what mathematical task she was trying to create for students nor how to stimulate the mathematical thinking and discussion she observed in Karen's class.

Courtney, Karen and Diane worked together to adjust the unit plans and detail the next lessons, continuing to ask the hard questions of what they wanted their students to learn, why and how to help them understand the concepts. Simultaneously they recorded their thoughts and feelings about what they were doing in their journals, which they shared among themselves. The journals helped to raise questions and clarify thinking that emanated from their work together. Courtney followed through on audiotaping a lesson which also helped her reflect on her teaching. She realized that she needed to learn how to hear what her students meant by what they were saying and how to interpret what they understood from that. Then she thought she needed to learn how to design learning tasks that were closer to their thinking and would move them further in their understanding of numeration and number systems.

One of the members of the TMU, Evelyn, was a graduate assistant who systematically videotaped each of the teachers in the TMU group to help them analyze their mathematics teaching. After Evelyn taped one of Courtney's lessons in February 1994, she talked to Courtney about what she saw. There had been several students who were unruly during the lesson but most of the class had focused on the mathematics. Evelyn noted something Courtney had been wondering about herself. She said that the videotape showed Courtney asking a question about the mathematics and then interrupting to discipline the group. The emphasis in the lesson became behavior rather

than mathematics. Evelyn observed that the whole-group discussions had become like a game related to behavior. The name of the game was, "How Do We Behave?" The children were smart about the mechanics of the conversation. They knew the teacher had to ask questions and the agenda for several children was how to interfere with the conversation. Courtney thought Evelyn had identified a key problem in the mathematics discourse in her class. Courtney looked inward and said, "I have taught for 25 years. Why am I feeling so crippled at this point about what I need to do to make this classroom work?"

Courtney's efforts to concentrate on developing and managing a learning community culture seemed to be getting in the way of focusing on mathematics. Courtney needed to shift to the mathematics and away from the behavior as the central focus. Courtney wondered how she could do that when things were currently out of control. Evelyn suggested working with a small group of students one at a time rather than the whole class. The group discussion would be highly structured, exemplary turn taking. Courtney realized she would need to modify her own behaviors in order to provide the structure necessary to teach the children the self-discipline required for good discussion. When the small group discussions indicated the children were ready, Courtney could try whole-class discussion again.

Courtney rethought her plans and initiated Evelyn's suggestions the next day. She had several mathematics tasks and then some writing she assigned to the whole class. As they were working, she called a small group of students to the board to discuss the mathematics. Courtney recognized that this strategy allowed her to hear her quieter students more. She also realized that she could concentrate on the mathematics more

than the children's behaviors. She could quickly redirect someone who was not listening and she could more easily assess how children were interpreting what they were hearing. The morning was completely different and went well in Courtney's eyes. Courtney was out the next day and the following day things did not go as smoothly. There was still a lot of work involved in making the isolated successes the rule rather than the exception.

During the 1994-95 school year, Courtney continued to learn the role of teacher as a facilitator of learning rather than simply giver of information. The TMU group focused on how to listen to children learning and how to identify mathematical tasks that supported constructive discussion. Courtney saw the relationship between providing a task that engendered debate about ideas and learning to shape the discussion so that children's ideas surfaced for consideration. She wondered if engaging debate developed only when there was a struggle to make sense of some confusion. She questioned whether it was characteristic of an engaging task that it created confusion as part of the process of reaching conceptual understanding.

Courtney started the 1995-96 year doing simple addition facts with her second graders so that she could teach them how to talk about mathematical ideas together and use their mathematics journals to work on the problems, including creating diagrams, pictures, and writing about their thinking. For example, in early September the class worked on the problem of 6 books plus 3 books. Children explained how they arrived at their solution (counting on fingers, making marks for each of the books in their journal, just knowing it from first grade) and Courtney asked them to explain what each of the numbers meant, what "how many altogether" meant, what "equals" meant, and what would happen if someone first had 3 books and then got another 6 books. Through

problems such as this, Courtney could not only teach the children how she wanted them to think through and talk about mathematical ideas by solving problems and engaging in discussion but she could also assess student's understandings and ability to "play" with numbers.

In mid-October, Courtney asked the class what they had learned about mathematics in second grade so far. The children said that math was both fun and hard. In her journal she wrote that they told her,

> It helped to learn stuff like putting stuff together and take aways. In first grade you had to do a lot of pages (1000) in books but in second grade you have to figure out problems that the teacher wrote. This is harder. You have to explain things. It's different because you go to the board to write your answer. It's the real stuff, like the day we did the problem about stuffed animals--the real stuff.

The students' responses reflected that Courtney had not only changed her mathematics teaching practices but that the children recognized that they did mathematics differently from the more traditional approaches the first grade teachers used. The class moved through concepts of place value and addition of 2 digit with 2 digit numbers including regrouping or carrying by the end of November. Children grew in their ability to explain their reasoning and discuss their ideas with each other. By this time Courtney also recognized that, while she needed to understand the mathematical concepts she hoped the children would learn, she did not need to know all the answers. She noted,

> When I saw the kids doing things with numbers—they were smarter than I was. It said to me, the kids have the ideas, if I can get them out…Never in my life did I think that.

In January Courtney did what she thought she might never do—introduce negative numbers to second graders. Hearing the temperature and weather forecast for Anchorage, Alaska on the television that morning, Courtney decided to talk about it in class. Later she wrote about her decision to introduce the concept.

It's the coldest winter in a long time. I have an indoor/outdoor thermometer I
bought my son for Christmas. You can hold the thermometer and kids can carry
it indoors and out. They are ready for something new to try. They can now
discuss and share questions. An objective on the MAT is to read a thermometer.
I decided we can record each day's temperature, if nothing else comes up. I drew
up a thermometer and then showed it to [my student teacher] and Karen.
Something wasn't right. They helped me see how I needed to show temperatures
in increments of 5 degrees with a mark large enough for kids to count. No more
stalling. Here we go. The objective—there are numbers below zero.

On the first day we used the indoor thermometer and wrote temperatures
on the board to discuss. Then I asked them to look at the thermometer to see
what they noticed. The first response was the numbers below zero. Negative
numbers were off and running and all I had to do was present a thermometer and
ask, "What do you notice?" We *all* started learning.

The children started to learn about negative numbers and Courtney began to learn

how to help children explore them. Courtney asked the students to figure out what the

temperature would be there if it were -11 and it was expected to rise 6 degrees. Then

suppose the sun came out and warmed it up another 5 degrees. What temperature would

it be then? Many children realized that adding on meant counting up. They drew a

thermometer with a scale below 0, located -11 and counted up 6, then 5 more. They

talked about what it meant to have a number below 0 and why you counted up. When the

discussion started to get confusing, Courtney let it rest a day. This gave her time to think

about the questions she wanted to ask that would help the children think about negative

numbers. She introduced the idea of the temperature dropping to see if children could

subtract negative numbers and if they understood that negative numbers decreased in

value as the numeral got higher. That is, -8 is less than -6. As usual, she asked children

to explain their thinking and what they thought a negative number was.

Courtney was learning both to teach and learn with her students, recognizing that

she could take risks as a learner just as she expected from her students. The TMU group

was instrumental in supporting her mathematical learning and learning to teach

mathematics differently. The group went beyond support; they became colleagues in

practicing the mathematical thinking and discourse that they were trying to make happen in their classrooms. Courtney contributed to their debates, frequently asking the hard questions or demanding a clearer explanation of another's ideas. In this group, she felt the trust and security she needed to experiment with expressing herself.

When Courtney, Karen and Diane met for lunch during the winter break of 1995, it was notable because it marked the success of their mentoring endeavor in which all of them had learned and grown as teachers. This time their lunch recognized that they had moved on from the project. Their relationship had developed a fluidity to it that allowed each participant to move into and out of the mentor or learner position depending on the movement of the conversation and who needed help in thinking through a concern or question. Courtney noted,

> It's no longer like mentoring. It's just part of our professional conversation.
> Math is like a big key to us. 'Listen to what my kids said today about rectangles.
> My kids said this about rectangles and I don't know where to go with it.' 'Oh,
> you're doing Allen Say's books. Those are good books. I always do this with
> them.' So the conversation is still about curriculum and if I have a problem I
> don't hesitate going to her and saying, 'Hey, what should I do about this?' Our
> conversations were still very much about professional stuff.

They had become accustomed to their professional conversation, challenging each other's thinking, exploring curriculum possibilities, and holding each other accountable for teaching decisions. Although they met less frequently this year, they valued their conversations and the professional relationship they had built that allowed them to be collegial mentors.

Courtney no longer saw herself as an impostor. She was, instead, a real teacher who valued her own learning and the learning of others. She commented,

> For some reason over the last several years I've learned to say I don't know that
> answer. Why would I know that answer? I'd be glad to help you find that
> answer. And I don't have to know the answer. And that has been like a weight
> lifted off my shoulders. I'm a teacher but I don't have to know all the answers.

Courtney saw that not only did she not need to know all the answers, she did not want to know them because that would mean she would stagnate as a teacher-learner. She realized that learning to teach differently was a continuous process. She also recognized that she would continue to learn subject matter herself, not only to be able to teach it, but because learning had become an enjoyable pursuit in itself. She was able to see that a teacher who was a learner was also a role model for her students as learners.

# Chapter 6

## LEARNING TO MENTOR NOVICES: THE STRUGGLE TO WORK DIFFERENTLY WITH STUDENT TEACHERS

> I knew in my heart I didn't know what I was doing and I didn't know how to talk to a student teacher about it. (Courtney)

> I was trying to figure out two roles with my student teacher—my role with her and my role in the classroom. (Courtney)

Courtney faced a double bind trying to help her student teachers once she started to change her teaching practices. First she was expected to help her student teachers learn reform-minded teaching and learning practices that she was struggling to learn herself. Her own confusion provided scant support or guidance for her student teachers who were grappling with their own learning to teach from reform-minded approaches. In addition, the new field-based teacher education program expected collaborating teachers to mentor their student teachers much more closely than in the past. Thus, as she became enmeshed in learning new teaching roles, Courtney found herself struggling to learn a new role of mentor as well. She confronted learning not only how to teach differently but also how to teach someone else to teach differently. Trying to keep so many circles of learning in the air eventually overwhelmed her.

## Practicing the Traditional Non-interference Role of Cooperating Teacher

Courtney's own student teaching experience did not provide her with a beneficial model for helping a student teacher learn to teach. For her student teaching, Courtney had pictured herself in a lower-grade classroom in a relatively new, one-story school, with a helpful cooperating teacher, most likely a woman. In Courtney's vision, this teacher would help her learn teaching techniques, including management, and provide a model that Courtney could follow. Courtney's actual student teaching experience had scant resemblance to her vision. She was placed in a fifth grade in an old building in a small city. Her classroom was on the third floor, requiring her to walk up and down three flights of stairs several times a day. Her cooperating teacher, an older man, had suffered a heart attack during the term prior to Courtney's arrival. Courtney was placed in his classroom because the teacher needed to rest. The school wanted to avoid hiring a substitute, and having a student teacher was an efficient way to "cover" the classroom. The cooperating teacher spent much of his time in the teachers' lounge where he could relax. Courtney was left on her own in the classroom to learn from trial and error. In the long run she succeeded in teaching a unit on the Civil War that culminated in a grand production about that historical period. The production, performed for parents, included costumes and music. It was the highlight of her student teaching experience and most likely the cornerstone on which she built her penchant for activity-based teaching.

Courtney left her student teaching experience, however, with a sense that she had not brought closure to her expectations for this initial period of learning to teach. Her placement was not at all like she had envisioned. She missed the support of a cooperating teacher who was available to observe her and offer suggestions or advice. Her students

were older, street-wise, urban youngsters, rather than the younger, suburban, well-motivated children she had hoped for. She had to struggle on her own to figure out what to teach and how. When her student teaching was over, she left with a sense of not being finished. She felt as though she still knew little about how to teach and had no model to emulate. Yet she also knew that she had turned an undesirable situation into an opportunity to try out some of her own ideas. The fact that the parents wanted her to stay on as a permanent teacher bolstered her self-confidence and gave her momentum as she began her professional career.

Courtney decided to have a student teacher herself during the time of differentiated staffing at Adams when the large student teams needed as many adults as possible who knew something about teaching. The first student teacher that Courtney had was an older woman. Even though Courtney had been teaching for several years, she thought that this woman probably knew more about children and how to teach than she did. Courtney and her student teacher had a good relationship and the student teacher was very successful. After teaching for awhile, the woman became a principal in a nearby school district. She and Courtney continued to contact each other throughout their careers.

After her initial rewarding experience with a student teacher, Courtney worked with a succession of novices. Having a history of close connections to the university, Adams accepted student teachers every year. When PDS started, there was even more emphasis placed on having student teachers because a PDS was intended to be a place where novices would be exposed to teacher-learning and classroom-based research, much like a teaching hospital was for medical interns (Holmes Group, 1990). Thus, Courtney

continued to work with student teachers on a regular basis. She participated in the study groups formed for cooperating teachers to learn more about reform-minded practices such as creating learning community classroom cultures, teaching for understanding, and using cooperative group learning, structures that the student teachers were learning about in their teacher education courses. As the teacher education program developed more field experiences and looked to the cooperating teachers for the close-to-the-classroom mentoring that they were uniquely in a position to provide, the teacher education study group called the Mentors Circle focused on what mentors needed to know to help their student teachers learn to teach.

**Working with Student Teachers While Learning New Teaching Practices**

As usual, Courtney had a student teacher the year that PDS began at Adams, 1989-90. The teacher candidates from the university arrived for their pre-student teaching field experience early in the fall. One of Courtney's teacher candidates, Anne, started teaching a reading unit which she began by having children participate in establishing some rules for working together. Unfortunately, the children were not very cooperative and Anne did not know how to respond to their silliness. She left the room saying, "Maybe this isn't the profession for me." Courtney talked with her later about being too laissez-faire with her management and Anne decided to keep trying.

It was not long, however, before Courtney began to experience management problems herself. As Courtney tried to turn her classroom into a learning community in which children had more rights and responsibilities for the learning that occurred in their classroom, Courtney's perception of her role as a teacher grew foggy. She did not want to continue to be the authoritarian disciplinarian she thought she had been in the past.

She wanted the children to assume more responsibility for their own behavior and for helping their classmates learn. Yet, she did not know what her role was in a classroom that she thought of as "child-centered" (see, for example, Sugrue, 1997; Society for Development Education, 1995). Consequently, she tended to expect children to control their behavior without giving them the structure and guidance they needed to do that.

It did not help that Anne continued to have management problems as well. For instance, Courtney noted that she forgot to tell the class what lessons would entail, which disoriented the children. Many of the students ignored her and she failed to get their attention. She lacked control and presentation as a teacher. She told the class they needed to take responsibility but deferred giving them explicit expectations. She needed to be more enthusiastic. Courtney did not seem to recognize her own struggle in any of these observations of Anne's teaching, possibly because, when Courtney taught, she resorted to authoritarian control before the class "fell apart." Anne, however, neither took control herself nor managed to get children to accept responsibility for their own behavior.

The following year, 1990-91, Courtney's student teacher had problems as well. By late October the student teacher was faltering. The crisis came when she had to teach a social studies unit for which she was unprepared. Late one night the university field supervisor called Courtney. She had just had a call from the student teacher's parents who were very angry that their daughter was so distraught over this unit. The student teacher accused Courtney and the field supervisor of having secret meetings behind her back. She felt forced to teach this unit when she was not ready. She was uncomfortable

in Courtney's room and wanted to transfer to a different school but the field supervisor refused to move her.

When the student teacher finally began teaching her unit, the class was unusually patient and quiet during the forty-five minutes of the first lesson. It was a very teacher-centered lesson and rather boring, Courtney observed. Afterwards, when Courtney started to talk to her student teacher about the lesson, the student teacher burst into tears, crying that she could not teach, write understandable units, or clearly explain her thinking. She thought she might as well quit. Courtney waited for her student teacher to stop crying and said, "So, what are we going to do to help you do these things?" After they had talked for awhile, the student teacher had generated better ideas for her lessons and how to do them. She left feeling better and Courtney felt they had made some progress.

Later, Courtney joined the field supervisor in a conference with the student teacher. The field supervisor asked the student teacher what had happened and what the student teacher understood her responsibilities to be. Courtney admired the calm way the field supervisor handled the discussion, suggesting how the student teacher could improve her communication as well as teaching skills. The student teacher decided to stay and try again.

In the spring the student teacher took on more teaching responsibilities and Courtney was pleased that her attitude improved and she taught lessons satisfactorily. Courtney realized, however, that she did not know what to talk about or how to talk with her student teacher that would best benefit the student teacher's learning to teach. Courtney decided to observe Karen and Karen's student teacher, Diane, as they worked

and talked together. Karen was involved in a project conceived by Ruth, a university professor working on teacher education at Adams as part of the PDS effort, to help teachers learn how to assume the role of field instructor or mentor, usually a role held primarily by university people. Karen and Diane had frequent conferences in which they planned lessons together for Diane to teach. Karen tried to make her own thinking about planning and teaching explicit so that Diane could see how an experienced teacher tackled the tasks of teaching. When Courtney observed how they worked together, she noticed that rather than just listen to Diane describe what she planned, Karen kept asking Diane to talk about her purposes for the learning activities she had selected. This helped Diane clarify what she was teaching, why, and whether the activities were actually appropriate for her purposes.

The next time Courtney and her student teacher talked about the student teacher's plans, Courtney took Karen's approach. The conference went well; the student teacher wanted to continue to talk like this and Courtney felt she had learned something, too. As she asked her student teacher about goals and purposes for her lessons, Courtney mentally turned her questions inward. She realized that she had become lax about making goals and purposes for learning activities explicit with her class and their work suffered. She resolved to do that better herself.

**Learning a New Role of Mentor to Novices**

Since the education of novice teachers was a key principle of the PDS endeavor (Holmes Group, 1990) and the partnership between Adams and the teacher education program at the university was well established, the Core Team approved a proposal to have a group of teachers and a university teacher education professor work together on

developing teachers' capacities for mentoring student teachers. The 1991-92 school year

began a two-year transition period, phasing out the former four-year teacher education

program and moving to a differently structured five-year program that was more school-

based. Thus, it was an appropriate time to introduce a mentor-teacher project. Ruth, the

university professor who initiated the proposal, wanted to structure the school-based

experiences of the teacher candidates assigned to Adams for the next two years in ways

that would involve their cooperating teachers more actively and intimately. She wanted

to see what student teachers could best learn by being in schools in the presence of

thoughtful teachers who acted as mentors. In addition, she wanted to know how to help

teachers articulate and share their knowledge in appropriate ways with novices learning

to teach.

The group that formed, the Mentors Circle, wrote a proposal that enumerated

several activities as part of their work. These activities included (1) weekly consultations

with the participating teachers about their work with the teacher candidates; (2) bi-

monthly meetings to discuss curricular questions, compare insights about the learning of

teacher candidates, and plan ways to integrate teacher candidates into other PDS projects

at the school; (3) occasional forums to bring together teachers and teacher candidates to

discuss problems of practice; and (4) a few meetings with cooperating teachers from

other PDSs interested and involved in teacher education. It was also proposed that

Karen, in addition to Ruth, act as a consultant to the other teachers participating in the

project since she had worked closely with Ruth the previous year developing her own

knowledge and mentoring abilities when she had Diane as a student teacher. In the

process of helping experienced teachers learn how to articulate and share their

professional knowledge in the interests of helping a novice learn to teach, it was expected that the experienced teachers would make changes in their work with student teachers and in their conceptions of their role as a mentor.

As a member of the Mentors Circle, Courtney found another forum in which her ideas were both stimulated and challenged. She had worked with student teachers for many years but she had not seen herself as the primary person to mentor their school-based experiences. She had thought that was the university's job. She welcomed student teachers into her classroom and certainly offered them suggestions and advice, but she had not seen herself as the person most directly responsible for teaching them to think and act like a teacher.[8] During the past year, Courtney had experienced how difficult mentoring was, especially when her student teacher seemed to resist Courtney's attempts to probe her thinking. It was even more difficult when Courtney herself was making changes in her teaching and lacked confidence in her ability to enact reform-minded practice.

The mission of the Mentors Circle often overlapped with other activities. For instance, a Mentors Circle forum in October 1991 focused on teaching for understanding in general. Courtney chose to relate this to her mathematics teaching, which she discussed in the Teaching Mathematics for Understanding (TMU) group that had formed that fall. Although some of the participants also overlapped between the groups, there were differences and each had a different university person involved. The expectation for teachers to adopt teaching for understanding practices was clear. Courtney had a lot of questions about teaching for understanding such as what it really meant, whether it

applied to any curriculum, how to design curriculum that responded to students'
understandings and misunderstandings, how to discern which of the interests children
expressed would be most fruitful for learning, and whether it was realistic to think that
she could actually reach 29 different children's interests, especially when her particular
group seemed so uninterested in academics. Should she even try? Courtney's
participation in both groups meant she had two places to help her figure out what
teaching for understanding meant and how to do it.

As she started the 1991-92 school year, Courtney worked on developing a
mentoring relationship with her new student teacher, Sandra. Courtney tried hard to
create a relationship in which they could ask each other, "What do you mean? Why are
you doing that? In what ways are you doing that?" It did not happen automatically.
Being open to these questions forced Courtney to look at her own teaching more closely.
She had to look at the way she did things, why she did them, and evaluate whether they
were really what she wanted to do. In many ways, the year was characterized by the
question she recorded in her year-end reflection, "Why am I doing the things I'm doing?"

Courtney recalled that her relationship with Sandra had not always been as
successful or as friendly as it was when the year ended. Courtney recognized it was a
two-way street. She had a responsibility to be a good model for Sandra, which was not
always easy when she was just learning to teach differently herself. At the same time,
Sandra had a responsibility to be a receptive learner, which she often wasn't. In February
Courtney wrote,

> Working with a student teacher is hard work. How can I help Sandra? I feel she is very
> down. When I ask her about this she says she's tired or cold and changes the subject.

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[8] See Feiman-Nemser & Beasley, 1993, for a teacher's perspective on the difference between the role of cooperating teacher who
turns her classroom over to a student teacher and the role of mentor who engages a student teacher in the tasks of teaching in authentic
contexts.

> She wants me to give her answers and I don't have them. I'm trying to figure out what
> this teaching for understanding means. My knowledge is very fragile. How do I
> communicate to Sandra what I'm trying to figure out?

Courtney's own tenuous hold on her knowledge of innovative teaching approaches made it difficult for her to talk to Sandra about what she was trying to learn. Courtney's knowledge was fragile; she did not have language yet to articulate her questions or her discoveries. At the same time, Sandra seemed to lack interest and curiosity, looking to Courtney for answers that Courtney was searching for herself. Mentoring is difficult work even when the mentor is confident of her knowledge and teaching practices and the novice is eager to learn. For Courtney, learning to mentor in addition to learning new teaching practices and roles was doubly hard.

As she had in the past, Courtney began the second school year of the transition period, 1992-93, envisioning her classroom and planning activities she might use the first days of school to build the learning community. With the help of her two student teachers (one for fall and one for spring semester) Courtney got her room ready. At the time, Courtney was engaged in her struggle of several years trying to develop a learning community classroom culture. Hoping that her student teachers would be able to help, she and Tracy, her fall semester student teacher, spent time discussing their visions of the classroom and the curriculum they wanted to use at the beginning of the year.

Tracy said she wanted the room to be comfortable, a place where children felt free to express themselves, their opinions were valued, and they were respected as people. She wanted the children to be problem solvers in academic as well as social situations. Both she and Courtney wanted the children to participate in making decisions about what they would study and how as well as decisions about how the classroom should function. They wanted to work with the children on learning to express their feelings appropriately

but neither knew quite how to do that. They envisioned the classroom as being a stimulating learning place where students could ask questions and get help from peers as well as teachers and other resources. The adage they had displayed on a poster, "No one knows everything, but everyone knows something," supported the culture of respect and integrity Courtney and Tracy imagined (Cohen, 1986).

The discussion with Tracy about their visions of the classroom excited Courtney. Courtney deliberately initiated the discussion because Karen said she and her student teacher had shared their visions of their classroom and that had been very beneficial. After the discussion with Tracy, Courtney felt that she knew Tracy better and that they seemed to be looking in the same direction for the classroom. Courtney emphasized to Tracy that Tracy had to ask Courtney questions about teaching as they worked together because Courtney was not in the habit of talking about her thinking unsolicited. Courtney thought Tracy's questions would help Courtney make her tacit knowledge more explicit, clarify her thinking and identify what she wanted to do with her teaching.

Courtney and Tracy talked specifically about the first few days of school. Courtney wanted the children to get to know each other better, even though they had spent the year before together in second grade. She wanted to begin building trust, have the class learn the classroom routines and also have some fun. They talked about the importance of the class meeting time as an opportunity for children to express their ideas and feelings and practice listening to others. It also gave Courtney valuable insights into each child's experiences and lives both in and out of school.

Courtney wanted to build her learning community culture around cooperation and approaches to problem solving. She wanted to incorporate groupwork in which each

group member had a special role to play like encourager, linker, contributor, and organizer. She wanted to have activities the first day that would support these structures. Maybe the balloon breaking activity that she had done in the past or the puzzle activity where everyone got one piece and they had to cooperate with others in their group to make the whole puzzle would be a good introductory activity again. In any case, Courtney felt clearer about the culture she wanted to create; she just needed to figure out how to do it.

Both Courtney and Tracy were conscious of issues of diversity such as gender and race. They wanted the room to be a place where equity prevailed. As they thought about how to arrange the room and plan activities they kept these issues in mind. For instance, when Tracy designed a bulletin board with the children's names on some stars, she purposely rejected the idea of pink glitter for the girls and blue for the boys, mixing the colors instead. Planning seating arrangements surfaced other equity issues. Courtney tried to decide if she should assign seats or let the children choose their own. She wanted to ensure a mix of boys and girls, whites and African Americans in each cluster of desks.

On the first day of school, the children chose their own desks. When Courtney surveyed the room, she immediately noticed that the boys were all on one side of the room, with the more athletic ones sitting together, and the girls were on the other side of the room. She let it ride for the moment and began with a class meeting so the children could share their summer experiences. Some of the children surprised her by testing the management system with inappropriate behavior on the first day of school. Some put their feet up on their desks, others talked out and some yelled at classmates who made mistakes in the ball toss game the class played as an introductory activity. After a few

attempts, however, the groups were able to cooperate and accomplish the task well. Courtney was pleased with the results and also pleased that both student teachers had participated. Courtney felt encouraged that Tracy was able to talk about their observations of the children and ask good questions.

As September passed, Courtney grew more discouraged. She had difficulty establishing the learning community she had envisioned with Tracy in August. The children were often inattentive, unruly and disrespectful to Courtney, Tracy and each other. Courtney felt ineffective and needed help herself in learning how to develop and manage a classroom based on learning community norms. She wondered how she could be a good role model for Tracy when she encountered problems herself.

Early in October, Courtney had a day she never wanted to repeat. It was, as she noted in her journal, the "day from hell" when she arrived later to school than usual, upsetting her schedule from the start. Tracy failed to appear when expected and there was no message from her. One of the mathematics graduate assistants was visiting that day to observe Courtney and he told her to change her teaching plans at the last minute. Courtney was feeling unsettled and unsure of herself when the bell rang and the children came noisily into the room while she was still preparing for the morning. Tracy eventually arrived late in the morning. She isolated herself, however, by working with only one student rather than circulating and trying to help keep all the children on task. Tracy's behavior upset Courtney. She did not know what to make of it. When she asked Tracy if there were a problem, Tracy denied that anything was wrong. She said she had overslept, but Courtney sensed there was more to it than that.

Only two weeks later Courtney wrote, "I want out! My classroom is falling apart. I'm not helping Tracy. She needs more help than I can give her." Courtney, struggling with her own teaching practices, found it too difficult to try to help a needy student teacher as well. Courtney had thought that Tracy's presence in the classroom would somehow help Courtney clarify her own thinking because she would need to explain her teaching practices to Tracy. Tracy's questions would help her think through things that might otherwise remain hidden. Tracy did not ask those kinds of questions, however, and Courtney did not know how to direct Tracy as a learner when Courtney's own learning was so fragile. Courtney asked Karen for help but Karen only responded with remembering feeling that way, too, at one time. The implicit message seemed to be that it was hard learning how to teach a needy student teacher, but Karen had figured it out and Courtney would too. Courtney did not find this helpful.

Courtney felt frustrated working with Tracy. Even Tracy's journal entries said that she, Tracy, thought she should turn to Karen for help with teaching mathematics which only reinforced Courtney's feelings of inadequacy especially regarding learning to guide mathematics discourse. After reading Tracy's journal, Courtney also felt that Tracy was blaming Courtney for the way the class was behaving. Courtney felt defensive and insecure, but she noted that she shared Tracy's feelings of frustration about the dynamics of the class and the way the children were treating each other. She hoped she was not entirely to blame for the situation, but knew she was ultimately responsible for changing it.

Courtney and Tracy were feeling frustrated with the communication between them as well. Courtney felt as if she did not know how to talk to Tracy about teaching tasks such as planning. She wrote,

> I am having difficulty leading, assisting, or co-planning with her because I can't get down to why and what I do to make it clear. I feel that having me as a role model must be terribly confusing for Tracy.

Courtney had trouble expressing what she was trying to do in her own teaching, including her purposes for her practices. Being perplexed herself, she had problems helping Tracy think through teaching tasks such as planning. Her own state of confusion was not a model she imaged helped Tracy, who also seemed baffled.

At the same time, Courtney could not figure out why Tracy seemed to lack interest in asking Courtney questions or pursuing a discussion with her about teaching. In many ways, Courtney was feeling very unsupported in her efforts to learn to be a good mentor for Tracy. Learning to mentor was as difficult as learning other teaching practices and Courtney felt that she had to figure it out by herself. Courtney thought that someone, Karen, Ruth, or Grace, the PDS coordinator who used to lead the Field Studies group, would be more help to her. She wrote, "I'm feeling on a very thin limb alone. I don't feel capable yet of guiding a student teacher's thinking."

Somewhat later Tracy taught a children's literature lesson on perspectives that Courtney thought was "terrific." Tracy had thought very hard about the lesson and proceeded to plan and implement it very systematically. The children had a good discussion and drew some wonderful pictures showing different perspectives. Courtney noted, however, that Tracy did not follow through and complete the display of the children's work. Courtney felt disappointed because she thought the whole task was incomplete. Later when Courtney talked to Tracy about next steps, Tracy responded with

her usual, "I don't know." Again, Courtney felt frustrated, angry, and disappointed that Tracy had neglected to think about the lesson follow-up and, again, Courtney was unsure how to help Tracy.

Several university people came to Tracy's aid. There was a mathematics educator, a university supervisor, a PDS person, and Ruth all working with Tracy either in or out of the classroom on a fairly regular basis. Each spent time either observing Tracy as she taught or talking with her about her lesson plans and how to enact teaching for understanding. Courtney, however, was rarely a participant in these conference sessions because she had to stay in the classroom with the children. In many respects, she blamed herself for her student teacher's problems. When she reflected on the situation, she noted,

> I always felt bad because I wasn't doing the right thing for Tracy and Don. They had all those people helping them and I couldn't do it. I couldn't figure out how to do it. [There were] all those people helping those student teachers. What was wrong with me? ...They would stay a short time and then they would disappear with my student teacher so I wasn't part of that either. I didn't know if that was because of me or of my student teachers or of the situation...Of course it had to be me because they would go away and come back with an answer. So it had to be me. I didn't have things to share with my student teacher. I didn't know how to connect with what I had to share with them.

Courtney floundered in her attempts to identify what she knew that would help her student teachers learn to teach. She was not privy to the conversations her student teachers had with all the outside people who jumped in to help them as they lagged in their progress. In Courtney's view, her student teachers were getting answers from these people that Courtney would have appreciated having herself. To her it seemed obvious that she was the one who needed answers not only in how to develop a learning community and how to teach for understanding but also in how to mentor a novice teacher.

In December, Courtney reflected on her work as a mentor. When the Mentors Circle wrote the proposal the preceding spring to have teachers work more closely with their student teachers, Courtney was excited to be a part of it. After her struggle to help Tracy, however, Courtney questioned whether she could be an adequate mentor. She was struggling with changing her classroom culture, her management, and her teaching practices. She questioned how she could be expected to help a novice learn these things at the same time. She wrote that she had many doubts about her ability to do the work of mentoring, especially when she felt she was alone in trying to figure it out. She thought she probably confused Tracy by her own confusion and that was why so many other people were brought in to help Tracy. She knew she should do some co-planning with Tracy but she did not know how to co-plan. As far as the expectation to do joint inquiry into some aspect of practice, Courtney thought about the hours she and Tracy spent on the phone talking and yet the conversation never fostered curiosity and inquisitiveness. It was about "piece-meal survival" techniques. Courtney was confused. She did not know what she could have done or said that would have changed the nature of their conversations.

Courtney also felt she still lacked the ability to stand up for her own beliefs. She recognized that she felt extremely vulnerable as a person and wanted people to like her. Thus, she did not want to differentiate herself too obviously. At the same time, however, she wanted to be her own person, assert her ideas and beliefs, and develop a deeper understanding of herself both personally and professionally. Did this interfere with confronting Tracy about her teaching problems and their poor communication?

By February 1993, Courtney was still feeling isolated. She thought that Karen and Diane, who was a PDS released-time teacher by then, had progressed far beyond her in their ability to teach for understanding, create a learning community culture, and mentor a student teacher. She found support in what some teachers from another PDS said. At first, their journals were the place where they could vent their feelings of inadequacy and difficulty with the work of changing teaching and learning practices. They noted that sharing journal entries was one of the first steps they took to break out of the isolation they felt. Courtney felt a sense of identification and empathy with these teachers who acknowledged their feelings of isolation. Like them, she used her journals for expressing her feelings as she looked for ways to break out of it herself.

Spring semester Courtney had Don as her student teacher. Don already knew the children because he visited frequently during fall semester. With his daily presence and imminent assumption of much of the teaching responsibility and with several of the children continuing to act inappropriately, Courtney felt she needed to re-establish the class norms. She emphasized no "put-downs" and attentive listening. They planned another activity with a puzzle that would highlight the norms of respect, responsibility, and working in a small group. The activity formed small groups that would be the new seating arrangement. The groups were based on a survey in which the children recorded a few names of people with whom they thought they could work best.

Courtney continued to feel inadequate in her ability to help Don just as she felt with Tracy. She wondered what he really thought of the room, the children, and her as a teacher. She agonized over the fact that she was just learning and trying to change so

much of what she did that she thought she was not at a place in her teaching to be helping someone else.

In preparing for a student teacher review of Don, Courtney wrote some of her impressions. She thought he had good relationships with children and his manner with them was gentle, quiet, patient and responsive. He showed a dedication to the class, having come several times during fall semester. Courtney also thought he was sensitive and it bothered him if a lesson did not go well or a child was having a problem. He had good questions about developing curriculum, about the students, and about management. Courtney tried to help him find strategies to understand the children better. She thought he was desperately trying to figure out his role as a teacher.

Courtney felt dismayed when Don had his review in early March and he had his turn to talk about his work in the classroom. He took almost thirty minutes to describe the classroom, all in negative terms. He spoke of the lack of trust, the unsafe environment, and the lack of caring in the room. He talked about the lack of intellectual work, lack of management, and lack of structure. Courtney felt "terribly uncomfortable and much to blame" as Don was talking. From Courtney's perspective, he did not say one positive thing about the class. She felt very discouraged and ineffective. She felt all her hard work and commitment to the class was for naught. She wondered if she had done more harm than good. She did not believe she was the worst teacher in the world, but she began to think about early retirement.

Drawing on her strong ability to "bounce back" in tough situations, she thought about some of the wonderful things that had happened in her room. For instance, some terrific friendships had formed and she had seen some of the children grow a lot. She

felt good about the positive discipline approach she had started that seemed to be working with most of the children.

While Courtney attended a conference later that spring, Don said he wanted to teach without having a substitute in the room. Unfortunately the class went wild the first day of her absence so the next day Bob, the principal, had to help Don restore order. They took away privileges such as using the pencil sharpener, using the bathroom, and getting a drink without permission. They rearranged some of the furniture so it was rather inaccessible. The children read out of the basal, did mathematics work sheets, and were told what to do all day. Don's comment was that he had covered more content than he ever had and felt pretty good about the day, except for the long list of names on the board of children who had not finished their work. Upon her return, Bob told Courtney what had happened and that he thought there needed to be much more structure in Courtney's room. Courtney agreed but she was unhappy with the extent to which the room had reverted into the conventional mode of teacher-directed functioning.

In the spring, the Mentors Circle thought about the pros and cons to closely mentoring a student teacher. In the pro column Courtney wrote that it forced her to look at her practice more closely, pushed her thinking, extended her role as a professional, made her feel that she had a stake in the future of the profession, kept her up on the latest research, and provided opportunities for professional conversations with colleagues, and the questions student teachers asked brought some excitement to her teaching. In the con column she wrote that it was a big time commitment and that she lacked time.

When they finished their student teaching, neither Tracy nor Don decided to look for a teaching position. Courtney saw their rejection of teaching as her failure. She was

very discouraged about her ability to closely mentor student teachers as she was now expected to do. She had too loose a grasp on those practices herself to be able to articulate her ideas or knowledge to a novice. She was still learning much of the teaching practices that the student teachers were expected to try. Her sense of how to develop and maintain a learning community classroom culture was too foggy to be able to guide someone else in doing it. She could talk about what she thought this kind of classroom was like, but her vision of her role or children's roles was too opaque to be able to paint a vivid or detailed picture so that someone else could share her image. She was so much in the throes of learning herself, that she could not distance herself from it enough to be able to invite someone else into her thinking and understanding of what she was trying to do. Having to pay attention to her own struggles overwhelmed her ability to mentor a novice into the same kinds of practices she was trying so concertedly to learn herself. Consequently, she decided not to take a student teacher the following year, even though she felt much pressure to do so by the teacher education program and the PDS effort.

**Renewing Her Role as a Mentor**

It was 2 years before Courtney agreed to work with another student teacher. During those two years, she worked closely with Karen and Diane, who acted as Courtney's mentors in helping her learn to teach differently. By the time Courtney felt she would take the risk of working with another student teacher, which was the 1995-96 school year, she felt she had made considerable changes in her teaching practice and in her own image of herself as a person and teacher.

She decided to engage in personal therapy during the 1994-95 school year and it had been very helpful to her in understanding her reluctance to engage in confrontation

and assert her ideas. She thought the therapy helped her to communicate better at home and it helped her see that she could do things on her own when she wanted to.

In the two years she did not have student teachers, she concentrated on her mathematics teaching and her writing program. She continued her involvement in the Mentors Circle as well as the TMU group. Taking the initiative to participate in the summer writing program in 1995, the summer after her therapy year, was evidence that she had gained courage to strike out on her own. She was at a different place with a different frame of mind than two years previously when she was fighting so hard to make changes and could not help her student teachers at the same time.

After having had student teachers for many years and then working by herself for the past couple years, Courtney felt lonely in her room by herself. In addition, she saw Karen having engrossing professional conversations with her student teachers, now referred to as interns because they remained in the same classroom for almost the entire school year as part of the fifth year and final year of their program. Courtney valued the conversations she had within the TMU group and the Mentors Circle and wanted to be able to have similar interactions with an intern. Although she, Karen and Diane had satisfying professional conversations, they occurred less frequently than they had in the past two years. With an intern in the room, there was always the opportunity to have conversations if both participants were open to them and were willing to use their time that way. She said,

> I felt I had learned something through this conversation piece; that I now had something
> to offer. I also realized that I was lonely and I wanted another adult working with the
> same group of kids. I saw...I really wanted to have those conversations and I could have
> them with an intern.

Courtney decided she would try working with an intern for the 1995-96 year.
Preparation for having an intern began immediately after the school year ended in June.
The teacher education program held an institute for the mentor teachers to help them
think about how to help an intern learn to teach.  Courtney attended the institute and
listened while people talked about "co-planning" with an intern and helping them develop
"habits of mind" that characterize good teaching.  One activity was to brainstorm
everything you could think of that related to planning for teaching and learning.
Courtney had a page long list and understood that she could model how she "slogged"
through searching for materials for units and lessons as well as engage her intern in the
process.

Courtney met with Sally, her intern, in late August to talk and plan together.
Courtney liked having Sally in the classroom, not just as an extra pair of hands but
because talking about what they were doing was good for Courtney.  It helped her get
clearer about all the things they needed to consider.  Courtney hoped it was helpful to
Sally, too.  She hoped she was saying enough but not talking too much.  She did not want
to overwhelm Sally.  Courtney also wondered if she was talking too fast or if she was
appearing disorganized so that she was hard to follow.  She wondered if Sally understood
all the things she was saying.  Sally asked few questions so it was hard for Courtney to
assess the situation very closely.  Maybe Sally did not even know what to ask.  Courtney
looked inward and recognized that she, herself, did not ask questions when she was
unsure of what she knew.  Maybe Sally was experiencing the same thing.

As they planned the first day of school together, Courtney kept wondering if she
was including Sally enough in the thinking.  What activity would Sally like to do that

first day? Sally didn't know. Courtney felt awkward at times trying to connect with Sally but she figured that was natural as things got started. Courtney thought part of it was also that she did not know what to say to draw Sally into the conversation. Courtney was confident, though, that as they worked together, things would get clearer.

Talking with Sally aloud about how to work with the children on classroom procedures and norms helped Courtney focus on those pieces and made her more aware of their importance. It took 2 hours just to get some idea of what they wanted to do the first day of school. Then they needed to fill in the rough outline and plan the rest of the first week. Courtney hoped that Sally was feeling okay about what they had done. It was hard for Courtney to tell. As they talked more, Courtney realized that Sally did not seem aware of the need to talk to children about how to talk to each other and get information from each other so that a learning activity would be successful. Sally only commented on talking to the class about safety issues. As she realized this, Courtney hit upon the "saying" for the year. "Don't expect kids to do anything you haven't taught them."

The fall semester proceeded fairly smoothly. Sally was expected to assume some teaching responsibilities but not the full contingent until spring semester. Courtney could help her concentrate on a few things fall semester and become accustomed to the way the classroom functioned. She and Sally had time to develop their relationship, as well, over a longer period of time.

During the winter break, Courtney and Sally met to plan for the next few months. Sally was enthusiastic because she would become responsible for a good deal of the planning and teaching for a couple months after the break. Sally came to the meeting with her preparations to continue teaching Spanish to the class. Courtney thought she

would have planned other things as well but since she hadn't, they planned some activities together. When they finished, Courtney thought they had accomplished a lot and yet, she was not sure Sally had enough to do. Courtney thought that she should push Sally more, asking her to be specific about what she wanted to plan and teach, but was afraid of seeming too critical or antagonistic.

At a Mentors Circle meeting in mid-January where the discussion focused on reflective teaching, (Schon, 1983) Courtney realized she needed to become more reflective with Sally. Each day she needed to make time to ask Sally what went well and why so Sally could start seeing it too. Courtney thought she needed to take notes on the things she saw and heard Sally doing and share them with her. She also wanted to have evidence of what Sally was learning to share with the university supervisor.

Wanting to help Sally prepare for her lead teaching period, Courtney decided they needed to take time for talking more about Sally's unit plans, her teaching, and do some co-planning so Courtney could express her own ideas about teaching and learning in a task-oriented context. Courtney felt they were slipping into doing too much on the run and wanted to change that. Courtney hoped Sally would learn to ask more direct questions of her but also recognized that she, herself, could be more active in initiating deeper conversations about teaching and learning. Courtney thought there was something about Sally's participation that could be pushed further and Courtney realized she would probably have to do the pushing.

Courtney observed Sally's teaching more attentively and took notes as she observed. Still, in early February, she did not think her conversations with Sally were as rich as they should be. They were not digging deep enough. Courtney continued to feel

that she did not know how to do this. Sally did not offer much, either, and Courtney was

unsure how to help her. Courtney watched the university field supervisor ask questions

that seemed to dig into the intellectual work of teaching. "Why can't I do that?"

Courtney wondered. Courtney thought that Sally needed help but that Sally somehow did

not realize how lost she was. Courtney wrote,

> I know learning to teach is about having conversations about teaching, but I can't seem to
> get deeper. We need unit plans with purposes. What are our purposes?

Courtney knew that being clear on purposes for teaching the content and for

choosing the learning activities was an essential key to good teaching. She wanted to

guide Sally's thinking to dig deeply into purposes for her decisions. Still, Courtney had

difficulty getting Sally to engage in that kind of conversation because Sally was reluctant

and Courtney did not know how to draw out Sally's thinking.

When Courtney had student teachers before, she was not expected to be such an

active mentor. She had faded into the background, letting the student teacher take

complete responsibility. She offered suggestions and emotional support but generally did

not become involved in helping them plan or reflect on their teaching (Feiman-Nemser &

Beasley, 1993). With the internship program, Courtney knew she was expected to take a

much more active and intentional role in helping her intern learn to teach. After being

mentored herself by Karen and Diane, Courtney felt ready to assume a mentor's role and

help someone else. Courtney was feeling frustrated, however, because her conversations

with Sally continued to be shallow, not digging deeper into the intellectual work of

teaching. For instance, Sally said that it took her a long time to plan one lesson so

Courtney decided to co-plan a lesson using Ann Grifalconi's (1987) book, *Darkness and*

*the Butterfly*. Sally opened to a page and asked Courtney, "What are the questions [for

this page?]" On reflection, Courtney thought that she should have responded by asking Sally what *she* thought they should be. Instead, Courtney answered her by telling her some questions that applied. Courtney asked Sally if she had read the questions about looking at a text that they had discussed the week before. Sally said she had but it did not seem to Courtney that Sally had thought about them or used them to guide her planning now.

Looking at her mentoring techniques, Courtney decided she talked too fast and said too much too often. She observed that Sally shook her head as though she understood but Courtney surmised that Sally probably did not understand. She thought of ways that she could engage Sally in more intellectually challenging discussions. She could ask Sally what Sally hoped to accomplish and what she thought students actually learned. What would she do differently? How? What did she learn about herself and the students? Courtney knew what questions to ask Sally but thought that Sally probably did not know how to ask for what she needed to know or wanted. Courtney suspected that Sally did not even know what she wanted.

Courtney felt torn because she did not like giving up her class to someone else to teach. She wanted to be a vital person in the room. She was having trouble staying out of Sally's way. Sally told Courtney that she wanted to develop her own strategies for management, but whenever Courtney left the classroom, the children noticed it and the mood changed. Courtney had not realized her presence made such a powerful difference. As Courtney was trying to figure out how to help Sally learn, Courtney realized that it was hard for her to "give up the reins" with this class. She felt sorry for Sally because she, Courtney, had taken over too many times and not always helped. Courtney told

herself that it was time for her to get in the background unless Sally asked for her help. She needed to let Sally try and she needed to stay out of Sally's way.

In early March, Karen went into Courtney's room after school one day. Sally was upset and felt hopeless after a rough day. The class had been very difficult for her to manage. Courtney asked Sally how she was feeling and how she could help her. Sally was unsure and Courtney did not know either. Karen intervened and said that maybe the class was confused because Sally was doing so much teaching now and Courtney was more in the background. The rules remained the same but the teachers had changed so the children were uncertain if the same rules applied. Sally and Courtney had not made it clear to the children that Sally's rules were similar to the ones the children had with Courtney. Karen not only helped them identify the possible problem but also helped them think about how to talk about this change with the class.

Courtney thought Karen's observation of the situation made a lot of sense. Talking with the class about Sally's learning to teach as well as what her rules were seemed sensible to them both. Courtney realized that she and Sally had not brought the kids along in the transition to Sally's taking more classroom leadership. It was hard to remember to do all these things with an intern, Courtney thought. Again Courtney repeated to herself that she needed to be clear both with Sally about learning to teach and with the class about what to expect.

In late March, Courtney saw what she called the "ultimate support system for having two interns." She had to be out of the room for awhile so Sally and Karen's intern decided to teach mathematics together in Courtney's and Sally's classroom while Courtney was gone. Courtney returned while Sally and the other intern were still doing

mathematics and Sally was leading the discussion. After the lesson, Sally and the other intern talked. The other intern pointed out to Sally that she lacked "presence" with the children. Her voice and body stance did not communicate a sense of taking leadership. After this feedback, Sally went to Courtney and said, "Why didn't you tell me?" Courtney asked herself the same question. She had told Sally that Sally needed to go over her rules, expectations, and consequences but observed that Sally would read them and not enforce them. Courtney realized that she, herself, needed to go further in saying to Sally, "You are not being heard." She told herself that she should have been more specific in her feedback to Sally.

After this incident, Courtney and Sally talked more directly about Sally's teaching. Courtney asked her what she was going to do for communicating more "presence." Sally said she had thought a lot about it and Courtney went on to help Sally think about where to position herself in the room as various activities occurred and what she might say to children who were slow getting a learning task started.

In April, Courtney prepared her letter of recommendation for Sally. She wrote that Sally had a strong philosophy about children being treated with tenderness and respect as individuals. She went on to highlight Sally's ability to engage children in learning and that she was flexible, had a calm manner and soft voice. It was a very positive and supportive letter. Nevertheless, a few days later when Courtney was listening to Sally talk about her plans for her final days of teaching, Courtney could still see some gaps in Sally's thinking about how she would implement her ideas. This supported Courtney's thinking that she needed to ask Sally more directly to show her her lesson plans early and then probe Sally's thinking about how to begin a lesson, what

might happen during the lesson, and how children might respond. Courtney recognized she still needed to work on her own mentoring skills for helping an intern learn to teach.

Sally finished her internship at the end of April, leaving Courtney alone with the class for the rest of the academic year. Courtney and the class missed Sally's presence and in retrospect, Courtney thought she and the class should have acknowledged the loss more openly. Despite the problems, Courtney felt Sally had progressed well with her teaching.

Courtney felt very rewarded when Sally called during the summer to say that she had been teaching children of migrant workers as a summer job and was using what she learned from Courtney about designing curriculum that responded to children's cues about their understandings. One strategy Courtney and Sally used to understand what was involved in a task they expected the children to accomplish was to do the task themselves. Courtney had learned from her work in the TMU group that learning to teach by engaging in learning the content itself was a valuable way to understand not only the concepts but the questions and problems that learners confront. Thus, as the teacher, she could think about how best to help her students confront those problems. Courtney had helped Sally plan for teaching and learning by talking and doing it together. In her phone call, Sally acknowledged that she had learned a lot under Courtney's guidance.

Courtney felt good about having successfully helped a novice enter the profession. She gladly agreed to work with another intern the next year. She felt she now had a good handle on her management and was more confident in developing a learning community classroom culture. She also felt she had learned to facilitate

mathematics discourse so that it reached sophisticated levels of debate and conjecture. Her once fragile knowledge of innovative teaching approaches was strengthening. She felt she had something she could now teach to a novice. She was still learning how to engage an intern in the kinds of conversations she valued for her own professional growth but she was gaining more skills in mentoring and felt comfortable assuming the role of mentor. Most importantly, she no longer felt in a double bind. She realized she had many answers and that the enjoyment of learning was searching for others. She also realized that she felt great satisfaction if she could help a novice take that journey with her.

# Chapter 7

## FINDING WHERE THE JOURNEY LEADS: CHANGES IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND PERSONAL IMAGE

> "I'm thinking change happens to those who talk and think and write about change."
> (Courtney)
>
> Courtney: "It's coming slowly. I'm starting to give my ideas and say things. It's coming."
> Me: "You're going to be dynamite."
> Courtney: "I'm already getting my fuses lit for the explosion."

There was no doubt in Courtney's mind or in the minds of many of Courtney's colleagues that by the end of the 1995-96 school year she had changed her teaching practice and changed how she presented herself as well. One of the Adams' staff said,

> I just think there has been a big change in Courtney. She's much more a force to be reckoned with. I think she has always wanted to be heard and I think she was heard but now she's ready to interrupt and say, 'Wait a minute. I think there's something else you need to think about here.' That's more forceful. She's not going to sit there. She's going to jump in and be heard. I think that's a big change.

Courtney began to find the voice that she had been trying to locate within her. She began to express her views, being more assertive and articulate than previously. Another Adams' teacher noticed differences in her demeanor and in her classroom as well.

> I notice a difference in Courtney. She has lots of expression. She looks confident. She doesn't look beaten down. She talks a lot more about her classroom. She just glows. She said she was having a wonderful year. She couldn't hide it. Her body language just said it. I think she has a better idea of what her role is—her role as a teacher and facilitator in that classroom. I think she got a clear vision of what she wanted to happen in that classroom and how to do it. We used to ask her how she wanted that classroom to look but she wasn't able to put it into action. It's like she can take that vision now and do it. She seems very clear about what she wants and the confidence to do it.

After six years of professional and personal struggle, in the seventh year

Courtney's classroom started functioning more like the learning community she

envisioned. Her teaching was more student-oriented and conceptually based and her

students were responding seriously. She felt differently about herself and she even

looked different. Several colleagues remarked that she did not look so drawn and tired as

she had the previous years. She accepted an intern to mentor after a hiatus of two years

and felt more confident about being able to help her learn to teach. She was more

articulate about her thinking; she could illustrate her ideas using classroom examples that

illuminated the issues she wanted to highlight. She spoke up more assertively at

meetings, handling conflict by talking from her own experiences. She was still

uncomfortable confronting anyone directly, but she had found a way to communicate her

disagreements that she thought was effective. Using examples from her own personal

and professional lives, she presented alternatives to consider without directly criticizing

someone else or their ideas. In other words, changes were apparent in many aspects of

her teaching practice and her personal well being. She said,

> I have a new level of confidence that says to me I can make learning happen in my
> classroom. For four or five years I knew there was something in my classroom I wanted
> to create but I couldn't make it happen. But this year I could do it. I could make it
> happen. I made learning go on. I connected with kids. I engaged children in serious
> learning and that feels good.

## A Better Handle on Developing a Classroom Learning Community

Courtney's classroom continued to be active and noisy during the 1995-96 school

year, but a colleague commented that the noise was more controlled and purposeful than

in previous years. As Courtney learned to interpret more accurately what children said

and what their behavior was communicating, she was better able to pinpoint problems

and address them with individuals or present them to the whole class as a problem that

everyone needed to help solve. She recognized that she had been blaming children for their problems rather than going beyond blame to figure out what the children needed. She said,

> In difficult situations, it was more a blaming situation. [The children] weren't meeting my needs. Now, if I see that a child is having a hard time, instead of blaming, I try to figure out what that child is trying to tell me. They tell us in the things they do what it is they need. Their actions give us messages to help us figure out what they need. A child who shuts down and is belligerent often just needs help with getting started and some directions on what to do. I found that when I started listening, they were telling me those things. I don't always hear it now. Teachers aren't trained to get those messages. I want to get a lot better at figuring out what kids mean because they are always telling me something in their own way.

Learning to listen to and understand what children meant by their words and actions helped Courtney respond to children in ways that could redirect their attention and help them engage in learning. Courtney recognized that previously she had been assessing children's behavior according to how satisfactorily they met her own needs. When she was dissatisfied, she tended to blame her students. Now, instead of a trying to find fault, Courtney tried to find meaning and appropriate responses. In a sense, she reasoned that she had actually been successful in creating the safe, trusting environment she envisioned in which children felt free to communicate their needs, but when they did that, she did not know what to do. She noted, "I was letting them show me what they needed and I didn't know what they were saying!"

Courtney felt connected to her students in a different and more functional way than the two groups she had been with the past four years. After her break-up with Peg, she filled the emotional void through her relationship with her students. Looking back, she saw that she was relying on the children to give her the attention that Peg had supplied. Courtney reflected,

> The first year I was by myself without Peg, I couldn't leave those kids in my classroom. I brought them home. I dreamt about them; I showered with them. I spent the following summer—they were with me every single day. I couldn't let go of them. I was scared to

go back because it had been such a hard year. Everyone said it was such a horrible class you shouldn't put them back together again. But I wanted to really connect with these kids and...I was so connected, I couldn't sever myself at all. For my whole vacation I thought about them every single day. That's not healthy. I was exhausted when I started the year having thought about them every day. Did I need that because I had severed my relationship with Peg? Did I need another piece to draw myself into so deeply? They were very needy but I needed them!

As Courtney came to feel more confident about herself and developed relationships with other teachers, especially in the TMU group and with Karen and Diane, she found other sources for satisfying personal contact. As she found her own voice and the will to speak it, she also found strength in herself. She did not look to her students or her colleagues to fill the same kind of emotional needs she had in the past. With her new class for 1995-96, Courtney recognized that, although she had an emotional investment, it served different needs. She said,

Because of the way I now teach, I am constantly in touch with my kids, asking them what they think, what they're doing, what they're learning. I am going for more than fill in the blank, right answer. I am trying to listen to them with every ounce I have and figure them out. What is emotionally connecting for them? What is engaging for them? How do I help them become learners—see themselves as learners? I'm really trying to listen to them, teach them to listen to each other. Give them not only me and the intern as a resource for them but each other. Much of my energy is driven towards that. In that way, there is an attachment for me with those students which is a completely different way than 5 years ago. I've learned how to do that. I didn't know how to do that when I first started this. There were so many questions. I'm learning better how to do that—to respond to their needs, to listen to what their needs are.

Courtney believed that getting to know her students meant developing an emotional connection with them but not a dependency. She recalled that her fourth grade teacher went beyond just presenting information and connected with her at a personal level. This teacher revealed to Courtney that teachers do have feelings and can act on them in ways that help children grow. Courtney thought that her fourth grade teacher planted a seed in Courtney's mind that teachers can influence changes in children. Feeling connected to her students, Courtney said she was no longer satisfied with just teaching information. She had to know her students as individuals and they had to know

each other so that they could shape curriculum together that responded to their needs as learners. This meant than her classroom continued to be active and louder than most others in the building, but she had begun to accept that.

Courtney always had felt the pressure to have a well-ordered and quiet classroom. This was not only the norm at Adams but a reflection of the culture of teaching that a quiet, organized classroom was a sign of good management and learning. She was frustrated with the mess and the noise that resulted from her attempts at activity-based learning. When she first heard about developing a classroom culture based on norms of responsibility, supportive interaction, and respect, she thought it was the way she wanted to organize her classroom. Learning community structures gave her a language for her own thinking as well as ways to talk to children about how to function in an active classroom. After years of trying to clarify her position as an adult authority in her classroom, she came to recognize that talking to children about personal and social responsibility meant that she shared some control of the classroom with children but not abdication of her responsibility to communicate clear expectations and set limits for behavior. She thought about herself as an administrator of a classroom community. She thought that good administrators knew how to give everyone recognition at the same time that they knew how to highlight the paths that the community should follow. She commented,

> What I'm doing in my classroom—I'm going to be a good administrator eventually. I'm trying to do that. Giving my kids a voice. But somehow eventually someone's got to synthesize it. So it's my third graders who are teaching me to be a good administrator.

Courtney knew she had more to learn about administering a learning community and her students were one source for her learning. Orchestrating a learning community was more than being a good administrator, however. Courtney needed to learn to talk to

her students differently and she found that writing down words and phrases helped her. The catchy phrases that she loved to record in her journals eventually evolved into a language that she could use sincerely with her students to address concerns positively. For instance, she said that whereas, she used to be more dictatorial when telling children what to do, now she gave them reasons for doing things. Instead of saying sternly, "Put up your chairs!" she says, "You need to put up your chairs so that the custodian can clean." Or, "You need to be quiet now so that we can all think."

Courtney also came to understand that a learning community classroom was more than simply a management system and was not necessarily synonymous with cooperative group learning. She perceived it as a way of being together to foster everyone's learning. She saw aspects of learning community and human caring as intricately related and interwoven. She thought that her need for human connections complemented female characteristics of caring and nurturance (Grumet, 1988; Noddings, 1984). In turn, these were corner stones for building a learning community. This concept gave her a better understanding of what she was trying to achieve and a better idea of her role in her classroom community.

**Changes in Her Teaching Practice**

*Teaching mathematics for understanding.* Courtney's teaching practice changed along with her growing understanding of how to make her vision of a learning community become a reality. This was especially evident in her mathematics teaching. She was particularly pleased that by the 1995-96 school year, she had reached a level of mathematical understanding herself that buoyed her confidence and had learned to listen

more acutely to what children said that helped her guide mathematical discourse constructively. She observed,

> I am finally figuring out after all these years how to really listen to my kids without panicking. There was always a piece in me saying, 'come on, get it out, get it out. What are you going to say? What are you going to say?' There were times this year that it just felt right—the wait time, the time to let each kid figure it out, the calling on each other. All the things that had been there in bits and pieces in previous years but for some reason this year with this group, it felt, I mean I was in a different place....I was in a different place for letting it happen and trusting it. I trusted them in various degrees along the way but for some reason my position was different this year.

Previously during mathematical discussions, Courtney felt pressed to keep the discussion moving. She was uncomfortable with pauses or waiting for children to think through something. She did not know what children might say and that scared her because she might not know how to respond. This year she reached a different place in her practice. She did not feel that she had to push the discussion so hard. She was more comfortable waiting while children thought about a question. She did not feel that she had to "jump in and orchestrate every little piece of time" as she had in the past. She had more trust that the children would express their ideas to each other and that the ideas would sustain the conversations.

Courtney noted that it was through changing her mathematics practice that she learned that teaching did not have to be limited to telling. By creating a way for children to share their thinking and discuss mathematical ideas, Courtney saw that they knew a lot. Her role was more "helping them see what they knew and then asking them the question that would help them go on with what they already knew." It was different from presenting information, knowing that some children would get it and others would not and that was just the way it was in school. Courtney observed the difference in what she was trying to do now with how she taught before she became involved in changing her practice.

> There still is an agenda. We still have an overriding objective to learn here. But each of
> these children is entering in a different way. I want to get at each child's entry point so
> they can take the next step in their learning. That sounds different from me saying they
> are going to do textbooks or saying here's the agenda and if you can't get on it, well
> that's too bad. It's quite a different point.

Courtney wanted to create learning opportunities so that each child could get involved at his or her own level of learning. That meant knowing each child well enough so that she could design curriculum that included places for each child to get connected. It also meant knowing subject matter well enough to create learning tasks and problems that would allow for multiple entry points. Courtney recognized she was thinking about her responsibility to create curriculum differently. She was no longer looking only at books and materials as the starting point but at her students as learners and then connecting them to tasks and materials that would push their learning further.

Courtney recognized what she was doing with her mathematics practice was to shape opportunities for her students to socially construct knowledge. It was only the previous year, 1994-95 that she had really understood this term. When she, Karen and Diane worked on a unit about the Egyptian number system, they tried to figure out what the system meant, thinking together about what the symbols represented. They were also teaching the system to their classes as a way to investigate concepts of numeration, place value, and symbolic representation. Courtney noted that the children were understanding it faster than she, Karen and Diane. Courtney's, Karen's and Diane's understanding was fed by the children's discussions. Not only were the children constructing knowledge together, but Courtney realized that she, Karen and Diane were also socially constructing their knowledge using what they were learning from their classroom experiences with their students. Although Courtney had heard the terms, "socially constructed knowledge," she did not understand them until she experienced learning this way herself.

She reflected that her students had been doing this in mathematics and literacy for several years, but she had not associated the term with what she was trying to do in her teaching practice.

Courtney began to see the connecting threads in constructivist practices. She recognized that her role as teacher was to help children generate ideas, explore them, debate them, consider other people's ideas, and shape curriculum accordingly. She said,

> All those questions in literacy, I was hearing in math. What do people think about this? How do people feel about this? We were asking kids to think out loud. Then where do we go next? That was always my problem—figuring out where to go next...There was a lot of connection happening. The whole classroom was how we worked together, how we listened to each other, how we played, what we did in math, what we did in literature. I could see there were a lot of connections, things were crossing. Things were not black and white. We were asking kids to share where they were at—what they understood. So that was teaching for understanding.

As Courtney changed her teaching practice from transmission to construction of knowledge, she saw that her teaching practice was no longer neatly compartmentalized by subject matter. Whether it was a problem with recess, negative numbers, or how shadows work, Courtney saw that she was actually using the same conceptual approach to teaching and learning. She would help the children clarify the problem, help them engage in a task that would generate ideas and ways to think about the problem, facilitate discussion in which all ideas could be heard, and eventually guide the group to some conjectures, clarification of concepts, or more sophisticated understanding about the concepts or issues being considered. She saw patterns across her teaching practice in the ways she was interacting with children, eliciting what they understood, posing questions or problems for them to address, facilitating conversations about their thinking, helping them link their ideas to other's in order to eventually understand a concept or generate a conjecture that reflected a deeper level of understanding. She acknowledged that she had struggled with figuring out how to guide or shape this approach to learning; she felt at a

loss as to next steps once she got the learning started. She said, however, that she was

learning how to talk to children, how to help them talk to each other and was even trying

to talk to her own teenagers differently as a result. Next steps were becoming more clear

to her.

Courtney credited her experiences and conversations with the Teaching

Mathematics for Understanding group as a key source of her learning. She said,

> This group [TMU]has supported me in changing, too. We created this group where we
> could talk about things. It became a support group for people trying to teach differently.
> There were struggles...It was about all the things going on in my classroom. The
> conversation I was developing in math was the same conversation that was going on in
> our classroom. Honest communication about your own thoughts, about your own
> understandings and about how your ideas connected with somebody else's ideas. That
> was in math or science, social studies, writing or reading. I was learning through that one
> subject area how to develop a learning community in the classroom.

Although the TMU group focused on learning to teach mathematics for understanding,

Courtney recognized that she could apply her learning to all areas of her practice that she

was trying to change. In the group, she was with colleagues who were confronting some

of the same experiences, frustrations, and questions Courtney had as she struggled to

teach differently. Courtney lived the experiences and ways of interacting in the TMU

group that she wanted to have happen in her classroom. Through these experiences and

conversations, she learned what it looked like and felt like to function in a learning

community. Through the struggles of the group to reach a level of honest, open discourse

Courtney saw how to make this happen in her classroom.

*Writing as a powerful process and tool.* Courtney's changed stance towards

teaching and learning spilled into her writing program as well. Coming from the

Teachers Writing Project the summer of 1995, Courtney expanded her writing program

for the 1995-96 school year. In addition to her students writing almost daily and sharing

their stories, she initiated the parent journal, a classroom newspaper, a classroom

magazine that included children's reports from their studies, and a pen pal letter exchange

with a Teachers Writing Project colleague's classroom. She realized that writing was an

outlet for her as well as a repository of memories. She said,

> I would go and write and write and write and say all those things I was mad at. I used to
> run away from it. I remember when I was angry when I was younger I used to go and sit
> on the bank of the river and just cry and cry. No one knew I was there. Now this is
> another way to deal with it. I can sit down and write. I can put it down in black and
> white.

Discovering the power of writing as a personal outlet for herself, Courtney

wanted to create similar opportunities for her students. She said that the writing pieces of

her curriculum in 1995-96 were much more prominent than they had been before. Her

experience at the Teachers Writing Project of talking about her own writing with a group

of peers touched her personally and she wanted her students to find the same strength in

the writing process. She commented,

> The powerful thing about that was how that conversation about my writing piece,
> bringing that to a group of writers, helped me get into all the memories I had about that
> one incident in the summer when we built a raft. Each time I took it back they would
> help me get deeper and deeper. And I saw how powerful the writing process was with a
> group of writers who helped think about your piece of writing and develop it. Which is
> what the writing process is about. I knew it was important but I had never really felt it.

Although she knew writing was an important tool, Courtney felt the power of

writing and sharing drafts with others who pushed her thinking in the Teachers Writing

Project experience. Courtney came to see that she could write and that by learning to

probe her thinking, she could be introspective and reflective. Writing helped clarify her

thinking and with clearer visions, she was better able to create the kind of classroom she

wanted. The process of sharing her writing with others helped her discover more about

herself, giving her strategies to uncover memories she thought were lost. For Courtney,

the conversations about her writing were an important piece in the process. In her

classroom, she urged students to share their writing, often reading her own compositions

as a model. She created outlets for publication of their work. She even got all the

classroom parents involved in writing by circulating the parent journal.

## Becoming an Intentional Learner

As Courtney got a better grasp on the different teaching practices she was using,

she was better able to reconcile her roles as teacher and learner. She accepted her

position as a learner, no longer feeling like a teacher impostor simply because she did not

have all the answers. She noted,

> I don't feel there's an impostor anymore. I can talk about what I do and I can talk about
> what I think came about and I can say, "I don't understand and don't know what this
> means. I'm trying to figure this out." I don't think there's an impostor in me. I think
> there's a person that, I'm still trying to figure this whole process of teaching out. I think
> there is a whole process we're going through.

Courtney felt more comfortable being a learner—not knowing all the answers. She

acknowledged that she was in a process of learning to teach that was not finished. When

she saw that other teachers in the study groups, including university professors, did not

know everything but considered themselves learners, she realized that a teacher could

continue to learn, even publicly acknowledge herself as a learner and still maintain

credibility as a teacher. She said,

> I kept seeing these people don't know all the answers. They have strategies, they have
> ways of going about this but there's no one right answer here. The conversations that
> were happening in math were saying the same thing. For me who didn't have any
> answers. I didn't know all the answers I was supposed to know. And I thought, 'Hold it.
> I don't have to know all the answers. But there are other things I can do. There are
> strategies. I have thoughts and feelings that connect to these other people.' So that's
> why the conversation piece is so important for me.

Courtney saw that her connections to her colleagues and friends were links to

exploring her own thinking and feelings. She valued conversations with colleagues she

trusted because they not only accepted her as a learner but also were learners with her.

Through their conversations, Courtney had a place to test her ideas, learn to explain her

thinking, and use other's knowledge to enrich her own. When she went to the Teacher

Writing Project, she also saw that she could learn something outside her usual circle of

colleagues. She gained a sense of being able to learn through her own endeavors. She

said,

> I think I can learn almost anything and I just want to figure out what I can do. Maybe it's
> a book I read or maybe it's something I do. Like yesterday I tore up the hall carpet. I
> have hardwood floors. Now what's the next step? You can take a book and you can learn
> how to do a floor, you can learn how to plant seeds, design a garden if you want to take
> the time to do it. We're so busy saying I can't do this, I can't do this, I can't do anything,
> but I feel I can learn. This is a new stance for me. I didn't feel I could learn things
> before... I can see this is becoming more of a piece of me everywhere. This learning,
> asking questions, trying to do things. And it doesn't have to come out perfect. The idea
> is that I can do it and I'm willing to try.

Courtney gained confidence in her ability to learn. She allowed herself to ask

questions, be curious, not know. She was willing to risk trying to learn in all areas of her

life and she knew she had the fortitude to get through the hard parts. She did not have to

look to others to make her decisions, to learn for her; she started to take control herself.

She felt she was no longer burdened with thinking that, as a teacher, she was expected to

have all the answers. She discovered the freedom of looking at her professional and

personal life from the stance of a learner. She had faith in her ability to learn, her

willingness to try new pursuits.

## Becoming an Intentional Mentor

As a mentor of novice teachers, Courtney also changed her perspective on her role

as mentor. When she took an intern during the 1995-96 school year, Courtney started

sharing what she was learning about teaching and learning with her intern. She wanted to

help her intern understand that teaching was intellectual work—something she had only

just discovered in the past few years herself. By involving her intern in the types of

conversations that had supported her own learning, Courtney discovered that she was also

finding a language to talk about her classroom and her work. This was a very different

view of student teaching than she held before. She reflected,

> I guess at one point I thought at the end of student teaching they were to go out and teach [like finished products.] That was the goal for me. In fact, I was to do it while I was student teaching. [The student teachers] were ready to go in...and run the whole show. There is a piece of me that was disappointed that they weren't ready to do that when they were done. If I had really thought about it, I would have realized I wasn't ready either...Many days I came out frustrated. Now I'm not turning out finished products. I'm not a finished product. I know I'm not turning out a finished product now. What I hope to do is help them see that this is a beginning step of their practice of learning. This is never ending. You're going to go on and learn from each kid, each day, each hour. Sure there are things you're going to get better at. Are we ever finished products? I don't think so... I guess I start out by saying this is only the beginning of a long adventure you're going to have. You're going to learn about strategies, about planning. There are a lot of things you don't know at the beginning, but you're going to learn a lot more. And that is a different position than when I had student teachers before.

Having gone through so many difficult years of her own re-learning to teach and

coming to understand that the intellectual challenge of teaching for understanding meant

that she would always be learning, Courtney wanted to convey that stance to her intern.

Courtney was no longer trying to help a novice become an expert technician by the end of

student teaching. Instead, she hoped her intern would feel unfinished; her experience in

learning to teach would not be brought to closure.

Courtney recalled Buchmann's (1987) idea about teachers "coming full circle"

meaning that if they experienced learning the same kind of teaching practices that they

had known as students without questioning the purposes of the practices, they would

close their learning circle and perpetuate outmoded or inappropriate practices. By

planning and teaching together, Courtney hoped to probe the nature of teaching with her

intern. She reflected that her own learning circle never closed during her student

teaching because it was so different from what she expected. Now she worked to help

her intern keep her circle of learning open also. She accepted this as her role of mentor, a

different position for her than when she used to step back and let her student teachers take over the classroom.

Courtney felt some reciprocity in her relationship with her intern. She liked having another person who could observe the children. She liked having someone she could talk to about issues of teaching and learning.

> I found it good to have another pair of eyes looking at the same group of children. It's nice to have the support. It really keeps the ideas flowing of creating a learning community, of this place where we are all learning. We have this beginner, we have me and together we have to have this conversation to keep this flowing through our day, through our year. If I were alone, I'd have to be thinking about that myself. So the advantage of having another person is that on-going conversation, that excitement about learning and sharing with another adult about this, what these kids are learning. It's reaffirming that this is a learning place. It keeps me energized; it keeps me thinking why I'm doing what I'm doing.

Courtney enjoyed having an intern because she thought she had reached a place in her teaching practice that was energized by professional interactions. She realized that one way to stimulate and maintain the intellectual work of teaching was to participate in on-going conversations about teaching, learning and learning to teach with another person who shared experiences with her students. Courtney learned the power of conversation especially through her TMU group and her relationship with Karen and Diane. She wanted this to be a part of her everyday professional life. She also knew that, as a learner, she needed the interaction, the enthusiasm, the excitement that a novice usually brings to student teaching. Once she had a good handle on her teaching, having to help her novice learn teaching kept Courtney questioning her own teaching practices and finding ways to make her thinking explicit. At the same time, she and her intern learned together about the students and designing curriculum to fit their needs.

Courtney knew her perspective on helping an intern learn to teach was aimed in a rewarding direction when she received a call from her intern during the summer of 1996.

Her intern had been teaching children of migrant workers. Courtney recalled the phone

call,

> She talked about her migrant class and nobody knew how to share. So she decided she
> would model and show them how. And it opened it up and now they share. As she
> talked, I thought, she has got it. I thought, I have taught somebody. It has fermented in
> her body and in her mind and she is going to make this happen. I thought, this is it, this is
> what it's about. This is what I want now. She's arrived, I've arrived. It was just like,
> this is what it's about…I can feel goose bumps and tears coming to my eyes right now
> even as I talk about this. It's like I have made a difference somewhere. Because she
> didn't come with that. And that is the piece I want to be connected to. Helping them
> change the profession, helping the profession become inclusive because she is trying to
> include all her students, their needs, in the curriculum. She is really thinking about
> children and how they learn and what they need.

Courtney saw a piece of herself in her intern's emergent teaching. Her intern was

looking at what her students needed and how to meet those needs. Through helping her

intern learn to see children and teaching and learning differently, Courtney thought she

was also extending her own knowledge to changing the profession in some way. Not

only had she worked with her intern differently, Courtney felt she had made a difference

in the way her intern taught. The intern was trying to reach all her students, a goal

Courtney had had since she began her pursuit of change and a goal she wanted to instill

in her interns.

Helping someone learn to teach had a spiral effect on Courtney's own learning.

As she worked to be more articulate about what she knew as a teacher in order to explain

her thinking to her intern, Courtney clarified her own thinking. In turn, she thought this

would help her intern become more articulate and clear. One fed the other and each

benefited. Courtney saw that in her new role as mentor, the rewards of working with an

intern could far outweigh the expenditure of time and effort involved.

**Defining Herself**

Courtney not only saw differences in her professional life during 1995-96 but also in herself personally. She felt more confident, less dependent, and beyond the tumult of the past several years when she was undergoing so much change. She said,

> I am comfortable with myself right now. I really am, I don't know why, but I am. Once I passed Nov 7, when I turned 50, I was okay. I survived it. I went for a walk today and thought about how I didn't have to depend on anybody for any outside stuff. That's a nice place to be. It probably played into this past year's feeling good about my teaching but I don't know. Maybe I feel good because the year was good. If I had had a bad year or a rough year I probably wouldn't be feeling so good about where I am right now. I'd probably be doing a lot of questioning, soul searching. I don't know. I've had 4 bad years in a row. I've had some really tough groups. And I was in a great deal of change. And I don't know if it was because I had a rough group or I was in the process of change

Encountering her fiftieth birthday had some effect on Courtney's attitude. At least gerontologically, she felt like a survivor. In addition, she realized she had reached a level of autonomy that felt reassuring. She could depend on herself more to learn and accomplish things. She had achieved changes in her teaching practices that were working for her and her students. Her classroom was more in alignment with her vision than it ever had been. She had a group of students who seemed easier to work with than the last two groups. All of it seemed to contribute to Courtney's feeling good about herself and her teaching. She was realistic, however, in recognizing that if any of the factors had been different, her year might have been as rough as the last ones.

Courtney drew on her own strengths and resources to support her functioning more independently. She found her motivation for her actions within herself instead of relying on extrinsic sources. She noted,

> Motivation now is more from inside. Before, everything was from the outside. Now it's from the inside. It's what I'm feeling. Through the readings, the conversations, through the things I've seen, I now have a belief about knowing what's good for kids. Now I'm making that happen. I was having trouble with that just a year ago and Bob's answer to that was bring in the basals, [but I didn't]. That's not coming from the outside; that's something completely different. And that was just a year ago. So no, it's not from them, it's from me. It's only been a short time. There was something I saw I wanted. And

that's the piece where Karen, Diane, Ruth, Lee, the math group, the Deborah Ball tapes
and all those pieces [helped me].

Courtney felt committed to changing her teaching but she had to confront her own

self, her beliefs about teaching and learning, and the dysfunctional nature of her practice

as she changed from former habits of dependency and outside control to internal

motivation, drive, and awareness of power. Courtney felt that the sustained

conversations with the TMU group and other study groups, her work with Karen, Diane,

Ruth, and Lee, and her observations of other teachers who practiced teaching for

understanding fed her pursuit of change. She developed different perspectives on her role

and her ability to lead. She felt in control of her decisions, rather than allowing someone

else to make her decisions for her. Unlike her previous tendency to think other people

knew better than she, she rejected Bob's advice to return to basals and conventional

teacher-centered practice. She remained true to herself and her desire to change. With

the end of the 1995-96 school year, she was beginning to experience success.

Confronting conflicts continued to be difficult for Courtney. She said,

I've only started [dealing with confronting conflict] and it's only the tip of the iceberg. I
want to do more of it. It's very new to me.

Courtney had the ambition to get better at addressing confrontation and conflict. What

she had learned through the early Core Team meetings on conflict resolution and

interpersonal skills, what she had learned from books and tapes, and what she came to

understand about herself in personal therapy gave Courtney a basis for tackling this area

that she wanted to change. She was just starting; her learning was in the fragile state.

Although she felt her need for acceptance from colleagues had diminished as she became

more self-assured, she still could not confront someone directly. She reflected that she

felt scared when someone put her on the spot and she did not want to do that to others.

Instead, when she disagreed with someone, she used her own experiences to explain her

position. As she put it,

> I can use my own examples. I can talk about what doesn't work in my classroom, what
> works in my classroom but I can't say, 'You should not do that.' And I don't know if I'll
> ever get to that point. I think it is just as powerful to talk from what I do. I've found I
> can use my own experience and talk about my beliefs but before I couldn't even do that.
> It's only been in the last couple years that I've been able to talk about real difficult things
> for me, instead of just generalizing—it's just me, it's all my fault. Now I can give
> examples, vignettes or stories of things that are or are not working for me in the
> classroom. When all the teachers were together at the end of the year, there were
> examples of all the wonderful things that were going on with student teachers but I
> brought up that it was difficult for Sally and me to communicate at one point and I came
> up with different examples. In some group, there was an issue about curriculum, and I
> said something about I think it's important for kids to have phonics, but I have difficulty
> knowing how to get to all the children's needs when it's related to phonics and how to
> manage that. So that was an example of a time when I talked about it.

Courtney was learning how to talk about her beliefs and her practice and was

gaining the courage to speak her opinions. Previously she frequently assumed that her

difficulties were her fault and no one else experienced them. Now she was more willing

to expose her doubts and question ideas being debated. By talking about her own

practice, she felt she was not saying to others that they were wrong, but that she had

alternative ways to think about an issue or question. She had the courage to acknowledge

her own difficulties, such as trying to develop good communication with her intern or

managing phonics instruction. She hoped this would create opportunities to discuss

different sides of an issue rather than accept only one view.

In the past, Courtney admired someone who could deal directly with another

person about a disagreement. She thought it was a powerful person who could just say to

someone that they were wrong. When she witnessed a colleague chastise another in

public, however, she realized that direct confrontation was not necessarily humanitarian.

She recalled her feelings of lack of control and defenselessness when her second grade

teacher publicly admonished her for failing her phonics test. She did not want to put

anyone else in that situation. Although she agreed that her colleague had done something wrong, she no longer thought that direct confrontation was always the best way to address a problem, especially when it exposed someone to unnecessary public embarrassment. Courtney found that expressing her beliefs and opinions through her own experiences was more comfortable for her and gave her the impetus to talk instead of remain silent.

As Courtney became clearer about her changing practices, her classroom culture, and her role in making learning happen in a learning community, she found she was able to talk about her beliefs and practices with university people, colleagues, her intern, and her students. She no longer worried so much about acceptance or confrontation such that it constrained her from participating in discussions. She was better able to separate expressing controversial opinions and beliefs from arousing personal feelings of conflict and inadequacy.

Courtney compared her process of change to a journey. The vehicle for her journey was herself. The professional relationships, conversations, readings, PDS meetings, interactions with university people, and personal friendships were pieces that at times propelled her, at other times put up roadblocks in her path. In the journey, she found the control she was seeking in order to make decisions in her professional and personal life. She said,

> Instead of being on the road, I am the road. Each of these pieces is part of a life blood system. I am the main road and all these pieces feed into it. That journey is me. All these things that enter into it--there are pieces that I feel I have no control over and there are pieces I have a lot of control over. The decisions I have some control over. When I look at curriculum guides from the district, I look at the objectives they want. I could choose to do it with basals or I could choose to do it by building concepts. In that sense I see I have control.

Courtney saw that there were parts of her life that were out of her control such as pre-determined district objectives or whether Andrea or Kevin would win their sporting event. She realized, however, that as a teacher, spouse, parent, and friend, she was constantly in a position to make her own decisions. She felt she was at last able to seize these moments and make them hers. One of her colleagues noted that the journey through the change process had not been easy for Courtney and she admired her courage and perseverance. She highlighted the nature of the change by commenting,

> I have enormous respect for the courage to do what she's done in the last 6 years. To me it takes more courage to live through those years and keep moving forward and sort of get to the other side of it. Because the pressures against it were greater than the pressures supporting her even in a PDS. The pressure not to change too many things all at once and sort of do what others are doing. But she was making radical change. From, sort of the difference between being trained to do a job and being educated to understand what you need to continue to learn in order to continue to do the job. It's sort of technical versus socially constructed. I think her perspective changed from approaching teaching from a fairly practical, technical idea, to realizing it's a very complex thing requiring a lot more of learning teaching...and it isn't simple...While I see a lot of practices change today, I'm not sure any of those teachers have changed in their gut. Many have stayed with their same feelings about teaching and learning...When I went in her classroom her demeanor was different. She was more relaxed in a way that says I understand what's going on here...A lot of confidence about I can figure this out; I know how to deal with it.

The changes Courtney made in her teaching practices and in her self-image were evident to many of the people who had watched her struggle through the years of turmoil and confusion. She converted her practice from a technology into a complex, intellectually and socially dynamic construction. Although Courtney eventually found networks to support and help her through this change, the Adams environment was not always conducive to undertaking dramatic shifts in practice. As another colleague observed, for a number of years the Adams staff was busy just trying to take care of themselves, leaving little room for concern for supporting others in their efforts to change their teaching. The fact that Adams was a PDS afforded Courtney many learning opportunities at the same time that it acted as a restraint on her progress. While Courtney

was struggling herself, the Adams staff was struggling with its own tensions and stress. Trying to make radical changes in such an environment took determination, tenacity and courage.

Courtney recognized that she would never close the circle that had been left open from her student teaching days. She now realized that she did not want it to close since the changes in her teaching meant that she needed and wanted to continue learning. She was feeling content with herself personally and took pleasure in her growing ability to decide things for herself. She knew she wasn't finished—there would likely be more rough spots to move through. She thought, however, that having done it before, she could do it again and maybe with more ease and grace. Courtney could point to the enlightening as well as painful pieces that marked her journey. What she had discovered at this point in the road was that each piece fed into her journey and helped to make the path clearer. She said,

> There are pieces of each of these inside my story that helped me formulate what I know now. This reading White Teacher, conversations with the cooperative learning professor, conversations with Core team, divorce with Peg, TMU group, mentoring from Karen and Diane, Mentors Circle, writing project—is finding myself as a professional, finding my voice as a woman, as a person. Finding myself.

# Chapter 8

## CHANGING TEACHING PRACTICE: ACCOUNTING FOR AN ATYPICAL JOURNEY OF CHANGE BY A SEEMINGLY TYPICAL TEACHER

> Now I'm at a different point. Maybe it's turning 50. I realize, 'Hey, this is it. You'd
> better start now.' (Courtney)

Courtney dreaded her fiftieth birthday but once it arrived in November 1995, she

accepted it gracefully. It was a good year for her—healthy, satisfying, and liberating in

the sense that she finally felt she had valuable knowledge to share, the strength to express

her own thinking, and the confidence to learn what she wanted to know. After six years

of struggling to define herself more distinctly and change her teaching practice, she

moved through the seventh year, at age 50, realizing some successes in her personal and

professional lives that indicated her efforts were paying off. The temptation to say that

getting beyond the chronological and psychological hurdle of turning 50 made the

difference in her ability to seize control and change her self-image invites

oversimplification, however, of the complex, multi-faceted process of change that she

endured. During most of the years that Courtney was struggling with change, she dealt

with problems and concerns in many areas of her life. As she was trying to change her

teaching approaches and classroom structure in dramatic ways, she was also experiencing

separation from her closest friend and teaching partner, marital stress, constant concern

about her daughter's well-being, teaching without a teammate for the first time in 20

years, building new and unique relationships with colleagues, carving niches for herself in professional groups and conversations, and adjusting to new organizational structures and expectations.

The preceding chapters have told the story of Courtney's struggle to change her teaching practice in radical ways as well as change some personal traits that would allow her to function more autonomously. The purpose of this chapter is to look at what it took for Courtney to change. She experienced a slow, arduous process characterized by tensions, stresses and transitional periods in both her professional and personal lives. Courtney found several venues of support that eventually worked together to provide her with the substance and process of professional development that she needed to help her take charge of the intellectual and social tasks of teaching inherent in reform practices. In order to gain a better understanding of what change involved for Courtney, this chapter will explore some of these tensions, stresses and transitions, their effects on Courtney's functioning, and how an array of resources eventually came together in complementary ways to help her learn and change.

This chapter begins by placing Courtney's story against its social-historical and developmental backdrops. Developmental theories help us account for what generally happens as people or organizations grow and change. Using development as a focal point, the first section considers aspects of personal development such as adult identity issues, career development such as continuing to grow professionally or stagnating, and organizational development such as phases of reform efforts. Developmental changes are often characterized by periods of transition in which stress and tension prevail. Theories of development can help us account for what is generally expected as people or

organizations age and change (Levinson, 1978; Sheehy, 1977; Erikson, 1963/1950; Huberman, 1993; Fullan, 1991). How did Courtney's experience of change fit with general expectations of personal and professional development and how did it differ? In many respects, she fits typical patterns for a person at her point in life, yet her struggle to change her teaching practice was atypical. How can we make sense of the atypical aspects? In what ways did Adams as a PDS follow typical organizational developmental phases with inherent tensions and stresses? How did the PDS context affect Courtney's struggle to change her practice?

The second section of this chapter analyzes the sources of stress and tensions that Courtney, in particular, encountered as she moved through six years of struggle. Examining these tensions and stresses helps to explain why her case of changing practice is atypical of teachers in general and the other teachers at Adams in particular. This section is structured around organizational, personal and professional tensions and stresses. The organizational, personal and professional tensions and stresses existing simultaneously became a formidable set of roadblocks she had to negotiate on her journey of change.

The third section looks at the array of resources Courtney accessed that made a difference to her learning, supporting her movement through personal and professional change. This section explains why, in the face of all the tensions and stress, Courtney was able to eventually succeed in radically changing her professional practice. We see the organizational and personal resources coming together in ways that complemented the support systems that helped her make changes in her professional practice.

## Social-historical and Developmental Backdrops

**Social-historical Context.**

Courtney grew up during the 1950s and 60s, listening to Elvis Presley and the Beattles at parties with friends where they played the latest 45 rpm records. She belonged to the first wave of the baby boomer generation who began to recognize that the status quo was constraining and authority figures could be challenged. Social standards moved from more conservative norms to the freer expression of the hippie era when her age cohort admonished society to make love, not war. Following the actions in the fifties that openly defied racial segregation such as Brown vs. Board of Education (1954) and Rosa Parks famous bus ride on December 1, 1955, the sixties became a decade of movements, marches, and assassinations: the Civil Rights movement, the March on Washington, the shootings of John and Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., the feminist movement, and the protests to the Vietnam War. These events riveted many people's attention and the younger generation joined groups that advocated for social justice and racial equality. In 1963, Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique* which awakened middle-class women to the power they held and by 1972 the feminist movement had a mouthpiece in Gloria Steinam's *Ms. Magazine* (Heilbrun, 1995).

Courtney did not actively participate in the prominent social and political movements of her generation. She did not join protest marches nor did she subscribe to feminist causes. While the larger social and political issues provided a backdrop for her adolescent and young adult years, she was more absorbed in her own social needs of establishing a sense of belonging with her peers and finding an enduring relationship with someone of the opposite sex. The movements that permeated the larger U.S. society

probably had more influence on her thinking than she was aware of at the time. It was not until the eighties, however, when the student population at Adams shifted to include a sizable number of minorities, primarily African Americans, that she felt the need to attend to racial issues. Courtney had believed that being color blind would combat prejudice, but she grew more uneasy with her rapport with her African- American students as their numbers grew in her classroom in the 1980s. After reading Paley's *White Teacher* (1989/1979) in the early study group, she realized that ignoring racial and cultural differences denied certain components of children's identity. In the eighties, the social context-at-large changed to one in which recognition and tolerance for diversity was key to race relations. Courtney's challenge to Karen at their December lunch in 1993 to teach her how to address prejudice and teach tolerance stemmed from Courtney's desire to learn to address social issues more openly and directly in her classroom.

Courtney's career spanned two-and-a-half decades of educational reform attempts ranging from back-to-basics movements in the 1970s, cooperative groupwork in the 1980s (see, for example, Cohen, 1986; Johnson & Johnson, 1975; Sharan, 1980; Slavin, 1980), and teaching for understanding in the 1990s (Cohen, McLaughlin, & Talbert, 1993; Prawat, 1989). Adams' teachers actively engaged in each of these trends. For instance, in the 1970s, differentiated staffing at Adams attempted to give teachers more autonomy and it tried to give children more individualized attention. Mastery instruction (see for example, Block 1971, 1975; Guskey, 1985; Levine, 1985), especially in mathematics at Adams, was part of the drive for higher standards and teaching and learning based on discrete objectives. Having cooperative learning imposed on their classrooms by their student teachers, Adams' teachers requested professional help in

learning this pedagogical practice. The cooperative learning study group was a forerunner to numerous study groups that would be the basis for PDS work at Adams. At about the same time, whole language approaches to teaching reading, writing, speaking, and listening became prominent (Kiefer, 1990; Newman, 1985; Tiedt, 1989; Weaver, 1990). Several Adams' teachers shifted their language arts program towards whole language and literature-based instruction. Along with cooperative learning, the focus on whole language at Adams became a PDS effort at Adams when the school adopted PDS status. The shift at Adams to a whole language approach for literacy learning paved the way for many Adams' teachers to consider the movement of the nineties to teach for conceptual understanding in all subjects. These educational trends, then, directly influenced the way Adams' teachers taught and functioned as a staff and Courtney participated in all of it.

At 50, Courtney had reached a point in her life when certain developmental expectations, both personal and professional, also formed part of the backdrop against which she entered into her journey of change. Layered onto the social-historical context in which Courtney lived, these developmental phenomena help us consider what is typical of women reaching this "watershed" age (Heilbrun, 1995; Sheehy, 1995). In addition, Adams was developing as an organization with a reform agenda. Mapping the organizational, personal, and professional norms imbedded in Courtney's story provides backdrop against which we can discern the typical or ordinary from the atypical or extraordinary as she moved through change.

**Personal Development.**

Becoming 50 can be a significant event in a woman's life. It marks a time period

when not only physical changes may be occurring in a woman as she experiences

menopausal fluctuations but also psychological changes as she considers the probability

that she has lived more than half her life. It is likely to be a transitional period (Levinson,

1978; Sheehy, 1977) in which a person assesses what he or she has accomplished in life

and their degree of satisfaction, leading to identification of goals or aspirations that they

want to achieve while they still have good health and stamina. Erikson's (1963/1950)

developmental stages mark this time as the later phase of the stage of generativity versus

stagnation as one gets ready to move into the stage of ego integrity versus despair.

Having spent approximately 20 years in procreative, productive and creative activities or

existed in some state of stagnation, at 50 a person is often at a point of tension between

letting go of unrealistic dreams and determining what remains to be accomplished before

it is too late. Levinson calls it the "Age Fifty Transition."

According to theories of life-span development, the tasks of later adulthood

include accepting one's past and life history as meaningful, continuing to individuate, and

building a tolerance for conflict (Stevens-Long, 1990). While Courtney was still

contending with the tasks of middle adulthood such as making life-structure choices, she

also seemed ready to embark on later adulthood tasks of finding and accepting her life

history as meaningful, defining herself as an individual and tolerating conflict. Her

search for hidden memories, her separation from Peg, her efforts to use conflict

resolution and problem solving strategies in her classroom reflect a turn in this personal

developmental direction. She was also moving from relying heavily on external

authorities as the ultimate possessors of knowledge to becoming her own architect of knowledge acquisition, constructing beliefs, assumptions and knowledge from self-reflection in light of what she learned from others (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986). For a time, she straddled the shift from thinking and expressing what others had already thought and said to activating her own intellectual expression and articulation of ideas.

Courtney wanted to define herself more distinctly but needed to find that definition by locating and giving meaning to her childhood experiences and granting expression to the self who emerged from the search. Her comment after she turned 50 that she had "better start now" is indicative of her realization that if she had things she wanted to accomplish, such as become more autonomous and self-expressive, then she was at a point in her life when she still had time and energy for making such changes, but it would not last forever. By the time she actually had her fiftieth birthday, Courtney was well into her journey of change and was experiencing personal as well as professional successes after several years of struggle. In the process, she discovered herself as a learner which she realized she could apply to any area of her life, personal or professional. She felt ready to "light the fuse" that would ignite her voice and project her into positions that drew upon her more clearly defined sense of self.

In many respects, then, Courtney's identity search and drive to accomplish goals in her personal and professional lives is typical of middle-age adult development. Yet the intensity of her struggle to change seems beyond the ordinary. Her determination to accomplish deep personal as well as professional change in light of the hindrances she

encountered was not typical of her peers. They participated in the change agenda, but the breadth and depth of their endeavors were less vigorous than Courtney's.

**Career Development.**

Huberman (1993) has outlined the stages of development that teachers seem to follow as they make their way through their careers. At various points, he identifies junctures that teachers can take, moving in one direction or another and then making their way back to another common point from which they can again head in different directions. Looking at these stages, the ones identified at the latter part of career lives show a tendency toward conservatism and complaints and finally disengagement as teachers prepare to retire. Courtney's professional life deviates from these themes as she moves into the late stages of her career. Although her teaching reflected current practice at any given time, in order to make the radical change from teacher-focused to student-focused teaching and learning, she could not cling to the more conservative practices she had been using.

Rather than settling into conservatism, finding complaints to excuse what she felt unable to do with her teaching, or pulling back from involvement, Courtney plunged into professional changes based on her beliefs that children would get a better education if they could participate more actively in decisions about their learning and in constructing knowledge themselves rather than passively accept information presented to them. She came to recognize that her complaints about children's inability to learn ultimately meant that it was her responsibility to shape learning opportunities that would allow them to participate at the point where they were in their intellectual development. In other words, she had to look to herself rather than always shift the blame to others as scapegoats for

children's inattention and lackluster learning. Rather than moving towards

disengagement, she moved towards learning more about her students and the practices

that she thought best served their intellectual and social needs. She might have quit, but

she didn't; she chose the path less traveled. In a sense, she reached a point on her journey

of change where turning back became unthinkable and maintaining the status quo too

burdensome. Although a formidable prospect, the only direction for Courtney to move

was forward towards change.

Sikes (1985) argues that, although each teacher has a unique biography and career

path, there are certain common developmental stages that can be identified that involve

some assessment and possibly re-ordering of commitments and attitudes. Following

Levinson's (1978) developmental framework, Sikes notes transitional life periods in

teachers' careers in which tensions must be worked through. For instance, in a phase that

spans approximately the ages of 45 to 55, there is a period in which a person questions

what they have made of their life thus far and looks for ways to fulfill oneself in the

future. She notes it is a move toward maturity and by the end of this phase, teachers'

energy levels are diminished as they start preparing for retirement.

Although Courtney reached this phase chronologically, she did not show signs of

losing her momentum or interest in working on her teaching practices. She did mature in

her understanding of what it took to enact complex and adventuresome teaching (Cohen,

1989), but it was a maturity that recognized the need for continued learning rather than

diminishing involvement. Sikes (1985) also notes that younger teachers look at teachers

in this more mature phase as outmoded in terms of their pedagogy and values. Again,

Courtney's case is an exception to this generalization in that she transformed what she

considered outmoded practices into teaching that reflected her thinking and others about good teaching and learning. In addition, she wanted to learn how to work with novices in ways that would invite them into the professional conversations about the intellectual tasks of teaching. In other words, Courtney experienced the tensions common to teachers moving through transitional periods in their careers, but the direction she took as she confronted these tensions was unusual and filled with tensions of its own.

Using a different structure than developmental phases to understand teachers' careers and lives, Measor (1985) argues that "critical incidents" in teachers' lives affect their beliefs, actions and life directions. Such incidents could be worldly events such as war or economic depression or could be within a more personal context such as the birth of a child. The impact of these events can change an individual's trajectory because it involves a reassessment of priorities.

Within Courtney's professional life-frame, several critical incidents stand out. Some were personal events. Certainly the birth of her children required her to reassess how she would weigh professional commitments against personal ones. Although Courtney felt anguish leaving her babies with sitters, she never seriously considered not working. On the other hand, having children, especially one with disabilities, meant she had to decide whether family or teaching preparations would dominate her time at home.

Other critical incidents occurred in Courtney's professional life as she moved through her journey of change. The first PDS institute and the early study group were critical incidents that moved Courtney to examine her practice and set new goals. The end of her friendship with Peg was a critical incident that gave Courtney's personal and professional lives a change of direction. Another incident, the winter break luncheon

with Karen and Diane, marked a turning point in their mentoring relationship and led to the guidance and support she sought.

Each of these incidents involved tensions that tested Courtney's resolve to be more self-determined and to embrace the intellectual aspects of teaching. Within the institutional context of teaching as a profession, these critical incidents added elements that upset the balance Courtney sustained between her beliefs about teaching and learning and her practice. Once Courtney imagined a new or refined vision of teaching, she felt her previous practice was no longer adequate. The critical incidents in her career both helped her see the discrepancies between her beliefs and her practice as well as opened paths for resolution. For instance, as the PDS effort continued to feed Courtney's desire to teach differently and become more autonomous, it also created the dilemma Courtney faced having to decide whether to continue teaming with Peg or break up their partnership. This incident aggravated tensions among individuals at Adams at the same time that it opened the door for Courtney to progress, albeit arduously, with changing her practice.

**Organizational Development.**

Schools as organizations develop environments and work cultures that affect teachers' receptivity to change (Rosenholtz, 1989; Sarason, 1982; Little, 1981; Lortie, 1975). While planned school change has evolved through periods marked by phases of reform (Fullan, 1991; Cuban, 1990), the organization and culture of the workplace has been resistant to changes that involve restructuring school management and reorganization of teacher development (Williams, 1996). Courtney's journey of changing her teaching practice occurred within a school context that had a history of trying new

organizational structures, such as differentiated staffing, associated with educational reforms. That these reforms were ultimately not permanent organizational changes was typical of that period in the history of educational reforms (Fullan, 1991; Cuban, 1990). The culture of teaching at Adams was typical in many respects of other schools in terms of teachers not interfering in their colleagues practices but atypical in the sense that the school maintained a close association with the university and participated in research projects, innovative teacher education programs, and reform efforts as an integral part of that association.

Rosenholtz (1989) shows how variation in school organization affects how teachers function and affects support for their professional development. She notes that individual teachers can shape schools as social organizations, but as a whole the norms of the workplace cut across individual biographies to reflect patterns of beliefs and behaviors. In turn, these patterns that characterize the social organization of the school have consequences for individual teacher's perceptions and behaviors. Rozenholtz categorizes schools as learning-enriched, moderately impoverished, or learning-impoverished on the basis of the support and opportunities for teachers' development. She claims that learning-enriched schools typically reflect a collaborative environment in which teachers and administrators viewed teaching as inherently difficult; thus working together and learning with and from each other rather than in isolated self-reliance was a moral imperative. Rosenholtz found that in learning-enriched schools, teachers were expected to be lifelong learners, seeking and getting help from colleagues with the help and support of principals. Handling the uncertainties of teaching and gaining self-esteem

was less difficult in schools where teachers shared their problems of practice and worked towards professional growth collaboratively.

At Adams, the social organization of the school moved slowly towards greater teacher collaboration and goal consensus as it developed as a PDS. Prior to being a PDS, some teachers worked together in teams or met as a study group, but structures for professional conversations and professional development were the exception rather than the rule. As Adams developed PDS structures for collaboration and teacher governance, the social organization shifted towards more participation in joint work and learning. Courtney's feelings of isolation in her struggles to change her practice reflect the point of development of Adams as a learning-enriched school. While it was moving towards the collaborative, supportive social organization Rosenholtz identifies as characteristic of learning-enriched schools, it was not yet able to offer sufficiently individualized support and resources for teachers charting their own journeys of change. The ultimate success of the peer mentoring project was evidence that Adams reached a point where collegial professional development efforts on behalf of individual learning needs were accepted.

Becoming a Professional Development School built on Adams' history of engaging in reform that affected not only teaching practices but also the organizational aspects of the school. Williams (1996) identifies three phases of school change that he applies to the development of PDS as school organization reform: 1) adoption or initiation of change, 2) implementation and 3) continuation or institutionalization. During the period of Courtney's struggle to change her teaching practice, Adams moved through the adoption and implementation periods of change. Although the school had a long-term association with the university, the way university people and school personnel

worked together encompassed a much greater and more holistic sphere of operations when it adopted PDS goals and structures. Having to focus on establishing different organizational patterns of work norms, relationships, and expectations for the whole school meant that, to some degree, individual aspirations that deviated from the norm lacked whole-hearted support because the changing structures were not developed to the point where they could handle individuation. Thus, while the teachers at Adams were required to work on literacy, trying to change their practice in this one area, Courtney's attempt to make radical changes in the whole of her practice was atypical. The development of Adams as a PDS organization, struggling itself to establish a solid foundation of re-envisioned and restructured workplace conditions and culture, affected Courtney's ambition to change. At the same time that it espoused organizational and teaching practice reform, it was not ready to support the scope of change Courtney attempted professionally and personally.

In some respects, Courtney's journey of change was a reflection of typical personal and career developmental expectations. She searched for an adult identity and stretched herself professionally to avoid stagnation. This typicality does not go far enough, however, in explaining the depth of change she surmounted and her endurance through six years of frustration, confusion, and struggle. Her experience of change was extraordinary in many respects as she encountered organizational, personal and professional tensions and stresses. Courtney experienced the tensions and stresses common to teachers moving through transitional periods in their careers, but the direction she took as she confronted these tensions and stresses was unusual and filled with tensions and stresses of its own. Her determination to change her practice, although

conforming in some ways to the PDS expectations of change, went beyond the scope of what other teachers at Adams were doing. What accounts for her extraordinary struggle? How can we make sense of these atypical aspects of her journey of change?

## The Tensions and Stresses Encountered on the Journey

As she strove to change her teaching practice, Courtney confronted organizational, personal, and professional tensions and stresses that worked in combination to thwart her progress. These tensions and stresses formed a mesh that was difficult to pass through until she found ways to ease the tensions and stresses, providing the support and means she needed to successfully change her practice. This section examines the sources of the stresses and tensions she encountered. Divided into pieces that look at organizational, personal, and professional tensions and stresses, this section helps to explain the nature of obstacles she faced in order to speculate about why her journey of change was long and arduous.

### Organizational Tensions and Stresses.

*Tensions between institutional support structures and individual support needs.* Because Adams was a PDS, the structures in place at that school were different from non-PDS schools in the district. PDS involvement meant that Adams teachers had university people, other PDSs, and outside resources such as prominent guest speakers and participation in leadership institutes as part of their support system. Courtney was surprised, at first, that PDS appeared to be different from prior reform efforts that came with preconceived models and mandates, presented as packages for schools to accept as given (Wasley, 1994; Thiessen, 1996). From the initial PDS summer institute and subsequent organizational meetings at Adams the next school year, Courtney got the

impression that the teachers were vital participants in creating agendas for themselves and their schools. Although the goal of reform in school structure and organization, teaching practice, and teacher education was clearly communicated by the Holmes Group principles (Holmes Group, 1990; Howey, 1996), the paths to accomplish these goals were purposely left to PDS participants to decide based on their school context. When Courtney talked to teachers from other PDSs, she learned that each PDS established its own priorities, ways of working, and specific focus. Reform efforts of the 1990s like PDS or Sizer's Coalition of Essential Schools (Wasley, 1994) expected teachers to access their own knowledge and experience to contribute to identifying what needed to be done and how rather than be passive recipients of a fixed model.

The support structures at Adams included the Core Team, the study groups, individual work with university people, and connection to the teacher education program at the university. These structures communicated expectations for teachers to change outmoded teaching practices as well as change the school structure to better suit the need for teachers to have time and opportunities to enact reform measures. Courtney embraced the call for change and looked to the institutional structures to support her intentions. Tensions developed because, although the support from school restructuring, participation on the Core Team, work in study groups, and attendance at PDS institutes helped Courtney, they did not completely provide what she needed as she encountered her struggles. For example, having reallocated time provided teachers with regular blocks of time during the week to work on PDS related projects, yet, for Courtney it was not always clear how to make the best use of that time. For instance, reallocated time gave Courtney time to work with her student teachers on planning or discussing practice,

but Courtney did not know how to talk and work with them in ways that seemed to be what they needed nor what she thought was expected from her as a mentor. Similarly, reallocated time provided Courtney, Karen and Diane time to plan and reflect together on practices as part of their peer mentoring project, but they proceeded so cautiously at first that the time did not result in noticeable changes in Courtney's practice.

Courtney's determination to change her practice, although conforming in some ways to the PDS expectations for change, went beyond the scope of what other teachers at Adams were doing. Thus another area of stress arose because Courtney was attempting change in ways that differed from the Adams PDS structures that were developing to support change. Few support structures existed for individuals who deviated from the focused approach to change and needed individualized help. Courtney felt she received little encouragement for her attempt to radically change her teaching practice while others were concentrating on only one or two aspects of practice. In retrospect, one of the university people who worked on PDS projects at Adams acknowledged that, for awhile, Courtney did not get the support she needed from the people around her who could have provided help. Her needs were glossed over in favor of developing more school-wide endeavors.

In addition, the institutional norm for orderly, organized, quiet classrooms prevailed at Adams. Courtney realized that her classroom did not meet these norms. She felt pulled between trying to attain a quiet, docile classroom and her desire to have children actively participating in the tasks that required conversation and movement. She became frustrated when her students became rowdy, but she did not know how to create an environment in which children could help each other learn, keeping the noise at a

tolerable level. This was part of trying to establish a learning community classroom without knowing how. At some point each year for several years, she wrote that her learning community broke down and she felt she had to succumb to being a strict disciplinarian when she hoped to be a more easy going manager instead. She felt the pressure to conform to the institutional norms at the same time she both wanted and was expected to develop a classroom that defied these norms.

*Stress related to PDS governance and staff relationships.* During the first several years as a PDS, tensions among the Adams faculty permeated the social context of the school creating an atmosphere of distrust and unsupportiveness. Some of this tension developed because the non-Core Team teachers accused the Core Team of withholding information from them, keeping their agenda secret and not sharing what they were learning. When Courtney and Peg separated in an abrupt and unamiable way, the tension among the staff flared as some teachers rallied around Peg who, to them, appeared to have been left in the lurch. In addition, Courtney started spending lunchtime with Karen and Diane rather than with the other teachers in the lounge. In many respects, the three of them seemed apart from the rest of the staff, keeping to their end of the building engrossed in their own budding relationship.

Courtney, then, functioned within a social context in the school that was paradoxical. One the one hand, the work of the Core Team and the message of the PDS effort were centered on working collaboratively toward educational reforms. On the other hand, the conditions discouraged teachers from deviating from the accepted norms of conviviality. Courtney, Karen and Diane's desire for time in professional

conversation away from the rest of the staff was not viewed by the rest of the staff as the norm for functioning and it created friction.

Tensions resided among the members of the Core Team itself as Adams organized its PDS governance system. Members of the Core Team experienced tensions among themselves that had to be addressed through learning methods of conflict resolution. At one point two members of the Core Team agreed to air their differences in front of the other members so everyone could see how these methods actually worked. A university professor who had expertise in counseling guided them. The courage of the two members to work on their differences in public impressed Courtney. She admired them for publicly taking the risk of possible hostility for the sake of helping the Core Team learn to manage their disputes. The dissension among the Core Team members added to the strained relationships among the Adams' staff as a whole. The tendency on the staff, however, was to avoid acknowledging the tensions and function as though they did not exist. Working through conflict was stressful not only for Courtney but for others at Adams as well.

**Personal Tensions and Stresses.**

*Stress related to clarifying self-definition and gaining self-expression.* Courtney recognized herself as a child of what she called a "functional alcoholic." Her father, although a heavy drinker, maintained a steady position as a truck driver until he died when Courtney was 26. She talked about how much she liked his attention and doing things with him, including making deliveries with him in his truck on Saturdays and then stopping at the Dairy Queen for a milkshake, which made her feel special because she

thought it was an extravagance. Yet, she also said that she never knew what to expect regarding her father's moods and that being around him was like walking on eggs.

Black (1981) and Seixas and Youcha, (1985) point out that children of alcoholics frequently assume roles that help them cope with unpredictability and parental dysfunction. Among several roles, Black describes one, the adjuster, that allows a child to adapt to the changing nature of life with an alcoholic parent by adjusting to the situation—being ready to change plans and go with the flow. Adjusters follow rather than lead and do not draw attention to themselves. Children of alcoholics often assume more than one role, according to Black and Seixas and Youcha, carrying traits that helped them handle tensions they experienced in their family as they grew up into adulthood. In adulthood, however, these roles can sometimes be a hindrance rather than a help in functioning autonomously.

Woititz (1983) found a number of generalizations that applied to many adult children of alcoholics. Courtney's disposition aligned with ones involving constantly seeking approval and affirmation. Courtney acknowledged her tendency to go along with other's decisions in both her personal and professional relationships. Although she was not totally spineless like a jellyfish, usually she tried not to make a disturbance, adjusting to situations and accepting other's choices rather than asserting her own. Her desire, however, was to be more self-defined and assertive. She wanted to make her own choices, find her own direction, and function out of her own sense of identity. The discrepancy between her disposition and her desire created internal tension. She wanted to be self-determining, but she also wanted to please others.

In addition, Courtney wanted to tap into an identity that she thought was hidden from her. She wanted to recall childhood experiences as a way of figuring out who she was, yet her tendency was to remain somewhat anonymous. For instance, when she introduced herself at the Teachers Writing Project initiation dinner, she could only summon up her name and the grade she taught whereas others were giving some background information about themselves as well. Her admonition to herself for being so self-effacing illustrates this tension between self-expression and anonymity. This is not uncharacteristic of women who grow up fulfilling expectations to be quiet and submissive, especially demurring to male authority (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Grumet, 1988; Heilbrun, 1988).

Courtney's tendency to avoid confrontation but her admiration for people who could confront others directly with their disagreements created another area of stress in self-expression. She wanted to be able to express her point of view even if it differed from others, but she felt constrained because she shied away from unwanted conflict. From her experience, direct confrontation was frightening and could lead to emotional and physical abuse. Courtney saw one model of handling direct confrontation in a positive way that appealed to her. She liked the way the professor of the cooperative learning study group responded to the teacher who confronted him with her frustrations and disagreed with his approach. He showed that he was willing to accept the criticism and work more closely with the teachers. Personally, she recognized the difficulty of becoming more assertive if she continued to keep quiet as a means of avoiding conflict. She knew that she did not want to embarrass anyone or publicly put someone down as she had witnessed occasionally. She wanted to learn how to express disagreement

without alienating others. She extended this personal desire into wanting to help her students also learn to resolve conflicts using methods that would allow all the participants to emerge intact. This aspect of a learning community classroom culture resonated with her personal ambition to confront conflict constructively.

*Stress in fulfilling personal roles.* Courtney was faithful to her personal roles of wife, mother and daughter but not without stress that exacerbated her desire to fulfill these roles with aplomb. Bowing to stereotypic role patterns, Courtney tried to be the homemaker who kept the house tidy, the dinner tempting and hot, and the children well behaved. As she came to recognize her desire to be more self-defined and expressive, however, she saw that she had to find alternative ways to interact with her family that would provide her with some autonomy.

Gutmann (1975) argues that parenthood, which he characterizes as a "period of chronic emergency," is a pivotal stage in the human life cycle (see also, Benedek, 1959). Gutmann posits that parenthood shapes not only middle adulthood but also what comes before and after. Being the mother of a disabled child complicated normal parenting issues for Courtney. In her book on families with disabled children, Featherstone (1980) highlights the many emotional tensions that can accompany this situation. She notes that living with a disabled child frequently engenders feelings of fear, anger, loneliness, guilt and self-doubt.

Courtney talked about her guilt and self-doubt connected to her relationship with Andrea, especially, but also with Kevin. Since she had each of her children in the spring, the summer break immediately following her maternity leave, gave Courtney more time, initially, to be home with her children as newborns. When she returned to school the next

fall, however, she cried for months when she had to leave Andrea and then Kevin with a babysitter. Courtney said she felt guilty leaving her children during the day yet she enjoyed her work and it provided the economic buffer the family needed. As Andrea got older and was placed in special education programs, Courtney spent hours each day helping her with her learning, more so than with Kevin who could handle schoolwork and other normal life situations without much help. Guilt and self-doubt, however, touched Courtney frequently as she attempted to provide Andrea with protection, guidance, and monitoring of her intellectual and social growth. She wondered if she was doing the right things to help Andrea and whether it was enough. She grieved her separation from Andrea the first week of Andrea's life and felt guilty that the initial days for mother-child bonding immediately following birth were lost between them. The tension between parental guilt and self-absolution existed deeply in Courtney. Yet, with friends and colleagues Courtney rarely talked about Andrea's disabilities or complained of the time she spent helping Andrea. Instead, Courtney acknowledged that Andrea taught her to re-examine her priorities. As a cross-country track team member, Andrea had the attitude that winning a race was not as important as how well it was run. Courtney applied the metaphor to her own life, recognizing that finding quality in her teaching and in her personal life was more important to her than competing for recognition as the best.

As a wife, Courtney assumed the placater role (Black, 1981), trying to please Jim by arranging her life around his. In Courtney's eyes, he took little responsibility for the predictable occurrences in raising children. He seldom attended parent conferences, took the children to appointments, or helped with homework. While Courtney attended almost all their sporting events, Jim attended sporadically. He worked long hours in a stressful

position and although he showed little interest in Courtney's professional life, he always supported her desire to work and did not interfere with her professional activities even when they extended into long hours during the day and some weekends.

The stresses Courtney felt related to fulfilling her personal roles were heightened as she became more conscious of what the feminist movement was revealing about oppression inherent in women's traditional roles. Although Courtney paid little attention to the feminist movement, she could not ignore the conversations and talk she heard in personal as well as professional contexts about women's roles, their status and the suppression of women's voices. As she listened to colleagues talk about women's roles and status as teachers, she also became more conscious of her deference to Jim's agenda and male authority in general and began to look at her role in squelching her own autonomy. She felt tension, then, between fulfilling her perception of society's norms for the role of wife and mother and her own emerging desire to be her own person, responding to her own choices which was reinforced by what she was hearing related to the women's movement.

**Professional Tensions and Stresses**

*Stress related to learning the language of reform practices and finding authentic expression in teaching.* Although Courtney adopted the language associated with developing learning community classrooms and teaching for understanding, she did not have a clear sense of what it meant and how she should enact it. She was attracted to the vocabulary such as developing students' personal and social responsibility and establishing a classroom culture that attended to social justice but acknowledged that she really did not understand what it meant in terms of teaching and learning practice. She

had a notion that using the language would somehow change her into a teacher of innovative practice. She learned the words and phrases, but when she used them with students, they seemed hollow. She could memorize the script but without clear direction, she could not assume the role that the words were meant to support. For example, she believed in the learning community goal of social responsibility and could talk to her students about helping each other learn but she did not know how to structure discussions, group interactions, or quiet working time in ways that conveyed to children how they should behave. She could tell them they needed to be good listeners but what did that mean? She told them to encourage each other but how were they expected to do that? What was her role as the teacher once she had said to listen to and encourage each other? The language that created visions did not help Courtney create classroom structures or teaching roles that reflected those visions in practice.

Courtney contended with the tensions created by the gap between words and enactment. In theory she knew she needed to use language differently than in more conventional approaches to teaching if she wanted to create a learning community in which she could teach for understanding. Like following a script in a teacher's guide, however, she seized the language of reform practice as though it were words and phrases to be performed as directed by others. She relied too heavily on someone else's words and phrases to speak for her. When she taught from a more conventional teacher-focused approach, she used the language in teachers' guides, reading questions from the manual for children to answer. In her attempts to teach from student-focused approaches, she used the language from study group discussions, videotape demonstrations, and speaker presentations as it came to her from external sources rather than getting a sense for the

meaning of the language and then articulating those meanings using her own words. Courtney had a hard time understanding why the language she heard did not work for her when trying to express it herself. Trying to articulate clear visions supported by clear purposes for teaching and learning tasks and then transforming those into clear ways to enact them required using the language in ways that went beyond technical vocabulary. She needed to understand and adapt the language as a support for expressing her beliefs and stance towards teaching and learning. She needed to make the language work for her, not simply utter the words.

In addition, there was a sense of competing vocabulary. The language of social justice such as "prejudice," "stereotypes," "tolerance," and "equity" reflected political and social issues. The language of personal and social responsibility such as "helping others," "being accountable," and "listening attentively" tended toward pastoral care and interpersonal communication. The language of group development and conflict resolution such as "belonging," "identity," "trust," and "self-esteem" could be quasi-therapeutic. The mix can cause confusions and problems. Knowing what language to use under what conditions is a challenge. In reality, these vocabularies must be used fluidly since teaching and learning situations usually involve overlaps of political, social, interpersonal, and individual components. For instance, trying to facilitate a discussion in which children debate ideas calls for asking children to challenge each other's thinking at the same time expecting them to respect each other's personal character. How does a teacher know which type of language to use to convey these different attitudes and behaviors? It is not often clear to a teacher who is trying this for the first time. Courtney

attempted to grasp the language in ways that would make it real and efficacious for her and her students, but it often slipped through her hands.

*Tension between transmission and transformative/constructivist teaching practice.* Courtney's vision of her classroom portrayed a highly interactive social context characterized by students working together on learning tasks. Rarely did she envision children learning in isolation or responding to questions posed only by her. Her struggle to make her visions reality, however, created tensions between her years of experience teaching from a transmission model (Jackson, 1986) of presenting information and the practice she desired which concentrated on engaging children in constructing knowledge together in social contexts that fostered their learning (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978). She wanted to develop a classroom social context that supported teaching and learning for understanding, but Courtney had difficulty letting go of long-term habits of telling children what she thought they needed to know.

Courtney felt she needed to be directive, yet wanted the direction to come from the students. This tension was apparent as she shifted her practice to align with the approaches she learned about in the PDS institutes and study groups. At one of these meetings, Courtney heard about what Jackson (1986) called the transmission and the transformative approaches to teaching and learning. Transmission meant teachers transmitted or transferred knowledge to students while transformative meant that teachers tried to bring about changes in their students both intellectually and morally. Transmission meant the teacher was the gatekeeper of information, controlling and directing how it would be accessed. Transformative meant that the teacher created structures and designed opportunities for students to actively work at changing

themselves through reasoning, discussion, demonstration and argumentation. Constructivist theories of learning and the practice of teaching for understanding complemented the transformative approach because they support building knowledge through reason, debate, and inquiry. Developing a learning community culture also supported helping students change morally by focusing on personal and social responsibility and equity.

When Courtney first heard about the distinctions between transmission and transformative teaching practice, she considered herself working from the transmission model. Tension arose because she felt she had to provide her students with the facts, formulas, and techniques they needed to read, write, and compute but wanted to engage them in much deeper exploration and conceptual understanding of ideas that caught their curiosity. Although she often used activities and projects to promote learning, she recognized that she continued to make all the decisions and control the learning. Often the purpose of the activities remained hidden from the children and it was unclear what the children actually learned from their adventures. The social component to her transmission approach to teaching was based largely on interactions between her and individual students or the group as a whole, seldom among students themselves.

In addition, Courtney felt she had to keep children under control at the same time she wanted to have them assume more control for themselves. This meant controlling their own behavior as well as in contributing to what they wanted to learn and how to learn it. As she moved from a transmission to a transformative/constructivist-based practice, Courtney felt she lost control of her ability to keep children engaged in learning and lost control of directing her curriculum. Courtney struggled to gain an

understanding of what it meant to teach for understanding and change her stance towards managing teaching and learning that was based on social interactions and construction of knowledge. She struggled with learning how to maintain her presence as a teacher at the same time that she encouraged children to participate in helping their peers learn.

Courtney wanted to be a guide, facilitator, and knowledgeable adult in a classroom conducive to socially constructed knowledge, but she needed to provide the structures necessary for effective student interactions. She knew children needed guidance and boundaries in order to make good choices about their learning but she was unsure how to teach them to consider their options and how to interact in ways that supported everyone's learning. Courtney envisioned her students working actively and collectively. In reality, however, she had to learn that teaching and learning for conceptual understanding included individual work, reading, and problem solving and that she had the responsibility for providing the structures necessary for children to learn individually as well as collectively. The tensions that stemmed from trying to abandon practices she had used for years while in the midst of learning new ones, switching from transmission or teacher-centered to transformative and student-oriented teaching, and managing the classroom social context by sharing decision making with her students sapped her energy and confidence for several years.

*Tension between institutional roles and individual role determination.* As Adams assumed the responsibilities of a PDS, teachers' institutional roles began to be examined in light of what they meant for teachers' practices. Powell and McGowan (1995) highlight the changes in roles teachers confront in a PDS. With broadened responsibilities and multiple audiences to satisfy, the teachers in their study created new

roles and responsibilities that they described as a "long and difficult process." (p. 20) In

Courtney's situation, the traditional roles of teacher as gatekeeper to knowledge,

transmitter of curriculum, and authoritarian disciplinarian were being questioned as to

their continued effectiveness in light of today's students' needs. Teachers, including

Courtney, heard about different roles—those of facilitator of learning, designer of

curriculum, and manager of classroom communities as being the direction for the future.

Courtney liked the sound of these newer roles but for a long time did not understand

exactly what they meant or how they would be enacted. She felt pulled in several

directions. One tension was between trying to let go of the traditional roles she had been

working from for more than 20 years and assuming the newer roles as she envisioned

them. From what she was reading and hearing in the PDS institutes, the Core Team, and

study groups, Courtney realized that she would have to change from roles that she knew

well to ones that she could only imagine. In her imagination, these roles were very unlike

what she knew. They were harder to define, harder to visualize, and seemed to have a

fluid nature to them that was difficult to comprehend without experiencing them.

Courtney felt tension between what she thought these newer roles meant and what

she was able to do in reality to enact the roles she envisioned. She experienced the

tension of trying to understand and enact new roles that were created at an institutional

level as she struggled to sculpt her own shape for these roles according to who she was as

a person and who her students were (Lampert, 1991). This was different from trying to

let go of traditional institutional roles, which created its own tension. As she tried to

make sense of the vision she had from what she was hearing and reading at an

institutional level, she attempted to put these new roles into practice in her classroom, but

she could not give shape to them in reality. If she tried to imitate the teachers she saw demonstrating roles as facilitator of learning, intellectual guide, and molder of curriculum, she was frustrated because her performance did not produce the same results. Rather than her students becoming more engaged in their learning, they seemed to ignore her and each other and showed little interest in what they were learning. They were used to teachers functioning from traditional classroom roles and had to change their own understanding of what a teacher was supposed to be. Courtney needed to configure these new roles as she herself made sense of them, bearing some resemblance to the institutional roles as she understood them, but marked with her own interpretation. She struggled several years trying to figure this out, caught between visions and reality.

Beyond the classroom, Courtney also experienced changes in role expectations. With the advent of PDS, she found herself assuming leadership positions such as representing her peers on the Core Team and in presentations at PDS institutes. She had not envisioned herself in such positions and resisted them initially, only participating because people convinced her she could handle the role. In addition, PDS teachers were expected to join in partnerships and work collaboratively with colleagues and with university personnel which was a change from the traditional norms of autonomous and rather isolated functioning (Powell & McGowan, 1995). Little (1990) points out the difficulties teachers have in shifting their role perceptions to include collegial relationships because of the prevailing norm of teachers as self-sufficient operators. Although Courtney enjoyed the company of colleagues and had participated in a teaching partnership with Peg for many years, her role in that situation did not resemble the role of collaborative colleague and partner with university personnel that PDS efforts were

trying to create. Shifting to these newer roles was stressful for Courtney because she was uncertain of herself, her teaching practice, and what she could offer in such relationships.

*Stress within professional relationships.* On the whole, Courtney's relationships with her colleagues were positive and satisfying. As a friendly, cheerful person, she had good rapport with her colleagues. As she progressed through her journey of change, however, she experienced stress in several areas of individual relationships.

When Courtney began her journey of change, she had been teaming with Peg for almost twenty years. Although Courtney felt in Peg's shadow, she knew she contributed her creativity, enthusiasm, and energy to their partnership. As Courtney began to see the discrepancies between her beliefs about teaching and learning and her conventional teaching practices, she also began to see that she needed to function more autonomously in order to change her practice. The "divorce" from Peg, fraught with emotional stress of its own, plunged Courtney into an independent state that she had not experienced since her first year of teaching. Facing the challenges of learning a different grade level curriculum, working with a younger age group and feeling estranged from the staff because of repercussions from the break-up, Courtney felt alone as she attempted to change the way she taught.

When Courtney joined the Teaching Mathematics for Understanding group, she again experienced stress as the group tried to get to know each other and learn about negative numbers. Dealing with mathematics content that she did not understand was stressful in itself for Courtney. At the same time, she felt uncomfortable communicating to the group that she was in a mathematical fog. The relationship among the group members was new and uncertain. Courtney hesitated revealing her sense of helplessness

because she thought the other group members had a much better grasp of the mathematics. The group's leader, Lee, did not have a clear sense of how upset Courtney or the other participants were until much later when the members wrote about the situation in their journals. Lee said, "In a sense, they were left alone to resolve these problems." Courtney was not yet at a point in her struggle to change where she dared take intellectual or social risks among colleagues she was only just getting to know.

Although Courtney participated in study groups and on the Core Team, she nevertheless felt that her struggle to learn more innovative teaching practices was solely hers. She did not receive intensive help until the mentoring project with Karen and Diane started to work. At first, it, too, was tense because no one wanted to step on the other's toes. Karen and Diane did not want to impose on Courtney. The three of them had developed a professional relationship that was different from their relationships with other teachers at Adams. Each valued their special relationship, not wanting to risk losing it by over-stepping the trust that had been building among them. It was awkward for them to figure out how to establish a mentoring relationship with Courtney and this created stress. Only after Courtney pushed Karen to explain her thinking about teaching tolerance did the stress dissipate enough to open up their relationship to allow for effective peer mentoring.

Courtney encountered stress in still another area related to relationships--her relationships with her student teachers as she tried to help them learn to teach. She did not feel she could give them the support and guidance they needed in learning to teach in ways she was only just learning herself, nor did she think she knew how to interact with them in ways that would help them sort out their questions, concerns and thinking. She

felt she should be able to establish a relationship in which both she and her student

teacher could challenge each other's thinking and purposes for their teaching, but she did

not know how to ask the questions or make the observations that would mark this kind of

relationship. Several of her student teachers needed particularly close attention and

Courtney felt unable to provide what they needed. The tension this created between her

desire to help a novice and her perception of her ability to mentor adequately resulted in

her deciding not to work with student teachers while she tried to change her teaching

practices. The university people and other teachers put pressure on Courtney to change

her mind and accept a student teacher, creating yet more stress, but she remained firm in

her belief that she could not do either herself or her student teachers justice by working

under the strain she felt. She thought she could not be a good mentor until she had

successfully changed her teaching practice and had learned how to mentor a novice in

this practice.

### Enabling Learning through an Array of Resources

In light of all the tensions and stresses Courtney encountered on her journey of

change, what enabled her to eventually succeed in radically changing her professional

practice? What conditions enabled her to learn and change? What was supportive about

the context or professional cultures in which she participated that helped her make

changes? This section examines what helped to ease the tensions and stresses to the point

where Courtney could move ahead and in the seventh year, experience successes in

changing both her teaching practice and herself personally. The section is again divided

into components that focus on organizational, personal, and professional supports. The

organizational and personal supports were important in affecting professional changes.

In some instances, it is paradoxical that systems that created tensions and stresses eventually became supports for learning and change.

**Finding Individual Support Systems within Organizational Structures.**

*Learning from and with others.* The peer mentoring project among Courtney, Karen and Diane was organized because several people, including some university people who led the study groups or other projects at Adams, noticed that Courtney continued with her struggle to change and needed more individualized help than the study groups alone could provide. Karen and Diane had the skills to provide mentoring for Courtney and Courtney was willing to accept their help even though she was the most experienced teacher of the three. Courtney already admired Karen's teaching and her ability to assert her innovative ideas and practice even when she ventured into areas that she knew would challenge the school norms and other teacher's thinking. Courtney valued her professional relationship with Karen and Diane because it was built on serious examination of their teaching practices.

The idea of shaping their relationship into a mentoring situation was based on what already existed among them. By instituting an individual support system for Courtney, she began to receive the on-site, close-up, practice-centered attention she needed to push her over the hurdles on her path. Using reallocated time, Karen and Diane were able to observe in Courtney's classroom, have her observe in theirs, and talk to each other based on shared experiences, probing each other's thinking and responding to each other's hard questions in ways that began to help Courtney construct her teaching practice on more solid reasoning and clearer direction. Reallocated time became more purposeful as the mentoring project became more earnest. Not only could the time be

used for observations but also for the conversation necessary to bring about changed thinking, attitudes, and actions. They developed a clearer focus and purpose to their work together.

Once the TMU group and the Mentors Circle built a viable relationship among their members, these colleagues acted as peer mentors in a sense, also. The tensions and stresses that existed at the beginning of the TMU group eased as the group built a culture in which participants could risk revealing their misunderstanding of the subject matter and challenge each other to explain their thinking. By clarifying the purposes of the TMU group and setting agendas based on the participants learning needs, the group developed into the kind of learning community that Courtney was seeking for her classroom. Courtney found herself speaking out more in this group than she had in other group contexts and was rewarded with serious consideration of her thoughts, her fragile mathematics knowledge, and her feelings as a learner. She felt that her individual contributions mattered to the group.

Courtney found other supports that worked for her as an individual within the context of the school and PDS organizations. She garnered insights into teaching practice and understandings about interpersonal relationships from the readings and the speakers that were associated with PDS work. For instance, speakers such as Deborah Meier on Central Park East School in Manhattan (see, for example, Meier, 1995), Comer on his process of reform (see, for example, Comer, 1996), and Asa Hilliard on understanding African American culture and history (see, for example, Hilliard, 1990) inspired Courtney to keep moving towards change. Readings such as *White Teacher* (Paley, 1989/1979), *How to Discipline with Love* (Dodson, 1978), *Living Between the Lines*

(Calkins, 1991) and *The Writing Workshop* (Calkins, 1987) helped Courtney clarify what she wanted in her classroom and how to achieve it. While these resources created expectations at the institutional level for Courtney that added to her stress in struggling to achieve them, they also provided her with some models and insights which eased the stress as she learned to transform the ideas into practice in her own classroom.

***Working towards compatibility in staff relationships and tolerance for individual endeavors.*** What Courtney learned from speakers and the literature helped her liberate her thinking about her role in the classroom as well as in other contexts. Courtney gradually developed her leadership skills so that participation on the Core Team was not so intimidating and she was able to contribute to better communication between the Core Team and the staff. She attended numerous PDS institutes as the PDS work expanded and intensified, often representing Adams in her role as a Core Team member. As PDS as an organization matured, so did the PDS effort at Adams develop into more productive and effective endeavors to change classroom practices and stances towards teaching and learning. As Stanford (1977) highlights in his work on group dynamics, group conflict that is worked through successfully often leads to group productivity. The Core Team bore this out. As they resolved their conflicts over time, the PDS organization at Adams worked with less friction and the staff became more supportive of individual efforts by teachers to teach differently. As one of the Adams' teachers said,

> There were more and more individual attempts at doing things, some of which was rocking the boat. For awhile, the school was very non-supportive. And that died off...I think that chink by chink by chink, the notion of doing something different has been more accepted—not as threatening. It's taken quite awhile. There were some inbred kinds of things that made it difficult. Why rock the boat? We were doing okay as it was.

Although Adams had a reputation for innovation, the focus before PDS had been on curriculum changes. When PDS efforts began, the field for change expanded to

include changes in teaching and teaching philosophy. The structures to support individual change, however, were not individualized in ways that teachers found immediately helpful. As PDS efforts progressed and teachers became more accepting of expectations for individual changes in teaching philosophy and practice, teachers felt less threatened and the school culture changed. It became more tolerant of individual efforts to change and supported organizational measures, such as having Courtney and Karen stay with their students for two years, that included new ways of relating and working as professional colleagues.

## Gaining Confidence and Self-definition

Within both her professional and personal lives, Courtney found means to help her gain confidence and self-definition. Several factors contributed to Courtney's becoming more self-assured, assertive, and articulate. These included acquiring language for self-talk as well as interpersonal communication, acknowledging herself as a woman and a learner, and seeking personal therapy.

*Acquiring language for self-talk and interpersonal communication.* The conversations at the PDS institutes, on the Core Team and the field studies group that focused on interpersonal skills and conflict resolution resonated with Courtney's long-standing determination to become more self-defined and more at ease in addressing conflict. Sometimes these conversations emanated from presentations by university people or other experts versed in interpersonal communication, conflict resolution, cognitive structures, and effective learning conditions. Courtney became more consciously aware of her own propensities for deferring to others and for appeasement rather than constructive disagreement.

As she listened to others speak and participated in professional conversations, she

garnered language and strategies for bolstering her efforts to change her personal

self-image and approaches to communication. She realized that there were

constructive ways to support responsible expression and confront conflicts and

she could apply these methods to her personal situation.

Courtney listened to self-help audiotapes as she commuted to and from work,

sometimes taking notes in her journal as she drove. Mentally Courtney practiced talking

to herself, using the language she heard on the tapes as well as from professional

resources, to bolster her confidence. She used metacognition to learn about her thinking

and how she could turn it in directions that would work for rather than against her self-

image. In addition, she found the ideas and language in books aimed at helping teachers

talk to students, such as Dodson's (1978) *How to Discipline with Love,* helpful as she

looked for ways to interact more effectively on a personal basis. She used the stance

towards interpersonal communication and the language that supported it with her family

at home and found she could open up communication there.

Baldwin (1977) notes that journal writing can be therapeutic and support change.

She posits that writing a journal validates personal voice which can open up "avenues of

expression and the potential for change far beyond what we previously allowed ourselves

to experience or value." (p. 29) Courtney's journal writing offered her avenues of

expression that helped her clarify her interpretations, assumptions, and feelings about

herself, what she heard, and what she observed (Didion, 1968). Through her journal

writing, she sorted out issues of self-esteem, confidence, and definition (Field, 1952).

Courtney used her journals as another place for interpreting and practicing the language

she was acquiring. They were a place to record the language and strategies for interaction she heard as well as her thoughts about her own capacity to assume the attitudes about self that the language supported. For example, the pep talk she wrote to herself (quoted in chapter 3) was directed at positive self-support for embarking on further changes both personally and professionally. Her journals were a place to rehearse language before using it in practice. Writing was a means of reflection for Courtney, as well. She could articulate how she would have liked to have said or done something differently. For instance, when she was disappointed with the way she introduced herself at the Teachers Writing Project dinner, she wrote in her journal about her disappointment as well as what she would have liked to have said instead.

Writing also helped Courtney uncover pieces of herself that emerged as she pushed her thinking deeper into her past to find the memories she wanted to surface. Her writing peers at the Teacher Writing Project were helpful in giving her strategies to delve into herself for clarification of her thinking and a more vivid definition of who she was both as a child and an adult. From her engagement with writing, Courtney felt that she gained an identity in her own eyes as a writer. She also reinforced her image of herself as a learner, someone who could participate in knowledge construction and acquisition, in this context around learning to write and using writing as a self-defining process. It should not surprise us that she developed her writing program in her classroom to encompass daily journal composition.

*Personal therapy.* Courtney engaged in personal therapy for about a year during 1994-95. She worked on issues of self-definition such as gaining confidence in the legitimacy of her feelings and ideas. She worked on self-expression so that she could

communicate her feelings and ideas more freely within personal as well as professional

relationships. Courtney thought that the therapy helped her understand herself better and

she learned how to interact with others so that she felt she had a voice in relationships

that was worthwhile expressing. She reached a different perspective on her interactions

with Jim and her family and was able to change some of her self-perceptions. She began

to differentiate her own needs and desires from Jim's and even the children's. She did

not renege on her commitment to support them in her role as wife and mother, but she

began to see that she could also provide for her own self-fulfillment. For instance, she

took some time one summer to go on short trips with Kevin and Andrea even though Jim

could not accompany them because of work responsibilities. For Courtney, this was a

liberating act. She realized that she could still be a good wife and mother even when she

ventured out on her own.

She recognized, however, that she continued to have problems with direct

confrontation and conflicts. Eventually, with the help of her therapist and her own

searching, Courtney found a way that was comfortable for her to present disagreements

without being too confrontational. She would refer to herself or provide an example from

her own experiences that showed a different side to whatever was being discussed. In

this way, she was signaling that she had different ideas or opinions, but she did not

directly say that someone else's ideas or opinions were unfounded.

Within the context of personal therapy, Courtney moved through a transition

between looking for ways to think differently about herself and interact with family,

friends and colleagues and letting go of ways of functioning that had acted as a shield for

her in the past. Her deference to other people's desires and decisions protected her from

having to define herself too distinctly before she was ready to do that. Once she started

to differentiate herself more sharply from others, she also began to be more definitive in

her expectations for herself and others. This contributed to her ability to establish clearer

parameters for student behavior and clarify her role as an authority in the classroom. The

year following her personal therapy, Courtney experienced more success in her personal

relationships and her professional practice than she had the previous six years.

**Structures for Professional Learning**

As Courtney found avenues for support and learning in personal areas of her life

and as she learned to function more autonomously within the organizational structures at

Adams, she also discovered structures within her professional life that supported her

learning. The organizational and personal tensions and stresses Courtney faced eased as

the school developed as a PDS and Courtney found resources that enabled her to learn.

The organizational and personal resources that Courtney found to support her learning

and change coalesced in ways that helped her change in her professional life and practice

*Professional conversations with colleagues.* Courtney participated in several

circles of professional conversations emanating from PDS work, mentoring novice

teachers, and other study groups. For instance, PDS involvement provided Courtney with

opportunities for professional conversations on the Core Team and in study groups.

Working with the teacher education program provided Courtney with opportunities to

talk with colleagues about helping a novice learn to teach. Even when Courtney did not

have a student teacher, she continued to attend the Mentors Circle meetings in order to

stay connected to the conversations about learning to teach. The TMU group, the

mentoring project with Karen and Diane, and the summer writing project experience

were sources of intellectually stimulating and professionally and personally supportive conversations for Courtney.

Each of these professional conversational opportunities contributed to Courtney's ability to enact the kind of practice she envisioned. Over time, the substance of the conversations in which Courtney participated helped her clarify her vision of her classroom as a learning community and how to achieve it. The conversations also encouraged and sustained her learning how to teach subject matter for understanding. From the Core Team meetings, study group discussions, and her conversations with Karen and Diane, Courtney gained an understanding of what it took to teach from a transformation rather than transmission stance.

Through the articulation of her thinking in conversation with her peers, Courtney learned how to use the language of reform practices for her own purposes. As she drew upon the language to help express her ideas in these structured encounters, she made meaning out of it that connected to her beliefs. In turn, she was better able to make the language work for her in her classroom as she talked to her students and her student teachers about teaching, learning, and functioning together.

Professional interactions provided Courtney with a context that she grew to value because of the intellectual engagement as well as the social learning process involved. One reason she decided to work with student teachers after a two year hiatus was to assure herself opportunities for professional conversations with a colleague, albeit a novice. She wanted to find a means to engage in substantive professional reflection, problem solving and exploration of teaching and learning that would sustain her own growth. She thought that in the close work of mentoring a novice, she would gain

opportunities to develop these conversations for herself. She was particularly keen to have a place for conversations about teaching and learning to teach when the mentoring project with Karen and Diane ended.

*Learning within supportive social contexts.* In the TMU group, Courtney experienced the meaning of participating in a learning community. After the initial problematic months, the group gradually developed a social context characterized by respect, trust, and honesty. Courtney took an active role in the group, contributing to the social construction of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978) about mathematical concepts and ideas. Courtney exposed her tenuous understanding of mathematics and how to teach it conceptually and received help from the group in pushing her learning. As the group developed its own learning community, Courtney came to recognize what it felt like and looked like to take intellectual and social risks within a group of peers. Her anguish of being alone as a learner dissipated to some extent when she saw that others in the group also experienced similar stress of not knowing something and not knowing how to find answers. In the intellectual companionship of the TMU group, Courtney discovered that rather than frustratingly searching for right answers that often did not exist, she should search for clarity and direction. With this understanding, she became more confident in her moves as a learner and as a teacher. By personally experiencing what it meant to participate in the development of a learning community and what it meant to learn within this context, she was able to better define and enact a similar context in her classroom.

Courtney also recognized that as Karen and Diane mentored her learning to manage a learning community classroom and teach subject matter for understanding, they also engaged in social construction of knowledge that resembled what she was trying to

make happen in her classroom. As she made the connections between what she was learning and experiencing in the company of colleagues and what she was trying to do in her classroom, she became clearer about how to shape her classroom learning environment to provide opportunities for more interactive learning.

As Courtney gained confidence in her ability to learn in the company of peers, these experiences gave her confidence in her ability to learn on her own. She realized that she could read, listen, and talk with others in order to learn what she wanted to know. She applied this to learning in both her personal and professional lives. At the same time she valued learning with colleagues, she recognized that she could construct her own social context for learning between herself and an author, speaker, or her own intellect. Her curiosity and resourcefulness could provide her with the support she needed so that she no longer felt like an isolated learner even when she pursued her questions and curiosity by herself.

*Observations of working models.* Even though some PDS structures seemed to inhibit Courtney's journey of change, they also provided opportunities that helped her learn. Courtney mentioned several times that she used reallocated time to observe Karen's teaching and saw how a classroom could function with positive management approaches and with children acknowledging each other's rights and responsibilities. In addition, PDS sponsored visits to other schools where Courtney saw classrooms that seemed to fit her vision of active, student-focused teaching and learning. These classrooms were frequently noisy but purposeful. Courtney saw that room noise could have a tenor to it that was acceptable and reflective of busy minds at work. Courtney saw that the kind of teaching and learning she wanted in her classroom could be a reality.

Courtney also saw examples of the new roles for teachers in student-oriented classrooms. She observed teachers guide discussions, foster learning by posing interesting problems, and facilitate students' search for understanding. These observations coupled with debriefing and reflection, helped Courtney get clearer on what teaching for understanding in a learning community classroom looked and sounded like. They gave her a more concrete image of what she wanted to do herself. She gained a better sense of what it meant for her and her students to be teachers and learners together. She saw the variations among teachers and classrooms that helped her to find her own stance as a teacher who facilitated learning rather than just delivered information. She heard variations of the language of reform practices used in authentic contexts. From these observations, coupled with her mentoring from Karen and Diane and the learning in study groups, Courtney realized that she had a great deal of power and control to help children see how to gain their own power and control over their learning and behaviors.

In addition to helping her change her teaching practice, observations also helped her change her practice as a mentor of novices. She observed Karen and some university people as they worked with student teachers. Courtney watched others probe student teachers' thinking and construct conversations about teaching and learning practices. She gained a better understanding of her role as a mentor. She saw how Karen, particularly, guided her novices through the tasks of teaching by engaging in the tasks with them. Having had the same kind of guidance from Karen and Diane and having experienced, in the TMU group, the power of doing subject matter as an integral part of learning how to teach subject matter, Courtney realized the importance of these components in mentoring

novices. She began to learn how to talk to a novice and jointly engage in teaching tasks in ways that pushed both her and her novice's thinking.

## Tensions, Stresses, Enabling Resources and Change

In view of the complex matrix of tensions and stresses with which Courtney contended in her personal and professional lives, it is surprising that she did not plateau at a level of change that would have been only skin deep. Cohen (1991) tells of the revolution Mrs. O instigated in her teaching practice that Mrs. O perceived as a great change from her more traditional approach. Cohen points out however, that although Mrs. O did change, the change went only part way towards matching the goals reformers identified as optimal practice. Like Mrs. O, Courtney saw her own changes as quite different from her previous teaching practices. Unlike Mrs. O, Courtney recognized that she would need to continue to change. Courtney's changes penetrated not only her personal self but also her professional self and practice to a depth that reached to the bone. She realized that the changes affected her stance as a learner—that if she wanted to continue to be an innovative teacher, she would always have to be a learner, no matter how much she knew or changed.

Cohen (1991) also points out that changes in teaching practices are built on past teaching. Teachers in the process of change are bound to experience confusion as they mix traditional practices with more innovative ones. As Courtney tried to deal with her confusions related to moving from more conventional to more innovative practices, the tensions and stresses mounted. Although these tensions and stresses were identified discretely for purposes of analysis in this chapter, in the reality of professional and personal processes of change, they are intertwined and overlaid with each other much the

way some African sculpture is crafted as layers of people, holding onto and emerging from the ones below, yet the whole is carved from the same piece of wood with no break in the carving. The effect is a tangle of forms, each discernible but inseparable from the one above, below or next to it. Similarly, the organizational, personal, and professional domains intertwined as did the tensions and stresses created within each. The resources that helped Courtney learn and move forward on her journey of change formed an intricate support system as well, often serving multiple purposes and affecting her progress in intricate and sometimes subtle or paradoxical ways.

Raymond, Butt, and Townsend (1992) and Goodson (1992a) point out that teachers' professional identity and frames for changing teaching practice during their careers are influenced by their lives prior to beginning teaching. The high value that Courtney placed on socially interactive support systems such as study groups, the mentoring project, and other contexts for conversations builds on her earlier disposition to find human connections important for her sense of security and identity. Courtney came to recognize that these connections, however, could be two sided. For instance, in middle school and high school, she made good friends and joined numerous organizations in which she felt well-liked and accepted. Yet, when she reflected on these connections in the jellyfish essay she wrote just a few years later, she thought they provided only a pseudo-security because she was personally searching for a sense of identity and security that needed to come from within herself. In the same sense, the human connections Courtney made as she struggled to find herself both personally and professionally as an experienced teacher also provided her with a sense of belonging and

security, but she realized that she could not rely on those connections to provide the security that came from defining and knowing herself more intimately.

Goodson (1992a) also notes that teachers' personal and professional lives come together throughout their careers in ways that shape both. Courtney's story has highlighted that the change she was attempting professionally touched her personally as well. Not only did she apply some of what she was learning about innovative practices to family situations, but also as she grew in learning professionally, she grew in understanding herself personally. DeShino (1987), also a teacher, expressed this personal and professional interplay in her case of growth and change as she reflected on her learning experience.

> The growth I experienced affected all aspects of myself, for it became clear that I was, indeed, one whole person who encompassed the variety of roles that constituted my life, rather than a person with a life that consisted of those roles. (p. 14)

Like DeShino, Courtney came to see herself as an entity who assumed roles that could be played out in different contexts as needed. She began to put her own life together rather than let life put her together. Although she continued to keep her personal life relatively private in professional spheres, she began to see how she could use each to support her work in the other.

Courtney had to learn to function in multiple contexts and access multi-faceted systems of support in order to transform her teaching practices. She worked on change in both her personal and professional lives, moving ahead with long sought goals of confidence, self-expression, and autonomy. Although the stresses and tensions did not entirely disappear, she arrived at a place (Yinger, 1990) in her personal and professional life that was satisfying for her. She recognized herself as a lifelong learner which meant her journey would always continue. She saw herself as the road for her journey. Rather

than following the path wherever it may meander, however, she recognized that she had a

good deal of control over the directions it would take. On the surface, the road she

encountered toward personal and professional development was typical of her age and

gender. Her decision and her determination to traverse the road to change, overcoming

some atypical roadblocks by accessing some atypical resources, distinguished her,

however, from more typical teachers who either choose not to begin the journey or stop

too soon along the way.

# Chapter 9

## THE VALUE IN THE STRUGGLE:  DOES CHANGING TEACHING PRACTICE HAVE TO BE SO DIFFICULT?

Courtney was trying to change.  I wasn't trying to change; I was trying to build.  (Diane)

Courtney's story is about an experienced teacher transforming her practice in the context of Professional Development School reforms.  As an experienced teacher, she grounded her practice on a solid foundation of many years in the classroom.  She attempted radical change of her teaching practice, moving from conventional teacher-directed approaches to learner-oriented approaches aimed at conceptual understanding.  She had access to what current literature is identifying as efficacious professional development support systems—study groups that examine both teachers' needs to learn subject matter differently and their need to learn to teach it differently, opportunities for professional conversations with peers and university colleagues, and involvement in leadership roles and decision-making (Little, 1987; Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Klein, 1995; Lord, 1994).  Yet, Courtney struggled for several years before she and those who watched her thought she had made noticeable progress in changing her teaching practice.

Although Courtney's case is unique because she and her history are unique, her struggle raises questions and issues that should be addressed by policy makers, researchers and practitioners in their respective areas of expertise.  These questions apply

to reforms in teaching practices and the process of changing practice. What does it mean for a veteran teacher to attempt changing well-established practices? What is different about a veteran teacher radically changing her practice compared with a novice teacher learning innovative teaching practices as she prepares to teach? Who needs to change their practice? To what extent do teachers need to change their practices? Do all teachers need to undergo radical change as Courtney did? What kind of change is sufficient and to what depth must it occur to make a difference in students' learning? What makes support systems actually work for a teacher engaged in change? In addition to having opportunities for support, what else must be in place for a teacher in order for significant change to happen? What is the substance of deep-seated change that necessitates so much time and energy? For closer consideration, these questions can be clustered around the three major elements this story is about: 1) an experienced teacher 2) radical transformation of teaching practices 3) the context of reform support systems such as a PDS.

**Experienced Teacher**

What does it mean for an experienced teacher to attempt changing well-established practices? Experienced teachers who went through teacher preparation programs in the sixties, seventies, and early eighties were usually educated to develop their teaching practice around textbooks with teacher's guides that provided teachers with ready-made lesson objectives, steps for enactment, scripts for teaching that included the questions to pose, worksheets for practice, and tests for evaluation. Some of these materials were even called "teacher proof" on the assumption that teachers do not have the knowledge to design curriculum and lessons that present subject matter coherently

and conceptually. Teachers were the center of attention and closely directed classroom activities. The assumption was the quieter the room, the more controlled the students, the better the teacher (Lieberman & Miller, 1984). Even when Courtney did more engaging activities with her class such as visit an island, she noted that her practice was typical of the teacher-dominated, textbook-centered approach. When she started to change her practice, she was not already functioning from a previous base of innovative, reform practices. She did not learn to teach with the current national subject-matter standards as her guides (see, for example, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1989, 1991; National Research Council, 1996; American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1993; National Council of Social Studies, 1994; International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English, 1996). She was grounded in methods that she had learned more than twenty years ago and that she had refined as she grew in experience. Thus, she had to unlearn many practices which had become second nature and learn anew practices that were alien to her years of experience. (Ball, 1996, 1988; Langer, 1991).

What is different about an experienced teacher changing her teaching practice compared to a novice teacher just learning to teach using innovative approaches? Attempting change is different for experienced teachers than novice teachers. Novice teachers are educated, hopefully, in current reforms of teaching practices. Although they are beginners, usually having to transform their preconceived notions of teaching they acquired through their apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975), they start their careers from a different vantage point on reform practices than experienced teachers. They usually have knowledge of the national subject-matter teaching standards and have

had some guidance in enacting those. Their base, for the most part, is established in the reform practices to which Courtney wanted to move. Experienced teachers have no similar foundation in reform practices. They read about them, get a taste for them through in-service programs, and might observe novices' fledgling attempts to enact them if they work with student teachers, but they do not have the same opportunities novices in the best teacher education programs have to learn them in a formal, sustained, guided course of study and practice. Experienced teachers must traverse a path between internalized habits and patterns of teaching that they find outmoded to less familiar, tenuously understood practices that often feel awkward and result in confusion as they develop different ways to function in their classrooms (Cohen, 1991; Ball, 1996). Change for experienced teachers means letting go of both former thinking and actions while learning new ones, whereas novice teachers, although they may have to revise their pre-conceived notions about teaching and learning (DiShino, 1987; Heaton & Lampert, 1993) have not yet developed ingrained habits of action that have to change as well. Both novices and experienced teachers may struggle as they learn to teach in reform-minded ways, but the struggles are staged from different launching pads, and the tensions and stresses encountered by each may differ because of where they are in their development as teachers. As Ball suggests, the question of similarities and differences between novice and experienced teacher learning of reform-minded practice is rich for further study.

Courtney's story illustrates that experienced teachers who attempt change must be willing to acknowledge themselves as learners of teaching and learning at the same time that they must uphold their reputation for knowing how to run a classroom. Novices are

assumed to be learners; they have the luxury of being expected to take risks, make

mistakes, and be guided by more knowledgeable others. Experienced teachers, however,

have to handle the tension of being both a learner and an expert simultaneously. There is

little tolerance for them to muddle around while they try out different teaching roles and

experiment with practices strange to them. There are few opportunities to do this with

close to the classroom guidance of knowledgeable others which novices often have

available as they student teach and may continue to have available if they take a position

in a district with a required induction program. Even if experienced teachers enroll in

education courses, the courses are at levels of higher education that do not include guided

practice as an integral component. For the most part, experienced teachers are left on

their own to try out and observe their attempts at reform-minded teaching. They may

reflect on and report back on their experiences to a professor or colleagues in a study

group but it is self-perception only, not coupled with an outsider's perspective as well.

Could we expect other experienced teachers with similar careers to change their

practices? Should we expect such changes? Courtney's story began by noting her

typicality as a teacher. She typifies elementary teachers in that she is a white, married,

middle-class woman with many years of classroom experience (Newman, 1994/1990).

Yet her experiences and her struggle to change were unique to her as a person, teacher,

and participant in the personal, social-historical, and institutional contexts in which she

was imbedded. Her uniqueness, however, is also typical in that every teacher has a story

to tell that gives some insight into who they are as a person and a teacher. The ordinary

or typical looks different at the individual level. While we could expect other "typical"

teachers to change, who and what a teacher is cannot be ignored in supporting efforts to

change. To understand and support change, we must pay attention to the personal aspects of teachers' lives (Agnew, 1989; Aspinwall & Drummond, 1989; Goodson, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c; Grumet, 1988; Millies, 1992; Schmidt, 1997) and how their unique story affects their disposition to change.

Likewise, although career paths may have similar trajectories (Huberman, 1993), each teacher's journey on those paths has individual character. Such individuality is typical. By attending to who each teacher is, what they bring as a person to their practice and how that affects the way they function in a classroom, we can better understand how to help each teacher traverse the change process as they move through their career. It is typical that each person's journey through change will be unique. Those who advocate classroom reforms must be prepared to attend to the individuality of change.

Who needs to change? It is unrealistic to think that every teacher needs to or will change. Teachers, however, who are not touching the potential for each child to learn in depth, who see gaps between their beliefs about teaching and learning and the way they practice, who feel they can do better to help students learn, need to change. The challenge to change is for those teachers who see their practice as a developing, evolving, career-long adventure that demands intellectual, social, emotional and physical resources. These resources need to be stimulated and fed by support structures and learning opportunities that are responsive to teachers as individuals as well as members of a professional body. Most teachers have the potential for change. Unfortunately, there will always be some tadpoles left in the pond.

**Transforming teaching practice**

Courtney made radical changes in her teaching practice. She transformed her teacher-centered instruction into student-oriented practices. She shed roles of authoritarian director and controller for roles of guide and facilitator of learning. She restyled her classroom culture from one dominated by teacher decisions and teacher-student interactions to one characterized by student participation in decision making and interactions among students as well as teacher and students. She changed from teaching for recall to teaching for understanding. Do teachers engaged in changing teaching practices need to reconstruct their practices as extensively as Courtney did? What is the range of change related to teaching practice?

Courtney's visions of a different classroom culture and different ways of teaching and learning encompassed all curriculum areas and aspects of life in her classroom. She felt she needed to do a complete renovation of her teaching practices in order to reach a close match between her beliefs about teaching and learning and how her classroom functioned. All teachers who engage in changing their teaching practices do not need to do complete overhauls. Diane's observation that she was only trying to get better at what she was doing rather than make radical changes like Courtney points out the continuum of change. Courtney believed her teaching practice had become outmoded, thus plunged into bone-deep change. Diane already functioned out of a stance that supported student-oriented teaching and learning for understanding in a learning community classroom culture. She was a beginning teacher, however, and recognized that she needed to make changes that would help her learn to get better at enacting these approaches to teaching and learning. Both saw themselves as learners; both embraced in-depth learning; they were at different places, however, regarding the extent to which they needed to change

their practices. Karen was at still another point. She had enough years of teaching experience to recognize that she wanted to make substantial change in some of her practice, but she was always on the forefront of change in any case. Rather than needing to make dramatic changes in her practice, she worked on becoming more sophisticated in her understanding of innovative teaching practice and the development of a classroom culture conducive to supporting constructivist approaches. She had already made some basic changes in her practice several years before.

While the scope of change can range from refinement to radical overhaul of practice, teachers who engage in change needs to assess the extent of change needed for their individual situations. Helping teachers become aware of teaching practices that need change, recognizing where they are on the continuum, and providing them with incentives to change beliefs, values and practices raises many problems (Sowell & Zambo, 1997). One danger is in what Cohen (1991) highlights in the case of Mrs. O. Mrs. O regarded the changes that she made as revolutionary. Cohen acknowledged that Mrs. O did make changes, but the extent of her changes did not reach far enough to encompass the reforms in teaching practices being called for by current state and national standards. Mrs. O, however, seemed not to recognize the gap between the point she had reached and the practice that the standards expected. She was satisfied that the changes she had made were good enough and reflected the standards. It is cases like Mrs. O's to which we must be vigilant. Some changes in teaching practice do not go far enough, but who is to assess the extent of change needed and who is to determine whether changes made meet expectations?

Another problem encountered in change that is aimed at capacity building is keeping the effort manageable. Many change efforts begin as bounded endeavors that conceivably can be skillfully handled and kept under control. As the change process proceeds, however, the snowball effect takes over and the endeavor pushes the boundaries until they are obscure and the effort becomes overwhelming. Courtney began by thinking she would change her classroom culture and a few teaching methods but realized that the culture and innovative teaching practices were in a symbiotic relationship—to change something in one area meant changing in others. To change her teaching also meant changing herself. She also heard from the PDS movement and the university's teacher education program that reform in teaching practices was needed in all areas of classroom and school life. It was difficult for Courtney to keep her process of change contained in ways that allowed her to proceed systematically and with control. It became an all-encompassing and often overwhelming endeavor, sometimes getting out of hand so that she retreated to past practices she was trying to change. Once she was enmeshed in change, however, she could not return to previous practices for long. She knew they no longer served her or her students' needs. Thus she continued her journey, pushing herself to reach a point where radical change resulted in practices that she could eventually work to improve rather than continue to overhaul.

Do all teachers engaged in change have to struggle and confront obstacles as Courtney did? Again, each teacher's journey through change will be a unique story, yet aspects of Courtney's change process may be typical for most teachers. For most teachers, the expectation to change as well as what the results should look like must be clearly communicated. Courtney was inspired to change because of her work with the

teacher education program that placed student teachers in her school as well as from her involvement in the PDS effort. Teachers must feel a need to change as well as have the will to accomplish it. Courtney recognized discrepancies between her outmoded teaching practices and what she believed about how children learn. Her commitment to change her practices so they matched her beliefs was unswerving even though she had recurring set-backs, disappointments, and frustration. Teachers should not have to endure the extremes of struggle as Courtney did, but teachers in change must open themselves up to learning, which means working through disequilibrium, confusion, and uncertainties as part of the process.

While change may reside within teachers (Sowell & Zambo, 1997), they cannot be expected to engage in the process of change without adequate support and guidance. As Courtney's case illustrates, her determination to change was only a piece of the whole process. She also needed multiple sources of learning, guidance, and support over a long time to match her visions to her classroom reality. She did not and could not accomplish her goals alone. With adequate support, teachers can confront the challenges of change and make their way through the hard parts knowing that, as Courtney said, "There's value in the struggle."

## What Needs to be Learned

What do teachers need to learn in order to change teaching practices? Obviously teachers need to learn reform approaches to teaching and learning if their goal is student-oriented teaching and learning for understanding in a learning community classroom culture. These reform practices demand that teachers know subject matter in ways they probably did not learn as students themselves (Ball, 1996). In order to build pedagogical

content knowledge (Shulman, 1986, 1987), teachers need to understand content in enough depth to allow them to play with the ideas that emerge as they engage their learners in conceptual understanding. They also need to learn pedagogy that allows them to engage their learners in intellectual "play" both individually and with others. This means learning to be open to ideas, to be flexible, and to be adaptable. It means learning roles such as guide, facilitator, orchestrator, and manager that may be unfamiliar and feel awkward (Powell & McGowan, 1995).

Courtney's story highlights that teachers often know what not to do but not what to do. For instance, she wanted to facilitate discussion among students but often found herself taking control and directing instead. She admonished herself for acting in ways that she knew she wanted to abandon, but she did not know what to do instead. She had to learn to listen to her students differently, interpret their hidden messages and respond differently to their thinking and actions. Teachers endeavoring to change to reform-minded practice need to learn to attend to their learners from a holistic perspective, picking up on cues that will help them assess where a student is in understanding a concept and how to help them move further. How a teacher learns to see and hear her students differently needs to be explored further.

Changing to reform practices means learning to take control of curriculum decisions so that teaching and learning tasks are purposeful, intentional, and multi-faceted to provide opportunities for all students to engage at their point of learning. Courtney had to learn how to think about curriculum and make decisions on content to teach based on what she was learning about subject-matter teaching and her students as learners. When she finally introduced negative numbers, she was pleasantly surprised to

find her students ready to tackle the concepts involved, but it had taken her several years to build her own knowledge and confidence to the point where she was willing to risk teaching them.

Teachers engaged in change need to learn how to participate in shaping their own systems of support, searching for the ones that work for them and then involving themselves in the exploration and reflection that is integral to the process. Courtney had to recognize that not only was she a learner, but that it was okay to be a learner. She had to learn that seeking knowledge about herself as a person, learner, and teacher was more fruitful in accomplishing change than seeking right answers. She learned that participating in substantive professional conversations and study with peers was a mainstay for her process of change. Within these circles of conversation, Courtney had to learn how to question, challenge ideas, and publicly admit her lack of understanding in order to take advantage of the learning opportunities these circles offered her. Learning how to be a learner may be necessary for many teachers who want to change their practice.

To what extent must teachers engaged in changing their teaching practices learn a different professional language that allows them to function out of roles, norms, attitudes, and ways of thinking that reflect teaching practice reforms? Courtney needed to learn the meaning of reform language and interpret the meanings according to her situation. She needed to learn to transform her visions created from images based on the language of reform practices into classroom practices that were true to herself while still reflecting the visions she was seeking. She also needed to learn to use language differently with her students, providing them with encouragement, viable options for their learning, and

invitations to engage in responsible classroom citizenship rather than imposing dictums and communicating from a negative stance. She needed to learn to talk to her student teachers differently in order to engage them in learning the tasks of teaching and guide their development as novices. Learning a script, however, did not get Courtney to the point of change for which she was striving. She had to learn the language so that she could create her own conversations with the learners and teachers in her life. She had to hear it, rehearse it, try it out and modify it until it communicated what she meant and children or colleagues could respond in ways that complemented her vision.

## The Context of Reform Support Systems

Unlike many teachers, Courtney was surrounded by support systems that she could use to sustain her journey through change. She had opportunities to participate in multiple study groups, attend workshops and leadership academies, observe others teach, work with student teachers and the teacher education program, and be immersed in a culture that espoused teaching reforms. Yet opportunities for support and actual change are not necessarily congruent. Opportunities for support and change can exist independent of teachers taking advantage of them. For instance, current literature on teacher's professional development is advocating teachers' participation in study groups that provide places for professional conversations (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Lord, 1994; Little, 1987; McLaughlin & Oberman, 1996). Teachers can attend such study groups but continue to resist changing their practices and study groups can be formed that have no real substance or relevance for their participants. Having opportunities in place does not guarantee that they will be effective in bringing about change.

In Courtney's case, the expectations and support systems around her initially helped her create visions but failed to help her transform those into viable practice. She needed structures such as mentoring from peers and involvement in professional relationships such as the TMU group that touched her personal as well as professional needs for a sense of belonging and security. She needed to make the available resources work for her as an individual. She also needed multiple sources of support, each offering a piece to the scaffolding that was eventually constructed to help her change her practice. She went through a process of constructing this scaffold by taking pieces of support, putting them in place to see if they fit, reshaping some to make them fit better and discarding others that were too far out of shape to be helpful at the time (such as deciding not to work with student teachers for awhile) until the pieces formed the structure she needed to support her. Teachers not only need to have pieces for building support systems but also need to know how to select and adapt pieces to construct a scaffold that works for them. Unfortunately, many teachers still do not have opportunities even to select pieces to try out the fit for themselves.

Some of Courtney's struggle centered on her trying to learn to craft curriculum with little reference to textbooks and teacher's guides. Is it realistic and wise to expect most teachers to abandon guides that can help them make curriculum decisions? In thinking about the kinds of support that can help teachers change their practices, we must recognize that not all teachers can be creative designers of curriculum. While conceptually based, learner-oriented teaching and learning practices rely on teachers' abilities to carefully assess students' understanding and respond to their cues about how they are thinking, teachers can be supported in shaping curriculum by having curriculum

guides available that offer guidance rather than scripts and prescriptions. As Ball (1996) points out, curriculum guides that contain multi-faceted problems, projects and questions to use as learning tasks, articulation of the concepts that the problem addresses, viable options for structuring lessons around the problem, possibilities for individual and group work, what to watch for during discussions and learning tasks, tangents that might be fruitful to follow, and other insights would provide guidance and some direction without usurping teachers responsibility to shape curriculum according to their learners' needs. In mathematics, such guides have been pioneered by *The Connected Mathematics Project* (Lappan, Fitzgerald, Friel, Fey, & Phillips, 1997) and the *Investigations in Number, Data, and Space* mathematics curriculum (Russell, Teirney, & Mokros, et al., 1995). Judicious use of such guides and publications that address teachers concerns about moving to innovative practice such as *Beyond Arithmetic* (Mokros, Russell, Economopoulos, 1995) can ease the struggle to learn how to enact such practices. Teachers have formed study groups around the use of such guides as another source of professional support and as a place for meaningful conversation about practice.

Must teachers engaged in changing their teaching practices be in the company of others who are also learning and changing? Is it plausible to think that teachers will embark on changing their practices when they are the only ones in the context making the journey? In Courtney's case, she was not the only person learning and changing. The people who were a part of her learning were learners themselves. For instance, Karen and Diane continued to learn how to think about and enact reform-minded practice, mentor novices, and mentor Courtney. The TMU group members, including Lee, the university professor who led the group, learned not only mathematics as subject matter

and how to represent it for children to learn but also how to function as a group of learners together. The Core Team learned how to confront the conflicts that arose among them as they also learned how to structure the work of teachers in the school differently to provide time and opportunities for teacher learning. Many of the people in Courtney's network of support were making changes themselves in their practices. In this sense, Courtney was not alone in making changes, even though, for awhile, she felt alone in her struggle. Teachers need opportunities to be in the company of others who are working on change in order to reflect, question, critique and bolster each other's confidence that the struggle is worth the effort.

## The Substance of Changing Teaching Practices

It is one thing to point out the need for reforming teaching practices and call for change. It is another to look intimately at one teacher's biography of change to gain a sense of what it took for her to transform her professional practice and gain a better sense of her personal self in the process. In advocating change in teaching practice, it is important not to gloss over what is involved. Expecting change is not enough; teachers need guidance, direction, and help in gaining clarity about what needs to change. Recognizing that change takes time is not enough; teachers need to be given time in their classrooms, out of their classrooms, by themselves, with others, to pursue change at a pace conducive to their learning. It doesn't necessarily happen in a week, a month, or a year. For teachers truly striving for professional development, it takes much of an entire career to engage in learning that supports change. Providing sustained and consistent professional development opportunities is not enough; those opportunities must be

substantive and relevant so that teachers connect to them and use them in ways that affect their practice.

Courtney's story provides one image of a teacher engaged in changing from traditional to reform-minded practice. Her story provides us with some insights about teacher learning and change but also raises further questions and areas to explore. Is change always desirable? When should consistency prevail? When is resistance to change the path to take? We need to continue to delve into the questions posed throughout this chapter. Courtney's story has highlighted their importance; it has not provided clear answers yet. Pondering these questions should help educators and those committed to educational reform make wise choices about directions for professional development that genuinely support teaching as an intellectual as well as social and emotional endeavor. For example, professional development could involve structuring sustained opportunities for substantive professional conversations that are relevant to teachers' learning in their organizational context. These questions should also help in thinking and making decisions about which practices need to change and who needs to change her or his practice. Courtney's story gives insight into the substance of changing teaching practice and illustrates paths through the process. From it we get a picture of what changing teaching practice entails and what can make it difficult.

Some readers of this story may be discouraged by Courtney's struggle to change. They will concentrate on the frustration, tensions, stresses and disappointments and consider such a journey of change to be too emotionally and socially expensive. Others, however, may see insights about what radical change of practice entails and apply those insights to their own domains of educational work and spheres of influence. Courtney's

story should give pause to policy makers who would too swiftly call for changes without considering what it takes for teachers to engage in changing their practices. For those who are in positions to provide professional development opportunities for teachers, Courtney's story can be a catalyst to find ways to bridge the gap between opportunities for support and enactment of change. Courtney's courage and determination to change her practice could provide inspiration to others who are in the midst of change to persevere and to those who are contemplating beginning the journey to take the first step.

**APPENDICES**

# APPENDIX A

## Timeline

**Growing up years**

November 7, 1945: Born

1952-53: Second grade. Publicly embarrassed in school when she failed a phonics test.

1955-56: Fourth grade (repeated year). Blossomed under teacher's influence.

1958-59: Seventh grade: Friend introduced her to the social world of adolescents.

1963-64: Senior year in high school. Active in many extra-curricular activities.

1964-66: Attended community college. Met husband, Jim.

1966-68: Attended college and graduated in teacher education.

**Professional career**

1968-69: First teaching position. Married in August 1969.

1969-present: Teacher at Adams Elementary School.

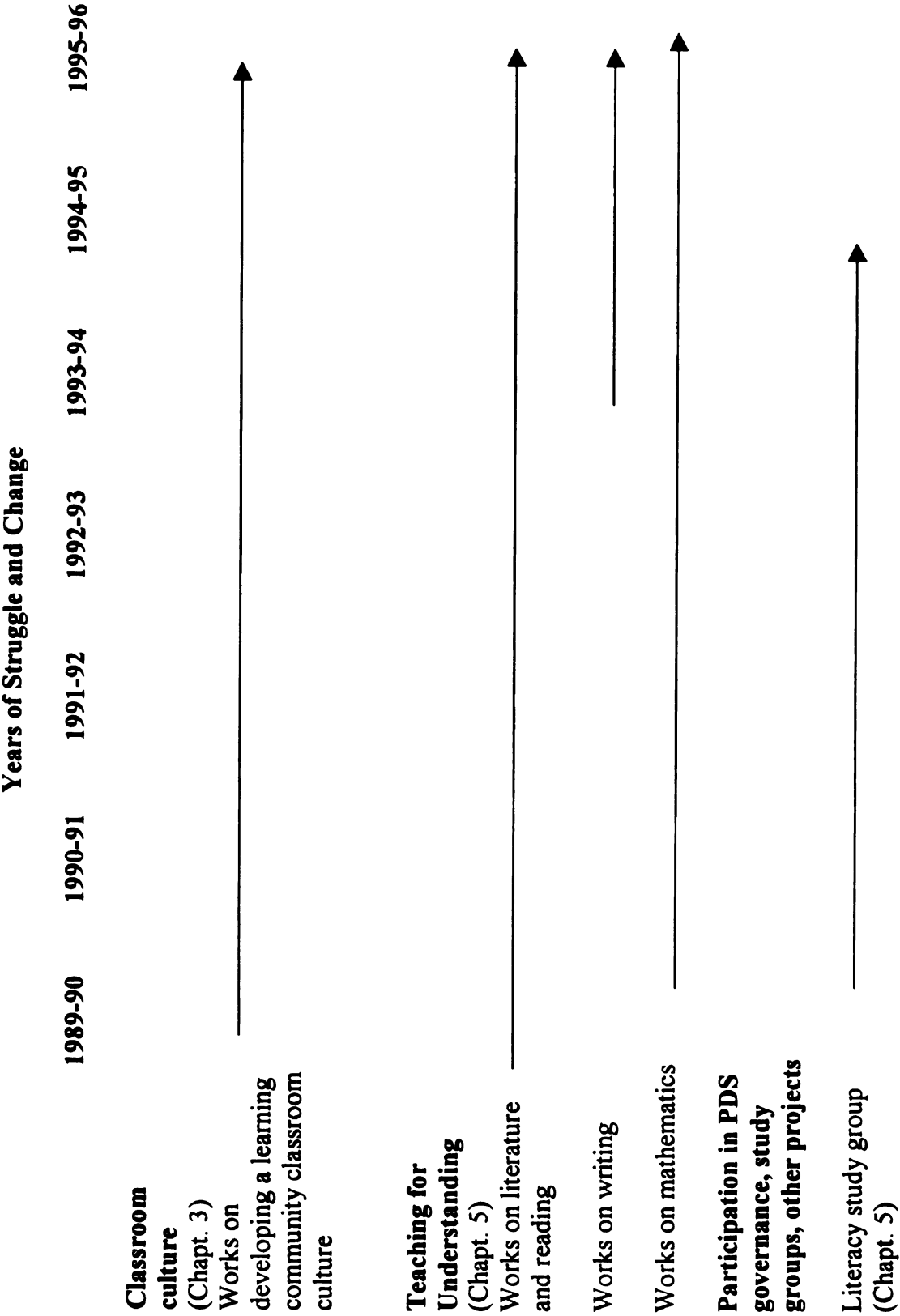1976: Birth of first child, stillborn.

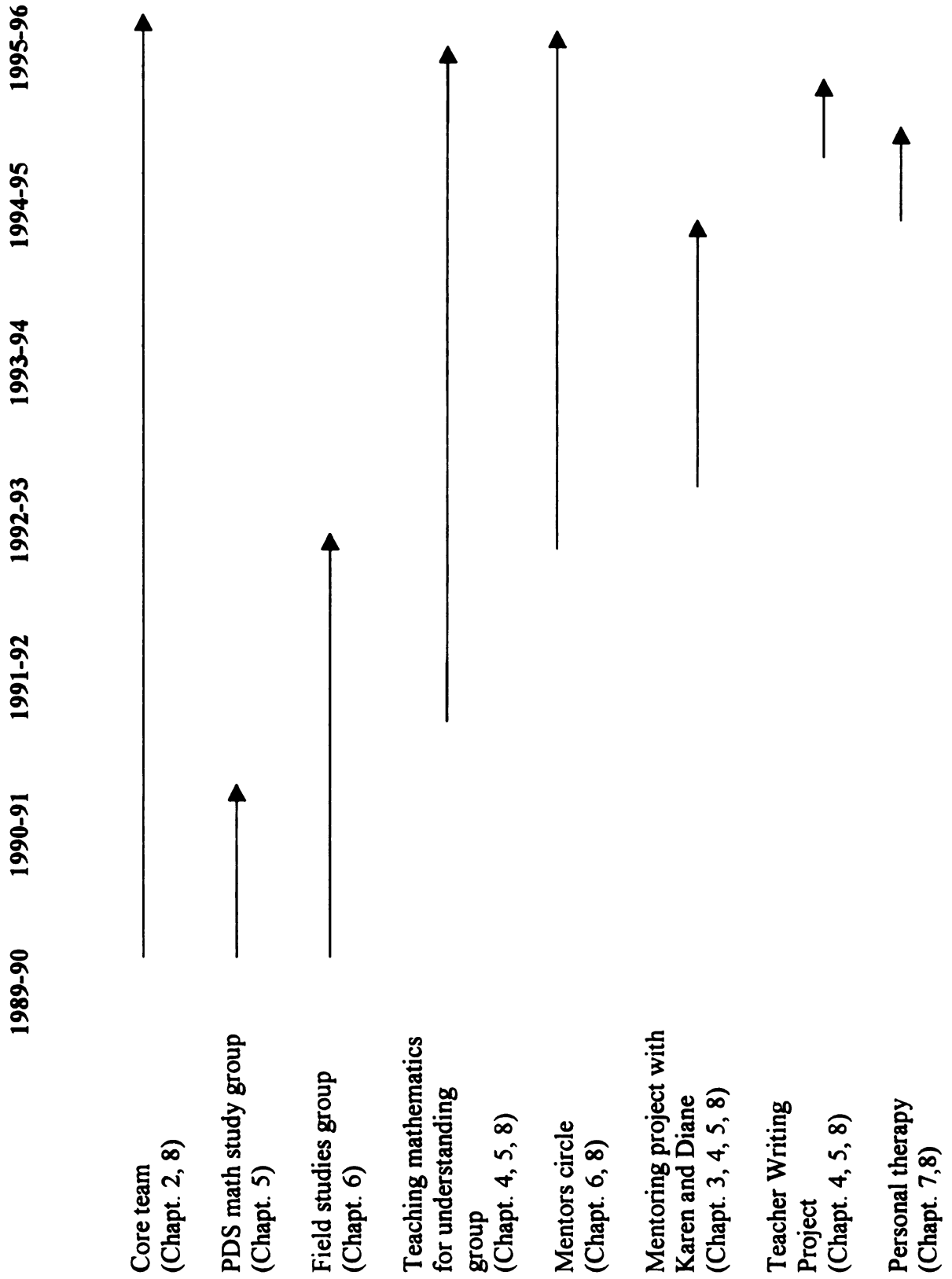1978: Birth of second child, Andrea.

1980: Birth of third child, Kevin.

1988-89: Participated in cooperative learning study group. First PDS institute in June.

1989-96: Years of struggle and change (See Appendix B)

**APPENDIX B**

Years of Struggle and Change

1989-90 1990-91 1991-92 1992-93 1993-94 1994-95 1995-96

**Classroom culture** (Chapt. 3)
Works on developing a learning community classroom culture

**Teaching for Understanding** (Chapt. 5)
Works on literature and reading

Works on writing

Works on mathematics

**Participation in PDS governance, study groups, other projects**

Literacy study group (Chapt. 5)

1989-90    1990-91    1991-92    1992-93    1993-94    1994-95    1995-96

Core team
(Chapt. 2, 8)

PDS math study group
(Chapt. 5)

Field studies group
(Chapt. 6)

Teaching mathematics
for understanding
group
(Chapt. 4, 5, 8)

Mentors circle
(Chapt. 6, 8)

Mentoring project with
Karen and Diane
(Chapt. 3, 4, 5, 8)

Teacher Writing
Project
(Chapt. 4, 5, 8)

Personal therapy
(Chapt. 7,8)

1989-90 1990-91 1991-92 1992-93 1993-94 1994-95 1995-96

**Work with
student teachers**
(Chapt. 6)

**Critical incidents**

Break with Peg
(Chapt. 4)

6/91

12/93

Break-through lunch
with Karen and Diane
(Chapt. 4)

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