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Moving to Whole Language:
Change Narratives in
One New England School District

presented by

Sue Frances Johnson

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Diane D. Brunner
Major professor

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MOVING TO WHOLE LANGUAGE:
CHANGE STORIES IN ONE NEW ENGLAND
SCHOOL DISTRICT

By

Sue Frances Johnson

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

MOVING TO WHOLE LANGUAGE:
CHANGE STORIES IN ONE NEW ENGLAND
SCHOOL DISTRICT

By

Sue Frances Johnson

In the last twenty-five years public education has seemed to be in a decline according to the many calls for reform, restructure and change from the public, government leaders, business leaders, and education leaders. Despite all the rhetoric and attempts to create change in education, we do not seem to be succeeding. During this time a grassroots movement called whole language has risen which could quell these outcries.

Perhaps the difficulty of successful educational change may lie in the fact that those who will be expected to implement and thus be most affected by change-the classroom teachers-have not been clearly represented nor heard by those proposing change.

The purpose of this study was to explore, through in-depth interviews, three teachers' perceptions of the process and reality of change in becoming whole language teachers. These teacher narratives reveal that a move to a whole language classroom is a very complex process which occurs gradually and involves the need for teacher commitment, development of a community of teacher learners, teacher autonomy and collaboration, time for reflection, principal

support, and parental support. Impediments to change are often the system itself, standardized testing, and the teachers themselves.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

in me and encouraged me. Tammi Flint without whose typing assistance the transcripts would have never been completed was invaluable. And especially I must recognize my friend and colleague, Helen Walker, who sat up nights with me and avidly read drafts and reassured me when I was ready to give up and helped me to believe in myself. She is and always will be "an uncommon friend" and "an uncommon teacher."

And finally to my children who put up with an often distant mother who sometimes tried to do it all. To Jill and Nick I offer my apology, my love and my thanks.

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Chapter One

THE SEARCH

"The search is what anyone would undertake if he were not sunk in the everydayness of his own life. To become aware of the possibility of the search is to be onto something. Not to be onto something is to be in despair." Walker Percy, from The Moviegoer.

As an English teacher for more than twenty years, in an inner city middle school and in a high/middle school for highly motivated and gifted kids, educational change has never seemed to be problematic or unique for me. My teaching colleagues would often tease me about what I was going to do next. What new book was I going to use? Why did I not use all the standardized tests? Why did I have all that stuff hanging in my room, all those books?

They could never understand that I **had** to change; I **had** to try something new. Often I changed because it was simply boring for me to do the same things over and over. I was always a different person as were my students different people, and each class had a different personality and different needs. How could I do the same things over and over again?

I was always searching for something: something new that would spark my students' excitement about language; something new that would involve everyone, including me. Sometimes the changes I attempted to make evolved from my

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own learning in the classroom. For instance, I clearly remember the day that fourteen-year-old Marcus asked me why we had to do grammar books. As I looked at my classroom of inner city kids, I realized that I did not have an answer that would hold any meaning for them. So we stopped using the grammar texts and began to explore, creating our own texts to work from. No one told me that I could not do this; it just felt right. When my principal would come in to observe my class, he would simply praise me because my students seemed to be involved in whatever we were doing.

I also discovered that my students responded with more enthusiasm and excitement to paperbacks instead of our reading books. So I searched garage sales and other classrooms to bring as many trade books into my classroom as possible and pitched the regular textbooks. Again no one said that I could not do this. Instead, I was again praised for the fact that my students were reading and their tests scores were going up.

Sometimes I learned through teacher development. We sporadically had a variety of workshops in our district sponsored by the state. I always made an effort to go to all of them in search of new ideas. But very often I was left with more questions than answers. The workshops presented cute ideas and new ways of doing things, but I was not sure how to connect them, and I could not always see how they would connect with my students.

It was finally through my formal education that my

search gained meaning. I formed more questions and started to think about the why of all these ideas and began to collect my thoughts and discover what my own philosophy was. In my masters program I learned more about what learning was. I had decided to take my masters in elementary education because I wanted to be certified K-12 so I would always have a job. In that program I began to question how what I was doing in the classroom connected with how I believed students learned. I was briefly introduced to a number of new ideas about reading and writing, and about teaching math and science, but it was the learning theories that got most of my attention. I began to realize that my teaching practice and philosophy at the high school and middle school levels were closely aligned with the philosophy of some elementary teachers.

It was shortly after I finished my masters that I joined a number of professional organizations (NCTE, ASCD, ALAN) and began to follow the current trends and research in the teaching of reading and writing. I began to read journals and newsletters and found a forum where I could seek out answers to my questions and where I found others who had similar questions. I even discovered that I could attend the meetings of the Michigan Council of Teachers of English.

When I went back for my doctorate, my search led me to read Louise Rosenblatt, Constance Weaver, Frank Smith, the Goodmans, Steve Tchudi, Lev Vygotsky, Jerome Harste, Graves

and Hanson, Atwell, Pearson and Tierney and others. They spoke to me, and I responded. I found answers to some of my questions and formed more questions. I had not been crazy for wanting to do things that were meaningful to me and my kids. It was okay for me to get off track with the students if something interested us. I was not alone in my belief that my students were at the heart of my teaching, not the curriculum nor the text. My search broadened. I discovered that I had been developing a whole language philosophy of learning.

Some changes I attempted were accomplished easily, some with great difficulty, and some were never fully realized because of many external and internal forces encountered. And some of those changes, I have discovered, were not "real" changes at all.

Even though to me change had almost always seemed to be an inevitable part of good teaching, a constant that some of us come to expect if we are in the field long enough, change is not and has not always been considered to be appropriate and valuable to many others in education and outside education. Also, as I have grown in my understanding of education, of teaching and learning, I have learned that I really did not understand the process of change, since my own personal implementation of change came so easily and naturally to me. Thus I began a new search.

Today as an assistant professor of English Education and an inservice teacher of English language arts teachers

and a classroom observer, understanding, implementing and observing change is an even more important part of my profession. Since I work with teachers to help them affect changes in reading and writing classrooms, I keep up with research and reports that suggest new and "better" ways of doing English. So in many respects, I have become an agent of change for language arts teachers. I have also come to realize that my fully understanding how teachers define change and most successfully accept and implement change would make me a better teacher of teachers and would allow me to more effectively affect change myself.

Along my own educational journey, I have evolved more strongly into an advocate of whole language philosophy. For me this was the most critical kind of change to make. It involved not only making changes in classroom practices, but making major changes in what I had been taught to believe about what education was and who my students were and what my real role as "teacher" meant. I had to come to terms with my experiences, beliefs and practice.

Sometimes I see teachers making changes that are successful, but at other times I see teachers who have no interest in trying something different, which concerns me. Sometimes I see teachers making changes which are not good for them or their students. Although I tend to think change is good, I know from my own teaching experiences that

sometimes it is not,[1] and sometimes it costs too much in other areas. But I still get frustrated when teachers choose not to change or give up on a change attempt too soon and then revert back to old ways after a few months. And I continually ask the question, "Why does this happen? Why was this teacher able to change successfully and not this one?"

I have a vested interest now in how and why teachers change in their language arts classrooms and a strong belief that the principles underlying whole language, clearly supported by an overwhelming amount of research (see Chapter Three), are the philosophy that should support classroom practice at every level. This interest in the questions surrounding how change occurs and what impedes change, especially as it relates to a whole language philosophy in teaching, is the impetus for this new search.

Michael Fullan (1991) argues that "an understanding of what reality is from the point of view of people within the role is an essential starting point for constructing a practical theory of the meaning and results of change attempts" (144). In this study, then, I will explore the

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[1]Fullan (1991) states that "many decisions about the kinds of educational innovations introduced in school districts, are biased, poorly thought out, and unconnected to the stated purposes of education.... Change is not necessarily progress. Change must always be viewed in relation to the particular values, goals, and outcomes it serves (8).

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reality of change[2] from the point of view of three New England school teachers who have successfully changed from very traditional approaches and beliefs in the teaching of language arts to a whole language philosophy of teaching. In doing so these teachers have not only changed themselves but have affected change in their entire school and have touched others in their district.

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[2]The term "change" will be defined by the teachers themselves, as one of the purposes of this study is to identify what their perception of change is.

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Chapter Two

THE PROBLEM

"It is teachers who, in the end, will change the world of school by understanding it." Lawrence Stenhouse

Calls for Reform

As I began to review literature on educational change and reform, some things became more clear to me. In the last twenty-five years or so, public education has seemed to be in decline according to the many calls for reform, restructure and change. "Johnny can't read or write," "Johnny can't think," "Johnny can't add" were the rallying cries of many. In a 1983 sobering report, the National Commission on Excellence in Education declared that we were "a nation at risk." This report not only set the tone for the educational reform that would mark the 1980's and 1990's, but it also brought a focus to education that had never happened before (Nowell 1).

I discovered that the loudest voices heard for educational reform have been raised by government, education and business leaders (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986) and a consortium of education deans (The Holms Group, 1986). In general the reform documents produced by these leaders

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have envisioned a professional teaching environment in which the teacher assumes a decision-making and leadership role and has the opportunity for career advancement.... Despite the abundance of literature suggesting visions for school change, as we begin the 90's, Shanker asserts that public education is still at the edge of disaster.'" (Dana 1)

Regardless of the rhetoric and the attempts to create change in education, it does not 'seem' that we are succeeding. The reports of problems in education continue; state and national scores are published regularly with cries about what students don't know; the government is taking action with Education/America 2000; and states are revising and creating new tests for teachers and students to force change in education. Perhaps the difficulty may lie in the fact that those who will be expected to implement and thus be most affected by change--the classroom teachers--have not been clearly represented or heard by those proposing reform --government, business and education leaders.[3]

For example, when we look at the representation on the above commissions themselves, there are more business and government representatives than classroom teachers; in fact, classroom teachers are conspicuously absent. The National Commission on Excellence in Education, which prepared A Nation at Risk, gave only one slot out of thirty-three to a classroom teacher. The Holmes and Carnegie Commissions,

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[3]Ravitch (1985) asserts that "educational reform movements have taken teachers for granted and treated them as classroom furniture rather than as thinking, possibly disputatious human beings"(19).

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which have pressed for an increased voice and status for teachers, do not have any classroom teachers on their task forces at all (Fosnot 12). Isn't that like a parent telling a child, "Do what I say, not what I do"?

What do we know about educational change?

At first, one might think that we do not know much about educational change, but, in fact, we have an enormous amount of research available about educational change. Since the post-Sputnik crisis in the 1960s which produced many curriculum innovations and fostered inquiry-based and student-centered instruction, there have been hundreds of studies on educational change.

Many of the changes that resulted from the wave of reform in the 1960s and 1970s were funded directly by the federal government and indirectly through state and local reform projects spurred on by government support.[4] Some of the early studies simply looked at the purposes of the new reform effort.

In one of the most prominent studies on federally sponsored educational programs by Berman, McLaughlin and Associates (1977), 293 change projects, including 29 field

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[4]Sputnik contributed directly to the passage of the National Defense Act of 1958 and fostered scores of projects at the national, state and local levels to strengthen curricula, to upgrade the quality of teachers and teaching, and to develop new instructional resources and materials.

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studies, were researched. Berman, et al. concluded that school district decisions to engage in certain reforms were of two types: those reflecting opportunism, in which districts were motivated by the desire "to reap federal funds," and those characterized by problem solving, in which the main motivation emerged in response to locally identified needs. As might be expected those which were motivated by need were much more successful in achieving the desired outcomes and in continuing the changes after the funds ended.

Studies were also conducted on why change was or was not successful. For example, some studies revealed that the importance of relating need to change decisions is essential for success.[5] Rosenblum and Louis found that "the degree to which there was a formal recognition within the school system of unmet needs" (12) was one of the four readiness factors necessary for implementing change. Huberman and Miles (1984) also suggested that the people involved in the change efforts must perceive both that the needs being addressed are significant and that they are making some progress towards them.

The people most closely involved in educational change are teachers. Regardless of who decides that there will be a change, it is the teachers who must see it implemented and

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[5]Teachers frequently do not see the need for changes (NEA report, 1979; Goodlad, 1984; Nias 1989). Those who do not see a need for real change are generally satisfied with the system as it is or are uncomfortable with trying to make changes that require a fundamental alteration in their belief systems.

provide results. Thus they should be involved in identifying the need for change and seeing the progress. However, Loucks and Hall's (1979) research showed that "the assumptions of introducers of change are out of [sync] with the 'stages of concerns' of teachers" (qtd in Fullan 35). And, Sarason (1982) studying the experience of the "new math" concluded that motivation for this change had not involved teachers, students or parents. And as we all know, the change to the "new math" lasted only briefly. Silberman's review of education (1970) concluded that the reason for the failure of the educational reform movement was "the fact that its prime movers were distinguished university scholars"; what was assumed to be its greatest strength turned out to be its greatest weakness (qtd in Fullan 22). The scholars knew a great deal about theory and research, but were too distant from the real, everyday realities of school.

More recently directives for change from state legislatures to increase teacher and school accountability to improve student achievement may in reality be contributing to a decline of teaching and curricula. For example, McNeil (1987) found in a study of magnate schools in one district that reforms meant to upgrade the quality of instruction had an opposite effect:

> By applying standardized, reductive formulas to content
> and pedagogy, (the reforms) undermine the integration
> of teacher, student and subject; they intentionally set
> in motion a de-skilling not present in the pre-reform
> days of the magnet school... (6-7).

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Corbett and Wilson's (1990) study of the impact of statewide testing in Maryland and Pennsylvania also found that new statewide testing mandates caused action at the local level in ways that narrowed the curriculum and created conditions adverse to reform:

> Coping with the pressure to attain satisfactory results in high-stakes tests caused educators to develop almost a "crisis mentality" in their approach, in that they jumped quickly into "solutions" to address a specific issue. They narrowed the range of instructional strategies from which they selected means to instruct their students: they narrowed the content of the material they chose to present to students; and they narrowed the range of course offerings available to students. (207)

Other research on educational change has found that substantial change efforts that address multiple problems are more likely to succeed and survive than small-scale, easily trivialized innovations[6] and that important changes can't be mandated because "they require skill, motivation, commitment, and discretionary judgment on the part of those who must change [schools and teachers]" (Fullan and Miles 746).

Research on the change process also reveals three broad stages. The first stage, initiation, consists of the process that leads up to and includes a decision to adopt or proceed with a change. Adoption decisions are most often generated from administrative offices and usually have as their focus district or school-wide change. Adoption decisions are often related to needs, assessments, or

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[6]Huberman and Miles, <u>Innovation Up Close.</u>

recognized areas of weakness. Yet in most areas of life, improvements build on strength, not weakness.

Stage two, implementation, (usually the first two or three years of use) involves the attempt to put an idea or reform into practice. It is the most difficult and complex stage of the process, which is surprisingly taken for granted by many policymakers. Implementation can be positively influenced if previous change efforts have been successful; if there has been careful consideration of the decision involving the individuals who will be affected; if enough time is allocated to implement the innovation; and if there is strong support from district and school administration.

Stage three, continuation or institutionalization, refers to whether the change gets built in as an ongoing part of the system or disappears. At this stage a shift from the personal to organizational needs occurs. A change is likely to take hold in a system if there is some strong administrative pressure; if there is minimal local resistance; if there are sufficient funds to continue; and if there is leadership and staff stability.

The list of the research and reports goes on and on. The point is that we do have a tremendous amount of information about what makes successful educational change, and yet we continually have unsuccessful change projects.[7]

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[7]Educational change in many instances is good, but not always. For me change is successful if its purpose, which should always be about improving learning, is clearly

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One of the most comprehensive studies on educational change is that of Michael Fullan. Supporting what much research points out, Fullan states that "Educational change depends on what teachers do and think--it's as simple and complex as that" (117). No matter what reforms, mandates or new gimmicks are presented to teachers, no significant change will occur unless it reflects what teachers believe about teaching and learning. Teachers are the key to successful change efforts.

Larry Cuban suggests that revising teacher practice is a matter of changing teacher beliefs. Since "the crucible of experience and the culture of teaching" (Lester and Onore 100) has been formed and perpetuated for over one hundred years, teachers need to unlearn in order to learn. Genuine learning and change come about from questioning or reassessing our existing beliefs about the world.

As Stephen North (1987) explains, teacher knowledge, or "practitioner's lore"

> is driven, first, by pragmatic logic: it is concerned
> with what has worked, is working, or might work in
> teaching, doing, or learning.... Second, its structure
> is essentially experiential. That is, the traditions,
> practices, and beliefs of which it is constituted are
> best understood as being organized within an
> experience-based framework: I will create my version of
> lore [knowledge] out of what has worked or might work--
> either in my own experience or in that of others--and I
> will understand and order it in terms of the
> circumstances under which it did so. (23)

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identified; if it is supported by well researched theories
of learning; if teachers are involved in the planning as
well as the innovation stages; and if it is viewed in
relation to the values, goals, and outcomes it serves.

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In other words new experiences are always initially reacted to in the context of some "familiar, reliable construction of reality" which people (teachers) must be able to attach personal meaning to, regardless of how meaningful they might be to others. For teachers, that meaning can take many forms depending upon what their initial purposes or goals were in attempting the new experience and their prior experiences and knowledge.

Often for many, the familiar equates with tradition.

The Influence of Tradition

Historically, a number of traditions have driven education.[8] At the turn of the century as the United States changed from a rural, agricultural society to an industrialized, growing urban world, it became increasingly evident that the traditions of literacy learning and the current traditions of schooling could no longer serve society to develop productive citizens for the twentieth century (Shannon 1990 6), and change was necessary.

Shannon (1990) reports that according to Kliebard there were four distinct groups vying for control of education at the this time: the scientific managers;[9] the social

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[8]See Shannon (1990, 1989) and Applebee (1974) for a discussion of these traditions.

[9]The scientific managers sought to develop curriculum which would use exact measurement and precise standards to determine the most efficient ways to train children to become useful citizens. Their central purpose was to use

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reconstructionists;[10] the humanists;[11] and the child-centered proponents[12] (7-14).

The most persuasive and powerful of these groups was the scientific managers. As early as the turn of the century Frederick Taylor's scientific management system, lauded as "the only means for raising productivity in both industrial and social institutions," was adapted from industry as the model for establishing a scientific curriculum (11). Taylor and his followers insisted that it was possible to scientifically analyze tasks performed by individuals in order to discover those procedures that would produce the maximum output with the minimum input of energies and resources.

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schools as the primary socializing agents for intellectual, social and moral development to ensure that American standards were upheld.

[10]The social reconstructionists wanted to develop a curriculum which would create an educational system that would help solve the social problems created by rapid industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. They wanted a curriculum that would focus on the social issues of the time: poverty, crime, political corruption, unemployment, etc.

[11]The humanists wanted to maintain as much of the status quo as possible by preserving many of the curricular traditions of the past such as the focus on classical languages and literature, development of reasoning power and a sensitivity to beauty. The school curriculum would be driven by college requirements.

[12] For the child-centered advocates, curriculum was to be formed around a child's natural development and interests. Through observation and systemic analyses, the child-centered teacher would develop a curriculum which would allow students to develop and use their literacy skills through natural communicative and self-expressive activities.

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> By 1911, scientific management was so well accepted in
> the United States that the National Society for the
> Study of Education's Department of Superintendents
> appointed a Committee on the Economy of Time in
> Education to make recommendations to eliminate
> nonessentials from the elementary school curriculum, to
> set minimum standards for each school subject, and to
> improve teaching methods through scientific research.
> (Shannon 1990 11)

Seeking the most effective methods and materials with
which to teach children, scientific managers, directed by
the report of the Committee on the Economy of Time in
Education, planned to develop the report into "a handbook
and guide for the use of teachers and supervisors who are
interested in planning classroom procedures with due regard
for both economy and efficiency in teaching and learning"
(qtd in Shannon 11). In the language arts curriculum these
materials translated into the commercially prepared basal
reading materials and the lessons they prescribed.

> The central focus of the basal lessons is on the
> systematic, even standard, delivery of instruction
> along a fixed sequence of reading and language skills
> with periodic use of standardized tests to monitor
> student progress through the materials (14).

The continued use and influence of the basals has preserved
the scientific managers' hold on the literacy lessons and
curriculum of the public schools.

Since the 1950s, educational tradition has been heavily
influenced and supported by the behaviorist movement,
inspired in large part by the work of B.F. Skinner. The
behaviorists added weight and strength to the scientific

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management program because they too promised clear and immediate measurements of learning. The behaviorist movement claimed that educators could break down all learning into discrete, observable outcomes that could become objectives of teaching. These concepts have had enormous appeal to a society which still held the clear pragmatic goals of industrialization and wanted a focus on product and "quality control."

This traditional "factory" model of education has been given a variety of names in education--"top-down," "transmission of knowledge" and "knowledge acquisition" models are three. It promised that learning could be measured accurately and that the public could know exactly what and how much had been and could be learned. Its emphasis on accountability has clearly undergirded and driven educational programs for the last fifty years.

Any time that there has been a perceived crisis in education, this scientific/behaviorist model and its measures for "quality control" are summoned. Frank Smith (1986), an opponent of this tradition, states in <u>Insult to Intelligence</u>:

> Tests are always required when administrations decide to take charge of some aspect of education. There can be no educational problems without tests. And instructional programs are required to help children take tests. The programs and tests are expected to ensure "quality education" and to solve educational problems. (238)

No part of education has been left untouched by this

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scientific/behaviorist tradition. For example, in her unpublished dissertation Brinkley (1992) shows that from the beginning of this country's history, evaluation of English language arts curricula and teaching practices has been consistently linked to evaluation of student performance and that "objective tests are the most frequent means by which English language arts student performance assessment occurs." Even in the field where creativity, the making of meaning, is often seen as an outcome, behavioristic principles govern. "English language arts professionals [believe] that testing drives curriculum. Historical and current data reveal that testing, to a greater or lesser degree, has almost always driven curriculum" (Brinkley 215).

Roland Barth (1980) observed that

> the lives of teachers and students in this country are closely wedded to an implicit, persistent 'transmission-of-knowledge' model of learning.... The proper business of teachers is to transmit this knowledge to students as efficiently as possible. And the student is expected to assimilate this knowledge as quickly as possible and to display it upon demand. Students are evaluated according to how much knowledge they have acquired and how fast and ably they can demonstrate it. (8-9)

Scientific managers supported by behaviorists have been able to dominate American education because of the American public's fascination with business, science, and behavioral psychology and social, economic, and political circumstances of the times. Clear behaviorist and scientific management principles and practices, including the belief that knowledge and learning can be broken down into manageable

parts and accurately measured and controlled, have driven
and underpinned educational practice for a long time.

These traditional principles are the "familiar and
reliable construction of reality" that many have used to
judge the need for and effectiveness of educational change.

Educational Change and Behaviorism

Educational change itself has also been affected by the
behaviorist tradition. In answer to the question, "How can
it be that so much school reform has taken place over the
last century yet schooling appears pretty much the same as
it has always been?" Cuban defines two different types of
change: first-order change and second-order change. First-
order changes are those that improve the efficiency and
effectiveness of what is currently done "without disturbing
the basic organizational features, without substantially
altering the way that children and adults perform their
roles, [without substantially changing beliefs about
learning]" (qtd in Fullan 29). First order changes, that
is, change in curricula, approaches or textbooks that have
been implemented to improve the efficiency and effectiveness
of existing programs, have been somewhat successful because
they did not substantially alter the structure of the system
nor require real change in teacher/student roles or belief
systems. And most importantly they could be tested within
the conventional and familiar standard forms.

For example, basal reading series have been changed to a certain degree to reflect sexual equality and minority representation, and "real" literature in the form of revised basals and trade books has been introduced into the classrooms. These two changes reflect a changing view about society and an awareness of new theory about literature. But these innovations in many cases are simply first-order surface changes when they are used in a traditional way in the classroom, when they are tied up with standardized tests, objective questions and specific outcomes:

> Most so called innovations in American education accept and only tinker with the transmission-of-knowledge model. The 'new curriculum' selects new details from the accumulated wisdom; team teaching [only] changes the transmission agents, as do instructional TV, computers, programmed instruction. Non-grading, like ability grouping, rearranges students so they can become better knowledge receivers. (Barth 10)

The very philosophy of behaviorism itself is built upon faith in first-order change, in changing external stimuli as the basis for changing human behavior. It dictates an insistence upon the use of these externally driven changes-- correcting visible structural flaws such as teacher evaluation and reward systems, unclear goals, or decision making authority, therefore overlooking more substantial and stable cultural values and mindsets behind and beneath everyday behavior.

Second-order changes, according to Cuban, seek to alter the fundamental ways in which organizations are put

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together, including new goals, structures, and roles. This
view of change is not a view behaviorists would or could
believe. This concept of inner change is part of another
tradition, the child-centered proponents' view.

Second-order changes, changes in classroom cultures, in
the roles of teachers and students, have not succeeded as
well because they require substantial changes in beliefs
about learning and teaching, establishing new goals, and in
the structure of education itself. Knowledge or learning
was not so easily tested and measured or failed to produce
the results required precisely because "objective
measurements" were not altered to reflect new goals.

The Experience Curriculum in English and the
"electives" curriculum are two examples of second-order
change that did not succeed. Most changes since the turn of
the century have been first-order changes, changes aimed at
improving the quality of what already exists to maintain the
status quo. Second-order changes essentially have failed.

One of the reasons it may be difficult for teachers to
make second-order changes is that many have never
articulated what their belief systems are. They simply
follow the directions for teaching given to them by mandated
curriculums, teachers manuals, etc. developed out of the
scientific management tradition. As Farrell (1991) points
out, teaching practice in this country tends to be
atheoretical, that is, oblivious to theory.

When change in classroom practice does occur, it comes

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about in two ways. Teachers will often try new techniques, and if they work, they may then change beliefs. Sometimes teachers will believe in an idea or strategy first and then will attempt to put it into practice. However change is begun, success is what will drive it, and a belief system will support it. But teachers need more than just successful experience. They need time to reflect on that experience, support from administration, communication with colleagues and ultimately the ability to make other changes because change is multidimensional. If "real" change is to occur, it seldom happens in isolation.

Studies also show another factor essential for second-order change. This is the principal, who can be the most powerful source of help or hinderance to the teacher who wants to attempt "real" change (Weaver, Fullan, Connelly, Onore and Lester). In order for any type of change to take place in the classroom, administrators as well as teachers must be involved. Teachers take their cues from their administrators. The principal must create a supportive environment so that teachers feel safe taking risks, making mistakes, and experimenting. A principal, implicitly and explicitly, reflects the philosophy of the school towards learning and what teachers should be doing. Whether she or he overemphasizes the district's standardized testing program or encourages and provides time for teachers to find and refine the artistry of their own teaching, her or his "actions serve to legitimate whether a change is to be taken

seriously..." (Fullan 76).

Research on change is finding that significant educational change [second-order change] consists of changes in beliefs, teaching style, and materials, which can come about only through the process of personal development in a social context (Fullan 133). To implement educational change successfully, teachers and those who promote change or attempt change must recognize that innovations should not be taken for granted or as ends in themselves. What values are involved? Who will benefit from the change? How much of a priority is it? Which areas of potential change are being neglected? All are continuing important questions about the sources and consequences of change.

Fullan concludes in his 1991 study by stating that for significant educational innovation to occur, the cultures of schools themselves must change.[13] Everyone involved must work to create new values, norms, skills, practices and structures. He quotes Goodlad:

> Renewal--whether of ponds, gardens, people, or institutions--is an internal process, whatever the external concerns and stimulants. It requires motivation, dedication, systematic and systemic evolution, and time. A second or third reform wave calling on teachers as the prime actors will be no more successful than a first wave pushed by policymakers if the conditions necessary to renewal are not developed. (352)

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[13]Lieberman and Rosenholtz (1987) conclude that the staff and the culture of a school are simultaneously both the major barriers to reform and the major bridge to improvement and change.

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But changing the cultures of schools will take time. Schools are supported by and protect many cherished myths and traditions. Schools will become different only when we are willing and capable of challenging some of these myths and traditions; when we stop correcting surface errors and begin to look at all that we know about change and education; and when we involve everyone who will be involved in the process--especially teachers.

It is becoming more and more evident from research that teachers must recognize and be recognized as the experts in the process of change and education. Teachers must have the opportunity to make the decisions necessary to promote change and reflect on their beliefs about teaching and learning. Teachers cannot wait for others--policymakers and administrators--to become experts in the change process and the educational process. Policymakers have organizational power, but not educational power, and in schools things do not get done through organizational power. As history has shown, traditional decision-makers, scientific managers and behaviorists, can make organizational and curriculum change, but still not make progress toward real change.

Chapter Three

THE SILENCE OF THE TEACHERS

"... until teachers can jointly recognize that curricular control is their most important right and responsibility, schools will continue to be run without substantial concern for the educational processes which should be their only real mission" (Mayher 20).

Recently a colleague and I had been developing our teacher education program, and we wanted to develop new experiences in the schools for our pre-teachers. We intended our project to benefit both our students and the teachers themselves. We asked a number of middle school teachers if they would like to have a student from our classes come in and tutor, read with students or in any other way help out in the class. Almost all the teachers we asked hesitated because they first needed to get "permission" from their principal, who needed to get permission from the superintendent before they, the teachers, could decide. We were only successful in initiating the project when we went through the superintendent's office and the principal first, who eventually gave their permission.

Also, in the same system, the system in which I would be doing my research, the reading curriculum for the district is simply the scope and sequence guides from the basal series publisher that that system had adopted.

Teachers are expected to follow it to the letter. The system supports the use of the basals and the guide by demanding that basals and the accompanying materials are used at least 40% of the time in the classrooms. Those teachers who do not follow the guide or use all of the materials often feel guilty that they aren't teaching what students need to know, and their colleagues who do use them constantly point out what they are not doing.

In this system curriculum is also subtly dictated by state and national testing. Last spring when teachers and districts were notified that the state assessment tests were going to be modified, we, the university, set up a meeting for local educators with the State Department of Education to answer questions. Over one hundred educators and administrators showed up expressing a clear sense of panic about how they were going to fit in teaching what was needed for testing while still covering the material they needed to cover in their texts.

All students in the system take some form of national standardized test to make sure that teachers and students are held accountable for their learning. Teachers are "said to not have the distance and detachment necessary to make these important judgments [about the learning of their students]" (Harman 117). Although there is a tremendous debate going on about the issue of testing, it is not relevant for this study, so I won't delve into it any further. What does seem relevant about the issue of testing

is that these tests are all published by the same companies who develop the basals.[14] The question becomes, where is the supposedly necessary distance and detachment that sets these tests apart from the decisions and classroom observation of teachers?

Those outside the classroom, driven by the scientific management advocates, have historically dictated the curriculum, goals and materials for most schools. Teachers are not heard by those proposing change because they are often viewed as powerless, powerless against "the strength of tradition, ignorance, and complacency" (Vinz 3) by both those outside the system and those within the system, including teachers themselves. Teachers frequently perpetuate this sense of powerlessness by confessing that **"they** won't let me do it," not recognizing that they are often the **"they."**

Teachers are silenced by the belief that they themselves need to be told what is good practice or bad practice or what texts and curriculum they should use by "higher ups," sustaining the belief that teachers are not able to make these important decisions themselves. Publishers, texts, teachers' manuals, and curriculum mandates all serve to perpetuate this belief that teachers

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[14]The California Achievement Tests, the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills and the S.R.A. are published by Macmillan/McGraw-Hill; the Metropolitan Achievement Test and the Stanford Achievement Test are published by Psych Corp, which is owned by Harcourt Brace; and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills is published by Riverside, which is owned by Houghton Mifflin (Harman 118).

need to be shown what and how to teach.

One of the most remarkable examples of this comes from Shannon's research (1983) on basal texts. Shannon discovered that both teachers and administrators believed that basals incorporated the best scientific knowledge on teaching reading from research and that everything in the basal materials is sequentially organized for scientific reasons. Therefore basals and the teacher manuals and student workbooks that accompany them should be carefully and mechanically followed by all teachers and learners. The basals' prescribed skills, strategies, materials, and use of time control teachers and classrooms. This control provides not only teachers but administrators and parents with a sense of confidence that literacy learning is occurring effectively and consistently.

If teachers believe this, then they have little incentive to develop their knowledge of reading, instruction and students because others will do it for them. They need only to be concerned with the management of surface skills control. This giving up control into the hands of others, of course, leads to a loss of real control over their work of educating and further silencing.

Another example of teacher dependency can be observed when a system decides to change time periods to either shorter or longer blocks. Many teachers will complain because the material or lessons they were supposed to cover are either too long or too short for the new period. And

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because of their dependency on the manuals and texts, they do not know what to do with the extra time.

The educational system is designed as a hierarchy based on the 'factory model' in which those who make decisions, states, districts, superintendents, and publishers, are at the top and those who follow those decisions, the workers, teachers and students, are at the bottom. When changes are made in the state or districts, teachers are very seldom part of the initial process except as implementers of changes mandated by those outside the curriculum and classroom. Romanish (1987) explains why this creates an unhealthy forum for change:

> the educational system...is paralyzed by structural features that prevent policymakers from envisioning... fundamental reforms. The policymakers' reality consists of schools as they are currently organized, and the visions embody a very narrow gaze of teaching itself (quoted in Fosnot 14-15).

The 'back to basics' and conservative movements of the last few years and the local resistance to programs that the public perceives as innovative and therefore somehow threatening, because they do not fit into their "familiar and reliable construction of 'educational' reality," also demonstrate this continuing influence of non-professionals on public education.

In one way or another, then, educational decisions are and have been made from the top down and the outside in, and teachers continue to present educational programs designed and mandated for them by others. Two of the underlying

assumptions of these outside groups is that teachers cannot make informed decisions on their own, and that all children and classrooms are alike. Roland Barth (1980) states it this way:

> The "from-the-top-down" model of school district organization appears to be based upon certain assumptions about school people: They [teachers and students] have a limited capacity; they will behave responsibly and productively only when objectives are specified for them and when they are held accountable by others for achieving these objectives (11).

In spite of the strength of this established model of education, a new tradition has been gaining momentum in the last few years. This new movement--whole language--views teaching and learning in a very different way. In a classroom based on a whole language philosophy, teachers and students make decisions which reflect the context of their situation at that particular moment in time. Teachers are valued as experts in "kid watching" and learning in their classrooms. Diversity, in classrooms and individuals, is recognized and expected. But, misunderstandings about whole language and the issues of control and tradition have made it difficult for teachers to adopt the philosophy and practices that evolve from it. To affect change towards whole language philosophy and practice becomes an increasingly complex issue.

Chapter Four

CHALLENGING THE TRADITIONS:
THE PLACE OF WHOLE LANGUAGE

"Whole Language is a professional theory, an explicit theory
in practice. That is, it is neither theory divorced from
practice nor practice that is blind to its own theory"
(Edelsky, Altwerger, Flores 7).

If you were to open almost any educational journal
today or even a newspaper you are likely to find an article,
pro or con, on whole language. At many of the local and
national teacher organization meetings, NCTE or CCCC for
example, you will find sessions devoted to whole language
debates, practices and discussions. Whole language is the
most recent and most potent challenge to the
scientific/behaviorist model of schools and learning.

Challenges to what has become a well entrenched
educational model of American schools are not new, but the
scientific/behaviorist movement has continued to have a
strong hold on American education. Chapter Two identifies
three other movements, the humanist, the social
reconstructionist and the child-centered, that vied for
control of the American schools. However, the child-
centered advocates have demonstrated the most persistent and
most vigorous push against this established model.

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the Quincy Method in the 1870s,[15] through the work of
Dewey's Laboratory Schools at the turn of the century,
Kilpatrick's child-centered project method of the 1920s, the
language experience programs of the 1950s, to the free
schools of the 1970s, these progressive educators and their
ideas have tugged at the scientific/behaviorist traditions
of American public schools.[16] The progressive movement,
however, never really caught on until research began to
support what the early child-centered proponents had been
instinctively suggesting.

New Understandings about Language

In the mid-fifties researchers began to look at
language and language acquisition more closely. It had been
readily believed that children passively learned language by
imitating sounds and words in their environments. Educators
and parents assumed that they directed and supported this
imitative behavior through some form of "positive
reinforcement." We began to move away from this naive
explanation of oral language development through the work of

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[15]The tenets of the Quincy method reflected a child's
right to be himself or herself, the primacy of natural
learning, a concern for democratic justice, and the
responsibility of the teacher to discover the balance
between teacher intervention, environment and student
motivation. (Shannon 1990 39-41)

[16]The predominant argument concerning literacy and
literacy learning has always been between the scientific
managers and the child-centered advocates. (Shannon 116)

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Noam Chomsky (1957) and other linguists. Chomsky
demonstrated that "language is based on a complex set of
syntactic, or grammatical, rules for relating sounds of
language and meaning" (Newman 1985 9). From his work,
researchers began to see children as actively engaged in
generating language, in creating rules for language use, and
researchers began to look for how children created these
rules.

The work of M.A.K. Halliday (1975) led to the
understanding that children create language through a
process of social engagement with other language users. His
work also led to the recognition of the complexity of
language in use, that every utterance serves several
functions at once, and that the context of the language
situation influences the meaning being created. Halliday
contends that at the same time learners are using language,
they are learning language, learning through language, and
learning about language. Not until we were able to
appreciate the complexity of children's oral language
development did it become possible for us to consider young
children's awareness of and interactions with written
language.

Detailed studies of young children's behavior provided
compelling evidence that learning language and literacy is a
constructive, purposeful, active process (Bissex, 1980;
Clay, 1975, 1979; Y. M. Goodman, 1986; Harste, Woodward, and
Burke, 1984) and that many children engage in literacy

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learning well before they enter school. Clay concluded that
literate environments were associated with young children's
later successes with school literacy. Bissex's case study
of her son's literacy learning showed that it shared many of
the characteristics of oral language development--it is
functional and communicative, and it follows certain stages
of development. Hartse, Burke and Woodward discovered that
the processes and strategies young children use to make
sense of written language are the same as those used by
adults--text intent, negotiability, risk-taking and fine-
tuning language with language.

Donald Graves' work (1983) with writing found that
children learn to write and that their writing continues to
develop when they have opportunities to write in a
supportive environment. Graves(1983), Caulkins(1983,1986)
and Dyson(1984) discovered that creativity, risk taking, and
hypothesis testing frequent in other forms of language
development also occurred when children wrote. They also
determined that writing like reading was a social process.

We have come to understand reading as a
"psycholinguistic guessing game" based primarily on the work
of Kenneth Goodman, who coined the phrase, and Frank Smith.
Smith and Goodman, working separately, developed the theory
and research which validated the concept of a unified single
reading process as an interaction between the reader, the

text, and language.[17] These researchers and their research challenged the behaviorists' explanations concerning how language was learned.

The psycholinguists accused the behaviorists of ignoring basic linguistic principles in order to fit language theory into learning theory. They proposed that language learning and use, both oral and written, were based on the creative and interpretive efforts of the user to produce and comprehend meaning through his/her experiences with language instead of being mechanical and imitative as the behaviorists suggested.

Behaviorists relied on the concept that the surface levels of language represented the user's real meaning. But the psycholinguists showed that not all significant features of language had physical representation, that meaning is more than just a linear summation of the words in a sentence,[18] that the rules of language are too complicated and numerous to be taught, and that humans learn language by using it in purposeful, meaningful situations.

Echoing and supporting many of the early child-centered

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[17]Much earlier Louise Rosenblatt had postulated the transactional view of reading (1938/1976) whereby she was the first to describe reading as a transaction between the reader and the text, establishing the rights of readers to their own meanings.

[18]Noam Chomsky's distinction between surface and deep structure was of tremendous significance in paving the way for the widespread recognition that meaning does not lie in language itself but rather in the relationships that a user of language intuitively knows (Weaver 1988 33-34).

proponents,[19] research into language and learning showed that children are capable, active learners under the right conditions. Children learn language rules through hypothesis testing, rather than through enforcement. Language learning is dependent only on a meaningful environment in which language learners can experiment with language elements in order to determine which features are necessary to communicate their needs and messages.

Basals and Reading Instruction

In essence the research leading to what has become whole language philosophy has called into question many of the beliefs and practices of teaching our children to read and write in the traditional educational system. Nowhere is this more evident than in the 'part-to-whole' logic of conventional educational wisdom in the teaching of reading through the basal reading programs.

A part-to-whole logic has been the guiding principle in the design of reading programs in American schools since colonial days. With the publication of <u>The New England Primer</u> in 1683, the prototype of the basal reader was born.

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[19]Shannon (1990) summarizes that "The idea that children construct the rules of language and use it creatively was essential to many early child-centered progressives', freeschoolers', and open educators' conceptions of how school should be organized to support students' learning. Language learning in many progressive schools had long been a psycholinguistic experiment" (134-35).

In 1919 contributing to the principles of scientific management, William Gray published the "Principles of Method in Teaching Reading, as Derived from Scientific Investigation" in the National Society for the Study of Education's yearbook. In his article Gray articulated the key criteria[20] on which basals are still constructed. These principles, together with Thorndyke's laws of learning, have dominated reading instruction through the basal reader ever since (Cuban 1984).

Basal series are based on behaviorists' part-to-whole logical notions of learning to read. Goodman (1986) describes the predominance of part-to-whole instruction this way:

> It seems so logical to think that little children could best learn simple little things. We took apart language and turned it into words, syllables, and isolated sounds. Unfortunately, we also postponed its natural purpose--the communication of meaning--and turned it into a set of abstractions, unrelated to the needs and experiences of the children we sought to help.(7)

Not only is language fragmented into little pieces for instructional purposes, but the processes by which children learn language have been cleaved into bits of behavior called "skills" which are believed to occur in a

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[20]Gray outlined "forty-eight principles covering skill knowledge norms for student progress throughout the grades, suggestions for oral and silent reading,.... Gray stressed the utility of skills and standardization of practice...the use of standardized tests to determine students' competence, and the scientific development of curricular materials...(Shannon 1990 12).

hierarchial fashion. The purpose of the basal programs is to teach the skills of reading through a comprehensive scope and sequence scheme that includes provisions for readiness, phonics, word identification, comprehension, and study skills development through texts, workbooks, assessments and teacher's manuals. To learn to read, children must master these skills in the stated hierarchial progression. This belief does not take into account what research shows that readers naturally do to comprehend texts or to develop literate behavior.

A Grassroots Reform

Yetta Goodman (1989) tells us that in the late 1970s, a number of educators[21] began using the term whole language to describe and talk about new ideas about language (generated by the knowledge explosion surrounding oral and written language development and the reading and writing processes) and about teachers and learners, and what these meant in terms of implementation. She stated that "We needed language to express our new meanings"(115). Although their intention was not to name a new belief system or start a reform movement, that is exactly what happened.

When teachers began to develop new knowledge and insights about language learning, they realized that

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[21]Harste and Burke(1977); Watson(1978); K. Goodman and Y. Goodman(1979).

"students needed to use language to solve problems that were significant and meaningful to their daily lives in order to take charge of their own learning" (K. Goodman, Smith, Meredith, and Y. Goodman 1987). At the same time, the teachers realized that they had to change their views about how language was learned, and their roles as teachers of language. A grassroots reform movement, called whole language, began.

Although the scientific managers saw learning as a mechanical, sequential, scientific process whereby the learner is a passive receptacle which receives knowledge which can be measured, whole language advocates base their ideas on the current research which suggests that learning, especially literacy learning, is an active, constructive, integrative, social process.

Judith Newman(1985) defines whole language as a philosophical stance:

> It's a description of how some teachers and researchers have been exploring the practical applications of recent theoretical arguments which have arisen from research in linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, child development, curriculum, composition, literary theory, semiotics, and other fields of study." (Theory 1)

The principles of teaching and learning derived from the research that whole language teachers follow are outlined by Constance Weaver(1990):

1. Children grow and learn most readily when they actively pursue their own learning.

2. To foster emergent reading and writing in particular, whole language teachers attempt to replicate the strategies parents use successfully to stimulate the acquisition of language and the "natural" acquisition of literacy.

3. Whole language teaching is based upon the observation that much of what children learn--such as functional command of structure of their native language--is learned with little, if any, direct instruction.

4. Recognizing students' incredible ability to learn complex processes by engaging in those processes, whole language teachers conceptualize direct teaching much differently than traditional teachers.

5. Whole language learning--and the teaching that stimulates it--proceeds more from the whole-to-part than from the part-to-whole.

6. Knowing that language and literacy are best developed through functional use, whole language teachers thus engage students in reading and writing, speaking and listening, for a variety of authentic purposes.

7. A whole language philosophy asserts that in order to grow and learn, teachers and children must all be learners, risk-takers, and decision makers, taking significant responsibility for learning within the classroom.

8. In whole language classrooms, learning is often fostered through social interaction.

9. In whole language classrooms, children are treated as capable and developing, not as incapable and deficient.

10. In whole language classrooms, typically there are few behavior problems, not only because students are more actively involved in learning, but because students are given the opportunity to develop self-control rather than merely submit to teacher control.

11. In whole language classrooms, assessment is intertwined with learning and teaching; though periodic assessment may be preplanned and structured, daily learning experiences also provide opportunities for assessment--which in turn leads to modification of teaching, as necessary.

12. A whole language philosophy reflects and encourages

a far different concept of literacy than that reflected in traditional classrooms.

13. Whole language classrooms foster the kinds of attitudes and behaviors needed in a technologically advanced, democratic society. (<u>Understanding Whole Language</u> 22-26)

Whole language, Frank Smith (1992) says, is a way of thinking about teaching, not any one method of teaching. Whole language teachers have "respect for language" and "respect for learners," and these teachers intend to translate this respect into "meaningful and productive activities" (440).

To that end Judith Lindfors (1984) suggests that what and how we teach ought to be derived from what and how students learn. Thus whole language teachers believe that knowledge is the active creation of meaning by each learner. They recognize that there is a distinct difference between learning and teaching, that learning and teaching are not mirror images of one another. Whole language teachers focus on the learner's processes of coming to know and derive their teaching strategies from these observations. To that end, whole language teachers must first see themselves as learners. Then through the understanding of their own learning, teachers are able to help students become active learners.

For the teacher who subscribes to this philosophy, the impetus for change is great: they see literacy in a new light, and they see new roles for themselves and their students.

Whole language is often defined as many things to many people which in itself can be problematic as Connie Weaver (1992) suggests. Lee Gunderson (1989) writes, "There are as many manifestations of whole language instruction as there are whole language teachers"(41). This is because whole language is not a specific approach or textbook series; it is not one single method or particular practice; it is not a pre-packaged program of specific learning activities. It is a belief system--a belief system based on a plethora of research about how children learn; a belief system that is articulated by those who practice it. Rhodes and Shanklin (1989) assert that

> What whole language teachers have in common is a theoretical underpinning about literacy learning and instruction and a commitment to a continued exploration of theory and practice. The classroom implementation of whole language philosophy may be very different from teacher to teacher and evolves as teachers continually reflect on their evolving philosophies of learning and teaching (qtd in Weaver 1990 8).

At the core of a whole language belief system is the concept that decision making must be placed in the hands of teachers and learners. This belief system "'challenges many of the fundamental tenets of classrooms as we know them'" (Fulwiler qtd in Weaver 1992 41), and it clearly challenges

the traditional "factory model" of education. To embrace a whole language philosophy requires what Larry Cuban calls a "second-order change," a shift in authority: students as primary makers of knowledge are listened to and teachers serve as fellow learners. Students and teachers are empowered to make day-to-day decisions based not on stated curriculum or questions at the end of texts, but based on their observations of what children are trying to accomplish.

This whole language movement seems to have all the elements needed to reform education--making teachers decision makers and also creating reading/writing and thinking classrooms. It is supported by teachers well aware of the need for changes; who are not satisfied with current curriculum and approaches; who have informed themselves about research in language and learning; who are ready to make changes; and who do not want to be silenced.[22] The difficulty is that this movement challenges the traditional scientific/behaviorist model of education.

Movement or change towards a whole language philosophy has often met with resistance and difficulties for three

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[22]The force and power of this movement can be demonstrated by the many TAWL (Teachers Applying Whole Language) groups which have arisen since 1978 and numerous publications such as Breaking Ground (Hansen, Graves, Newkirk 1985), Whole Language: Theory and Use (Newman 1985), The Whole Language Evaluation Book (Goodman, Goodman and Hood 1989), In the Middle: Writing, Reading and Learning with Adolescents (Atwell 1987), Transitions:From Literature to Literacy (Routman 1988), and many others.

reasons. First, the nature of whole language assumes a decision making role for teachers. It threatens those in traditional decision making positions--government, school boards, parents, administrators, textbook publishers and others--by taking away the control that these groups have had over classrooms. It challenges school and state educational systems structured on the principles of scientific management.

Secondly whole language teachers have the difficult task of establishing an environment that will provide support for all students' whole language growth in educational systems which are primarily based on principles of behaviorism. Although there are many examples of suggestions about how to accomplish this in books and articles, "most of these efforts ignore the antagonistic context in which teachers must conduct their child-centered work" (Shannon 142).[23]

Finally, few teachers today have experienced learning in a whole language classroom and have the difficult task of modifying and changing their "familiar and reliable conceptions" of what the roles of students, teachers, and schools are, and what they believe learning and teaching are. Thus, even those teachers who wish to take control of their classrooms framed by a whole language belief system

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[23]See for example Routman (1988), Hanson (1987), Vacca and Rasinski (1992), Newman (1985) and Goodman (1986).

find the change attempts to be very difficult.

Chapter Five

METHODOLOGY

"Because whole language teachers operate on the basis of
well-developed theory and use it to plan their teaching, one
cannot usefully study or evaluate whole language classrooms
outside of the theoretical context whole language derives
from. Reductionist, experimental paradigms are of limited
utility in studying whole language classrooms."(K. Goodman,
1989 211)

Theoretical Base

To investigate the problem I propose here, discovering

teachers' perceptions of change towards a whole language

directed classroom, a quantitative experimental study would

not tell me what I really want to know: the realities of the

experience of teachers other than myself and how those

teachers think and feel about that experience. Knowing that

I can never "know"--in the same sense that I "know" my own

thoughts and feelings--what another person's experience is

"really" like, I want, nevertheless, to get as close to that

knowing as possible. I have, therefore, chosen as my

principle research instrument in-depth interviewing.

A basic assumption in in-depth interviewing research,

according to Seidman, is that the meaning people make of

their experience affects the way they carry out that

experience. To observe a teacher, student, principal, or

counselor provides access to his or her behavior. But,

interviewing allows the researcher to go beyond, to put behavior in context, and it also provides access to understanding their actions.

Fullan's perspective that "An understanding of what reality is from the point of view of people within the role is an essential starting point for constructing a practical theory of the meaning of change attempts"(130) is especially important with respect to whole language teachers.

A significant part of this study on teachers and change is based on the assumption that it is possible to discover motives and meanings of other persons through our connections with them, through their own words as they communicate with us, and through our knowledge of our own words and actions as we see them reflected in others. As we find support through our own experience and through hearing the repeated experience of others, we come as close as possible to knowledge about other human beings.

Gomez(1992) points out that research based on cognitive psychology indicates that it is not only what is known that is important for teacher learning, but how this knowledge is processed, i.e., personally organized and mediated. There is increasing evidence that the personal experience individuals bring with them to teaching exerts a powerful influence on how the professional knowledge is understood and used. More importantly these personal perspectives serve as a major driving force for pedagogical decisions in a teaching career (Crow, 1988; Mayher, 1990; Vinz, 1991):

> ...there is no doubt that our holistic ways of knowing
> are best exemplified by and rooted in our personal
> stories. They create the space with which we explore
> our own place in the world. They not only help us
> consolidate and frame our knowledge of the world, but
> our own stories and those we hear from others are
> particularly crucial in helping us understand human
> motives and actions. (Mayher 99)

Not only must we hear others' stories, but we must hear them in their own words and in their own ways. To that end I have chosen to allow the participants to tell their stories in their own words and in their own way beginning with Chapter Six, with minimal explication, saving the majority of my comments until the final chapters, breaking with some academic traditions. I want **them** to be heard. Ruth Vinz(1992) responds to the same concern when she asks:

> Where are the voices of those less powerful, including
> the teachers, who are often silenced? If there is a
> belief, as the rhetoric portrays in democracy in
> education, those who research teachers' work need to be
> silent if they are to hear what teachers say.(177)

When we work with personal narratives, we must keep in mind whose voice we want to hear and are hearing.[24] Too often research has a way of also silencing those being researched simply through the power of the voice of the academic/scholar/critic who is choosing and organizing what is to be heard and who comments so thoroughly and conclusively on the meaning of what is being said. The very virtue of the position of the academic can negate

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[24]For a further discussion of "Whose voice?" see Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives, edited by The Personal Narrative Group (1989) and Narrative Analysis by Catherine Kohler Riessman (1993).

the position/voice of the teacher/practitioner.[25]

Patti Lather writes of this research/researcher dichotomy, giving voice to the voiceless, heeding the unheeded, committed to making a "space from which the unvoiced/unheeded can be said/heard"(124). Lather is concerned with the fact that in conducting narrative inquiry, we literally turn a life into a text for our own gain, not theirs. Lather suggests this new approach (which she calls "praxis-oriented research") allows for the

> knower and the known [to be] brought together in
> representational form...that startle[s] complacent[cy]
> comfort with older forms.... Disallowing claims to
> certainty, totality, and archimedean standpoints
> outside of flux and human interest is to tell a story
> that retrieves inquiry as a 'way' that is always
> already beginning, always already 'on the way,' a
> 'different story that makes a critical difference' not
> only at the site of thought but also at the site of
> sociopolitical praxis. (150-51)

Researcher Background

Although I was relatively new to this community, where I would be conducting my research, information about my holistic approach to learning travelled fast. The university had not had an English education person for three years. I had been hired in that position to not only develop the university programs, but also to develop the university's connections with the schools.

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[25]See Brunner for further discussion of this issue, especially Chapter Two.

Although many of the schools and teachers were tentative about what I would be doing with them and for them as the English Education Coordinator, some teachers were pointed out to me as people I might want to connect with. I was very excited to find so many people interested in language and a holistic philosophy.

However, my past experience and practice had taught me that interest and knowledge did not always compute into practice. I spent a year visiting classrooms and leading teacher workshops and listening with a critical eye and ear to seek out classrooms which put a holistic philosophy into practice.

Choice of Research Site

The local school system that I would most often be working in had been initially identified through many channels as an exceptional school system with respect to variety of teaching styles, teacher expertise, parent involvement, administrative support, class size, and facilities. The teachers regularly are offered a variety of staff development opportunities and are expected through state and local mandates to make changes in their reading and writing programs. Reading Recovery is expected to be part of the program in the future. Whole language approaches are being encouraged, and portfolio assessment is taking hold in a number of the schools.

At the same time that these positive forces are at work, this state is experiencing extreme financial difficulties, and school funding has been and is being severely curtailed as new programs are expected to be implemented. Resources are dwindling, and class sizes are growing. Many outside forces were and are contributing and forcing changes in this system.

As I explored classrooms and met with teachers, I did discover a number of teachers who were actively pursuing holistic education and practice. The system has been involved with a number of whole language groups and has actively sought out whole language summer workshops led by New Zealand faculty and has supported teacher attendance.

I also discovered that although these opportunities for change in teaching practice were readily offered and teachers were encouraged to grow, there were limits. The system, as most systems do, looked to local, state and national standardized tests as evidence of successes. Anything new was acceptable as long as the standard curriculum was followed. It was mandated that basals were to be used at least forty percent of the time, and everything new had to be cleared by the superintendent. Clearly there seemed to be a contradiction in language and behavior. However, one school in this system did not follow the norm.

North Park Elementary School sits up on a hill about seven miles out from the city. It is a relatively new

building (sixteen years old or so) compared to the other elementary schools in the district. All the classrooms in the school open onto a central area which has a small amphitheater in the center and a lab area complete with counters and sinks.

Basals are nowhere to be seen in this school. Instead, every nook and cranny of the building is filled with books, paperback and hardcover. Children's artwork and writing are on every wall. The teachers' lounge is filled with professional journals, and on the wall is a chart identifying the characteristics of each teacher from a Myers/Briggs test next to a calendar which identifies what workshops teachers have gone to, which ones they will be leading and what workshops are happening in the near future.

This school has a local and state reputation for being innovative and independent. It has recently won a number of awards statewide. This school piqued my curiosity because of its uniqueness in a system that did not seem to value diversity. It is in this school that the participants in this project work.

Selection of Participants

Seven elementary teachers, K-5 from three different schools in this district, were initially interviewed. These teachers were identified through whole language teacher workshops, conferences, and other informal channels. They

have taught from three to twenty-seven years. However, as
the interview data was developed, it became obvious that
three of the teachers, located at North Park, were central
to the changes all were making. The newer teachers were
being motivated and guided by the experiences and practices
of these three. Because of the volume of data and the
leadership of the three, I determined to focus just on these
three main teachers for the purposes of this study.

Interview Process

The process of the in-depth phenomenological interviews
to be used in this study followed closely the methodology
developed by Seidman (1991). The process is generally
opened but focused. I did not use a specific interview
guide, but the interview was neither casual nor open to
infinite length. The sequence was for the participant to
review the constitutive factors of her life as a teacher
before coming to the decision to become a whole language
teacher, the details of her experiences as she has evolved
into a whole language teacher, and, finally, to reflect on
her past and present experiences and talk about the
meaning(s) that this experience has for her.

The purpose of this method of research is "meaning-
making." My task was to listen to each teacher as she
reflected aloud on past and present experiences and
considered them in relation to significance in her life as a

teacher.

Each participant was interviewed three times, each time for a length of a ninety-minute tape. Each interview was spaced at least one week apart to allow for reflection but no longer than three weeks. The interviews were held in a place mutually agreeable to participant and interviewer. The three interviews were held at the participants' classrooms, offices or homes because of time constraints for a number of the interviewees.

Prior to the interviews, contact was made by phone, a confirmation letter sent, and a date set for the first meeting. This initial first short contact was made to explain the purpose and nature of the research and to have the participant fill out a brief information form and consent form. Dates were then set for the next three meetings.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim (I shared the task with a typist.) resulting in manuscripts of sixty to ninety single spaced pages per participant. Because of the volume of this work, some compromise with the totally verbatim transcript has been made: for example, abbreviating or eliminating interviewer statements and omitting management details that are unrelated or unimportant to the focus of the interview.

Profiles

The interviews in transcription form which were strong in all three sections (each section represented a taped session), complete in the sense of not missing significant material (so that there are no puzzling omissions in the story), and compelling in the story-telling and meaning-making, were selected for "profiles." A profile, as developed by Seidman (1991), is composed from the transcript of an interview series. The words of the interviewer are omitted, and the participant's story stands alone. The words are entirely those of the participant unless it is necessary, for reasons of clarity, to add a word or phrase, which will then appear in brackets.

The profile was constructed in the following manner:

1) Read the transcript, underlining words and phrases which should not be omitted from the story.

2) Retype, or cut and paste, the manuscript, which should now be reduced by one-half to one-third the original length.

3) Edit, punctuate, paragraph, and rearrange for coherence and flow of the story, coding and otherwise disguising identifiable material and proper names, omitting repetitive passages and awkward expressions

that might do damage to the dignity of the participant,
or that add nothing to the story.

4) Use ellipses to show breaks in time, speaker and
theme changes.

The interviews were also read (in transcription form)
to identify overlapping themes, phrases, and experiences of
the participants. Texts were annotated with respect to
these connections and collated accordingly for quick
reference. Annotations may appear after each profile. (The
mechanics of this process required more than one copy of
each transcript.) The total process is both analytical and
aesthetic; the words "construct" and "compose" are both
needed in the description of the profile-making process.
The important goal is that it is the participant's voice we
are hearing.

Because of the importance of maintaining the integrity
of the participants and their voices, the transcripts of the
final profiles were returned to the participants to read to
make sure that their voices were clearly and correctly
represented.[26]

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[26]Laslett and Rapoport (1975) "urge 'giving back' to
respondents a picture of how data are viewed, both to return
something to research participants and to check descriptive
and interpretive/analytical validity" (937).

* A note about organization: A brief commentary is included after Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 concerning each participant's early life stories. However, I do not comment on the stories related in Chapters 10, 11 and 12 until Chapters 13 and 14 because the stories reflect each teacher's version of the events that occurred when they came together at North Park School. For these teachers to accomplish what they did required a collective effort.

Part II:

TEXTS

Chapter Six

VOICES OF TEACHERS

"Their story, yours, mine--it's what we all carry with us on this trip we take, and we owe it to each other to respect our stories and learn from them" (Coles 30).

Not all teachers have been silenced. There are many good teachers who actively engage in their own learning, who observe students, who reflect on their own teaching and classrooms, who read and consciously make efforts to create better learning environments, and who attempt to grow in their profession. These teachers are often praised for their good teaching and innovations, but just as often they are viewed as rebels or subversives because they do not follow with tradition or the system or submit to outside authorities easily. Often these teachers are whole language teachers.

It seems incredibly important that we explore how some teachers have made the move to whole language in that there are no teachers today who were students in whole language classrooms. As teachers move away from the traditional scientific management classroom towards a holistic one, they are moving into unexplored territory. This study will help explore this move to new territory.

This story is about three of these teachers--Joyce,

Marilyn, and Winnie.[27] They work together at North Park Elementary School in a small northern New England community. All three have lived in this community for most of their lives. They have grown and changed over many years of teaching in a number of schools. Their candor, their sense of humor and the love for their profession and their students don't necessarily make them different from other teachers. But their struggle to create not only a classroom, but a whole school based on whole language in a system guided by traditional behavioristic/scientific management principles, their unwavering tenacity against many obstacles, and their successes and their devotion to learning do.

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Joyce

The first of the three that I met was Joyce. Joyce, a tall dark-haired woman, has taught language arts for twenty-four years at the fifth, seventh and eighth grade levels. She has been involved in state and national activities and has recently finished her masters degree. Currently she teaches fifth grade in their school and has just been asked to teach Children's Literature at a nearby university. She is often the spokesperson for the group. One of the questions that I asked her was what she thought a good

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[27]All names of people and schools are pseudonyms.

teacher was. She replied,

> It is my goal as a teacher to know my students
> well enough; to know the methods and the materials well
> enough; and to know how and when to match those three
> things together. I think that's what teaching is...
> knowing the approaches, knowing the resources, and
> knowing the learner. What I think a teacher does is to
> find the point at which that learner is ready to learn
> that next thing.
>
> I don't think that somebody stands up and gives
> all kinds of information. It's the ability to assess
> the students that they're working with. I've thought
> about this with my own coming to believe in whole
> language. I worked through this process without ever
> having a theory--without having a teaching/learning
> theory because I don't ever remember learning in
> college, or anyone even discussing a teaching/learning
> theory.
>
> And the other thing is that they [teachers] see
> themselves as learners too. They don't have all the
> answers. I think that's a real critical piece. That
> they [teachers] are life-long learners and they are not
> afraid to say, 'I don't know. Let's figure out where
> we are going to go to find that answer.'
>
> I think about what I do. What was the theory
> behind what I did? Why did I do it? What did I set

out to accomplish? How does that fit into learning
process? How does that fit into how people learn? You
know, looking at it in a deeper way, not cursory, not
across the top of it. If something is not working,
then which of the conditions for learning am I not
putting in place?

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From Joyce's answer several things are apparent. For
Joyce decision making is a critical part of being a teacher.
The decisions she deems most important reflect her ability
to choose resources appropriate for her students. She
suggests that she is not tied down to one approach, one
resource, but knows many approaches and resources, and the
ones she chooses to use are reflected by the needs of her
students. This decision in turn implies that she sees
students as individuals, with unique needs and abilities,
not as part of a larger group. And we also get a sense that
the decisions she makes for her students are based on her
observation of her students.

Theory also is something that she thinks is important.
But true to many teachers' experiences, theory was not
central to her learning to become a teacher. Instead she
suggests that her theory developed out of her experiences as
a teacher. Her final focus on the fact that she believes
that teachers need to be learners supports her own theory
building.

What appears central to Joyce is the fact that reflection, ("I think about what I do. What was the theory behind what I did? Why did I do it?") seems to be the way she learns and builds her theory for teaching and learning. For Joyce learning is inquiry, not answers.

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Marilyn

Marilyn has taught early elementary for sixteen years and says she likes to look at classroom practices through research. At present she has developed and is teaching in a multi-age classroom, first through third. She radiates an energy and excitement in every move and smile. She is well read, and the others consider her to be a theorist. Marilyn begins,

I just always need to be learning, I guess because I am a reader. If you are a reader, you are always learning.

It's exciting to see the first graders get excited about books, about writing, to watch them become readers and writers. With the research I've read in the last few years, looking at your student, knowing that they are developmentally going to go through stages, I am able to point to that and say, 'Aha, when I see this happen, I know what's going to happen

next.'

I go into my classroom and get it all set up and
it looks so nice, and then, [I ask myself] Why? It's
for the kids that are coming. You might someday feel
like, 'Ooooh, it's time to get up and go to school
today, but I don't feel that well.' But, by the time
you get there and these little kids come bouncing in,
then you know this is why I'm here. It's because of
them!

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Marilyn, in her brief words, emanates an excitement
about learning for herself and her students. She teaches
because of her students and the excitement she feels when
they are learning. One could speculate that because she has
a sense of being a learner herself, she models that
excitement for her students.

She also exudes a confidence in her ability to observe
her students and know what they are about and where they are
going. She implies that being a teacher requires keen
observation of her students and an expectation that they all
are learners. Her confidence, she tells us, is based on the
research she reads.

For Marilyn learning seems to be based both on her
reading research and experiential.

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Winnie

Winnie has taught for thirty years primarily at the
first grade level. She loves teaching, and she defines
herself, as do the others, as the practitioner. She says,
"Probably I am an uncommon teacher. I forget the
[theoretical] vocabulary and carry the meaning. I won't use
it with my first graders anyway. I would rather see on my
tombstone 'She was a good practical teacher rather than she
could sling the lingo'." On my first visit to her classroom
she was twirling a soup can on the end of a long string with
all her might to demonstrate sound to her students. She is
a grandmotherly woman with a gentle smile and a twinkle in
her eye. Winnie states,

> I want to go into my classroom everyday with a
> positive attitude and help a child along the way. I
> want to try to have every child not work to <u>my</u>
> expectations, but to be able to do the best that he or
> she can. I will accept them if I feel that they are
> working to the best that they can. It irritates me
> to have a child sit back and say 'I can't' when they
> don't try. I think we need expectations for our
> children, and this is part of becoming a kid watcher,
> knowing what a child is capable of and trying to help
> them achieve as much as they can. I am here to help
> them. To help them through life's terrible moments

like leaving their mother for the first time, to give

him understanding, to cuddle her and mother her if it's

needed, and to teach. Compassion is a big part of

being a teacher.

I don't feel that I am a giver of knowledge. I

want to instill in children where they can go find that

knowledge and that nobody is going to give it to them.

They need to know where to find it themselves.

We affect children in different ways. I thought

it was mandatory when I grew up that a teacher kept her

hanky in her bra. There were a lot of facts my

teachers gave me, but I have forgotten most of them,

but I do remember every one of them that kept her hanky

in her bra. Things that children remember are very

eye-opening sometimes. Teaching is definitely not

routine. You do not know what is going to happen from

one minute to the next.

★★★★★★

For Winnie the student also is at the core of her

teaching. She sees her role as guiding and encouraging

students to go as far as they can. Although she says she

ignores theory on the surface, we see much theory in what

she says. Harste tells us that whole language is a

"practical theory" of learning, and Winnie seems to reflect

and accept this concept.

In Winnie's definition she also gives us a glimpse of

how a past experience has helped her develop her ideas about how a teacher influences students manifesting Janet Emig's (1983) summary of the teaching-learning relationship:

> That teachers teach and children learn no one will deny. But to believe that children learn *because* teachers teach and only what teachers explicitly teach is to engage in magical thinking (135).

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When these three teachers came together about sixteen years ago, some very exciting things began to happen in their school.

In the next chapters we will hear the stories of these three New England educators who have not been silenced, who have gained decision making positions, who have transformed their classrooms into whole language classrooms. With the weaving together in their own voices their memories of their own schooling, their first years of teaching and their changing perspectives on teaching and learning, their stories will illuminate the realities of one group of educators' transition to whole language.

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Voices from the Past

"Learning from the past, finding who and what helped us is a medium for change." Ruth Vinz

Little research exists to show that teachers draw on personal experiences to form their pedagogical and

ideological theories about teaching, although

autobiographical inquiry, as a source of knowledge for

teachers, has recently gained the attention of educational

researchers. For example, in <u>Stories Lives Tell</u>(1991)

Witherell and Nodding present a series of research inquiries

into teachers' experiences. Also in Ruth Vinz's recent

dissertation she explores how "the stories we tell of our

formative learning experiences may offer insights into the

roots of our current beliefs and practices" (52,53). John

Mayher(1990) suggests that

> ...the processes of stories provide a powerful way to
> understand how we think and feel, how we develop and
> sustain our identities, how we come to understand
> others as individuals and as part of our culture, and
> how we come to know the world (100).

And Jerome Bruner(1986) suggests that

> We know the world in different ways, from different
> stances and each of these ways in which we know it
> produces different structures or representations, or,
> indeed, realities" (105).

Their stories, the realities, which Winnie, Marilyn and

Joyce share reach back to their early lives in school and

family. Their experiences and reflections on these times

set the stage for how they would perceive their roles as

teacher and student in later life and how they would

approach the process of change and specifically change

toward whole language.

Thus they begin at the beginning with their memories of

their early lives, their families and their schooling.

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Their stories and their reflections bring to light some of
the reasons for their perceptions of their roles as teachers
today.

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The implications of their stories for teachers and
policymakers and change agents will be the possibility for
new connections, insights, and understandings for other
teachers and administrators who are considering a change
toward whole language and what a change toward whole
language means.

Chapter Seven

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

Joyce

"...getting an education was the most important thing. We were totally surrounded by it, and we grew up in a community where there were very few people who had a college education."

My interviews with Joyce took place in her comfortable living room filled with books and pictures of her daughter over cozy cups of tea. She was the most difficult of the three to pin down for our talks as she had just taken a new position as a literacy consultant for a whole language publishing company and had been travelling in all her spare time to take and give workshops. Her energy and excitement about learning and teaching kept the conversation moving at breakneck speed.

★★★★★★

I've written this story about fifteen times, I think, for different things that I've had to do. I started school in Allagash, Maine, in a one room schoolhouse. My grandmother was the teacher, and my mother was teaching about five miles up the road in another school.

When I went to school the first day, I hid under the bed and my father took me out from under the bed and carried

me about half a mile up to school and put me in my desk in my grandmother's classroom. Then he left and drove thirty-two miles to go to high school. From that very first moment when I knew I was afraid of it, I realized the absolute importance of education because here was my father who was thirty-years-old and going back to get his education. He worked nights and drove thirty miles one way to go to high school.

My dad had started out working for the forestry service. He had quit school when he was in the sixth or seventh grade. His father was killed, and he had four or five brothers and sisters, so he went to work and then he went into the Navy and came back and went to Allagash to get his eighth grade diploma. Then he went nights for his freshman and sophomore classes, and then traveled to another district to graduate. After he had gotten his diploma, he went to work for a land company. He was a land manager. It was a good job; it was a good promotion for him.

But I remember him telling me that if he had his life to live over again, he would become a teacher because it was the most important job in the world. He did not need more education for his profession. He just went back to school because he thought it was important.

Two years ago my daughter did an interview with my father--just taking records of his life and things like that. When she asked him why he had moved us, he said that we had moved because they [my parents] wanted us to have a

better education. They chose to leave that area because they wanted us to be closer to a college and to a bigger school system; and they felt that we would be more apt to go on to college and get a better education if we were in a larger school system.

When I heard that on the tape, it was so indicative of the way we grew up because getting an education was the most important thing. We were totally surrounded by it, and we grew up in a community where there were very few people who had a college education. As a matter of fact, my mother's family, obviously, was the one who had the education.

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I stayed in that one room schoolhouse for about three months because they were building a new school. My father was the chairman of the school board at that time and had spent a lot of time trying to get the state to build a school where all the kids could come together. I moved from the one room schoolhouse where my grandmother was the teacher into the consolidated school. When I moved, my mother became the principal, and my grandmother was the kindergarten teacher. I had an aunt who taught sixth grade and another aunt who taught third grade, and my mother also taught eighth grade. I was surrounded by teachers.

When I graduated from kindergarten, my father graduated from high school. He was thirty-two. I remember going to his high school graduation. I also remember my

mother's college graduation because she had gone to the
Normal School when they gave you your certificate to teach
after two years of college. She went back weekends and
summers to get her four-year degree. My sister and I
started college when we were five and three when Mom went to
school because everything she did, we did with her.

I remember going to college with her. Once she took a
nature course where she had to go out and collect specimens
and things like that. We went with her. It was a whole
family project; everybody went and collected and learned.
That's where I got to learn about identifying different
kinds of trees and flowers and things through that course
that she took.

<p align="center">******</p>

A Sense of Community

It was 1952. I was five, and I remember sitting in
that one room schoolhouse before I was in the consolidated
one and just being overwhelmed by all those students and
trying to listen and learn everything that was going on
around me. I can still picture it in my mind, exactly what
the set-up of that classroom was, even though I was five. I
think it has real implications of why I believe in multi-age
classrooms today because I really have good memories of it.

I also remember moving into the separate classroom and
feeling isolated, losing that sense of community. I had

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thought I was more mature when I was with those older students. I somehow viewed myself as more a part of that community. I think that has something to do with why I tend to look at multi-age classrooms and think that their philosophy can work.

It was crowded. There were probably fifty or sixty kids. It was just one room. There was a well where we got the water, and there was a coat closet--all those things they talk about, we had them.

I remember more math than I do reading which is interesting because I don't really care that much about math, to be perfectly honest. I remember seeing math problems on the blackboard, and that the kindergarten kids were sort of in the middle of the class. I was surrounded by kids who were learning different things; I was fascinated by what was going on around me. But I don't remember any subject matter. And I remember the hustle and the bustle of trying to move from that school into the other classroom and the excitement of having a large school.

It was a brick building. It was really exciting. I also remember peg boards. We did a lot of things with geoboards and stuff like that, which is kind of interesting because we're into math manipulatives now, but I remember doing a lot of that and really enjoying making designs with pegboards.

In the consolidated school, we had tables and we sat together at tables. I remember sitting at my table, which

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was by the window, and having those Dick and Jane books and continuing to work on the pegboards. For some reason, that really sticks out in my mind. I don't remember coloring or cutting out or things like that. It was more academic than it was developmental and very work oriented.

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Marking Time by Books

I learned to read in my grandmother's classroom, but I think I already knew how. I had a Sally, Dick, and Jane book, and when I was ready, my grandmother sent someone up to my mother's office to get her, and I read outloud to her.

My grandmother was just an incredible reader. She had eight children of her own. She had three sisters who were teachers too. One of her sisters died, and she adopted the children, so there were four more--so she had twelve. They were very, very poor, but they were always in books. As a matter of fact, I still have a lot of my grandmother's books. I have a first edition of <u>The Five Little Peppers</u> that was hers.

As a child, I remember visiting her and going into the bedroom where those books were and sitting on the floor and reading. So, when I got to her kindergarten class, I already knew reading was really important to her. She read to us a lot, although she's not the teacher that I remember reading to me.

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It was my second grade teacher whom I can remember reading <u>Hiawatha</u>. I can remember it just as plain as anything. As I came up through the grades I remembered teachers by the books they read to me, not by the kinds of things that they did with me.

My third grade teacher, who was my aunt, read a Roy Rogers book, and I couldn't figure out what was going on. I remember reading <u>Little Women</u> and <u>The Bobbsey Twins</u> and <u>Call of the Wild</u>. But, I especially remember that Roy Rogers book. It was such a stupid book. I've looked for it because I'd like to own it. Roy was chasing a bandit and there was a tunnel under the Rio Grande River. I could never figure out how the bandit got to the other side and everyday I would just wait; I was so curious to figure out how that happened. I remember that book most vividly. I think about that today. When I read to my students, I try to end a story some place where it's a real cliffhanger because I remember how excited I would be for her to read the next day.

The only basal reader I remember using was in first grade. We had gotten new basal readers, and when you opened up the book, there were two white pages. I drew a snowman on one. It was such a perfect snowman; it had three great big circles. But, the teacher got very angry with me. She said I had defaced that book, and she said, "How could you do that? Your mother is the principal, and your father is the chairman of the school board, and you're wasting tax

payers' money."

I couldn't understand it because all I thought I had done was to draw this beautiful picture. That wasn't a very good memory, and that's the only memory I have of that first grade class. I guess it points out how careful you have to be. You don't really know what kids will remember. I'm sure she wasn't aware that she was traumatizing me.

I left there when I was in the fifth grade. One of the first things I had to do in my new school was take an IQ test and an achievement test. I got my first B in science, and it was very traumatic.

We hadn't wanted to move, but it didn't take very long to adjust. My mother, who had always taught, didn't teach that first year. It was kind of nice to have her at home for a change. Then she got a job and started teaching in the same school where I had been. I went to the junior high, and my sister went to the school where my mother was teaching.

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One of the first sets of books that we got was a set of Childcraft. My father was gone during the week to work at the lumber camps, and he would come home on weekends. When he would come home, my sister and I would immediately want him to read; she would ask him to read a story called <u>Johnny and His Mule</u> and <u>The Little Engine that Could</u>, and I would have him read one about a Russian girl who had a hen, and

she wanted that hen to lay eggs so she fed it all kinds of vegetables that were different colors. It was just a stupid little story, but I loved it.

The other set of books I remember is the complete set of <u>The Wizard of Oz</u>. The principal and his wife in Allagash came from Alaska, and they had a complete set of <u>The Wizard of Oz</u> books. They were the big ones with the original drawings on the front, and I remember going to their house and looking at them. Finally, my mother bought us that set of books. We were probably in third or fourth grade then. My parents read them to us outloud. It was wonderful. The best thing, though, I remember about moving was the library.

I'd never been to a library. It was upstairs over the fire station. It had two rooms. It was summer time when we moved, and I would go to that library and get three or four books and take them home and read all day. I'd take them back the next day and get more books to read. It was wonderful to have access to all those books.

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Books were always the most important things to me. I mean, reading was the thing that I really enjoyed the most. I had a young man for a teacher in high school, and he made us do Shakespeare. I really liked the challenge of what we had to do. I remember--I'll never forget this--he gave us book reports to do, and one of the books that I read was <u>Ivanhoe</u> because it was my dad's book. I still have it too.

He gave us a set of questions and one of the questions from the book report was, "What is the essence of the struggle inherent in the plot?" This is ninth grade. I don't remember anything about Ivanhoe, but I do remember that question; I knew that was a pretty stupid question. Isn't that incredible? What is the essence of the struggle inherent in the plot? It doesn't make sense, does it?

We did Merchant of Venice with him, and as a sophomore I did Julius Caesar. We had to do a term paper. Even though I didn't have a clue how to do a term paper, I did one on Reconstruction after the Civil War. All I remember is that I stayed home from school the day before it was due to write it. I basically copied it out of the encyclopedia, and I misspelled the word "separate" about seven times. I had to write it 200 times because I had misspelled it. Since then I have learned that there is a rat in the root of "separate," and that's how I learned it--not from the 200 times. I teach all of my students there's a rat in the middle of "separate."

When I got to be a junior in high school, I had a teacher who really made a big difference in my life. His name was Mr. Peltbender, and he was Jewish. His whole family had been killed at Auschwitz, and he had scrapbooks. He formed a book club, and we met after school. We read books, and he would assign specific things for us to analyze, and he would pit one student against the other--not in a bad way, but, you know, this is your opinion: you

interpret this way and you interpret this way and you defend it.

We read books by Leon Uris that had to do with the holocaust like <u>Mila 18</u> and <u>Exodus</u>. We also read <u>Catcher in the Rye</u>, and many more. I couldn't wait to get to his class. It was really, really exciting. We read books in class and in the book club afterward, and we did a lot of writing, analyses and stuff like that. It was wonderful!

If I could go through my life and mark it, I mark it by the books that I read, by the different books. Learning came very easily for me. I had really good grades in high school and in elementary school.

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Becoming a Teacher

Right after high school I went to college. I didn't want to be a teacher, and I didn't want to go away from home either. I was very stuck at home. But, I just went to college to go to college, I guess. There was never any question that I wouldn't go. But from the minute I got there, I loved it. I remember I cried for days before I left. When it was time to go, I didn't want to go, and then when I got there, I didn't want to go home. It was so wonderful; I loved it so much! I didn't like the academics, but it was the first time I'd been free.

Oh God, I didn't do any work. The only work I did was

in English classes. My parents were horrified. I had graduated at the top of my class in high school. I think I got a 2.7 the first semester in college, and I got a 1.9 the second. I never opened a book. I had a great time, and I wouldn't take it back. It was wonderful.

I have very little memory of learning anything that freshman year other than in English class reading "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." I loved that. It was such a wonderful poem. I don't even remember who the teacher was.

One of my most vivid memories in another English class was reading <u>Winesburg, Ohio.</u> I told the teacher that I didn't like it. He said, "Well, why don't you like it?" I said, "I don't know, I just don't like it." He told me that I couldn't come back to class if I didn't give him a reason for not liking it. He said, "You may as well leave, if you can't think and tell me why you don't like it." I was so horrified! But I came back and said this book is depressing and that's why I don't like it, and he was happy. I did a term paper about it based on the symbolic use of hands in <u>Winesburg, Ohio</u>, and I ended up really liking the book and learning a lot from the work.

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I was in an English program, but after my freshman year, my mother died, and then I decided it was time for me to settle in and smarten up and stop fooling around. I decided to go into teaching. I think I realized after her

death, when people came to her funeral, what an impact she'd
made on people's lives. I sort of fell into education then.
It made sense. I went back to getting good grades again. I
actually graduated in three years. I took 18 hours and 21
hours and went summers, so all I had left was my student
teaching in that fourth year. I ended up with a major in
junior high English and a minor in history.

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Steppingstones, Transitions and Decisions

"I had no idea what I was doing. But, I knew it was
right and I knew the kids wanted it and I knew that was
right."

I did my student teaching in a ninth grade English
classroom. While I was there, the special ed teacher was
transferred. So I did five weeks of student teaching, and
then they moved me into that special ed class for two weeks,
and then I finished. Teaching in that special ed classroom
was hellish. It was tough, especially for somebody who
hadn't really finished student teaching, and I had had no
courses in special education.

I had gotten married at the end of my junior year, and
my husband was a teacher too. We went for five job
interviews and got five contracts, and took the one that
made the most money, which ironically was back home. I went
back home to teach in the place that I had graduated from.

I taught junior high English for two years.

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I taught seventh and eighth grade English. It was ability grouped. When I went there to teach, the principal said to me, "This is the textbook you're going to use." It was the Roberts' Linguistics Series. "My wife looked at this series and she really likes it. This is what you're going to use." The series was never finished. Roberts died, and nobody else could figure it out. Anyway, it was interesting because it had the literature and the grammar kinds of things in it.

But I wasn't going to teach with that book. I chose novels. I got multiple copies of texts. We read. We did Evangeline; we did To Kill a Mockingbird. Nobody had ever told me, but I just knew that that Roberts' book wasn't the thing to use.

I didn't have a clue that I couldn't do that. One of my groups of eighth graders, who were really smart, were angry because they didn't have any basketball or anything like that at the school. So we spent one whole nine-week ranking period in which they contacted all the coaches in the county, did statistical analyses of schools that had basketball teams, did bulletin boards, interviewed our principal, did all kinds of writing, and ended up presenting a proposal to the school board and got basketball back in!

I had no idea what I was doing. But, I knew it was

right and the kids wanted it and I knew that was right. I did not get any flak. But I had gone back into a situation where my mother had been, and people thought she had walked on water because she was such a wonderful teacher. Those would be the kinds of things that she would have done, and so I went in on her coattails, and people just expected that what I did would be good whether it was or not. They didn't really measure me, I don't think, by what I was doing. It was more by her. I really didn't have my own identity. I was somebody's daughter.

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To me, the classroom was always an extension of my home. It wasn't a different place. It wasn't foreign to me, and I don't remember struggling that first year. I'm sure I must have. Now I listen to my daughter who is teaching this year, and she's fretting and fuming. I didn't think there was anything I didn't know. I didn't think there was anything I couldn't do. Teaching today is a lot more complicated. I mean, new teachers have so many more things that they have to teach.

One of the things that I remember so vividly that first year of teaching was that we had to have planbooks, and we had to have them set up in a certain way--TRA, teach, review, and assign. Teach, review, and assign, and the teach and review were written in blue, and the assign was written in red so you could pick them out just like that.

And that's how you set up your planbook. I could do wonderful planbooks.

The principal was always coming up with something. He came in one day and said, "These are some records that I've gotten on study skills, and you're going to do those." They were horrible! So, what I did was at the top of the planbook, I wrote in the first fifteen minutes of class these records or whatever it was, and then I did the rest of my assignments. So, when the principal came in to observe, I handed in my planbook and my class list, and he went to the back of the room. He sat down and looked through the class list to make sure it was right, and he went through the planbook.

When he gave me back my planbook at the end of the day, he said, "These are nice plans. Why aren't you teaching them?" Oh, I was so angry with him because I had taught them. He had only come in for fifteen minutes when I was doing the records. So, I took the planbook and went down and said, "I want you to write down here that this is where it is, and I want you to correct it in my planbook. I want you to change what you've written in here because I don't want this kind of evaluation."

I just can't imagine asking teachers to do that today, although there are systems that do. I've had student teachers who have come to me with that stuff. It's frightening.

I had my daughter at the end of that first year, so I

decided that I was going to be a good mother and stay home
and take care of her for a year. But, I just couldn't do
it. I mean I loved being home with her, but what I found
was that the quality of the time wasn't any better. It was
just quantity and I was not very happy, so I started subbing
again, and then I looked for a job and went to North Park,
and I've been there ever since.

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That was 1973 in the fifth grade. There was only one
fifth grade at that time, and I had a self-contained fifth
grade classroom in the old building. I had twenty-nine
students my first year. We were at this stage of open
education. We had a superintendent who was very much into
progressive education. He wanted projects and kids doing
their own thing. There was educational renewal and all this
kind of stuff under him. I felt comfortable doing that. It
wasn't foreign to me. It was foreign to a lot of people,
but I enjoyed it. I remember doing plays with my students
and we had the Scott Foresman Reading series.

I'm still marking my time by books--by reading books.
The third grade teacher was getting her masters in reading
at that time, and she was very much into reading outloud,
and there was the fourth grade teacher who did a lot of
reading outloud, and both of them talked to me about how
important it was to read outloud. So, I started doing it
because I remembered what it was like.

I was in that building for two or three years before we moved into the new building, but I only taught self-contained for one year. Then they had two fifth grades, and Jim and I started switching. He did math and science, and I did the language arts.

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During that period of time <u>Sesame Street</u> was just beginning, and I had four students who could hardly read at all. I had a television in my classroom, and they watched <u>Sesame Street</u> and <u>Electric Company</u>. I had it up on a file cabinet in the corner so they could watch, just the four of them, and they just loved it. They really learned a lot from it, too. They just hadn't gotten to read.

One of them had a real severe speech impediment, and another was a little Indian boy who was so sweet. I must have been working with him on nouns. Come to think of it, I know I was, and I was asking him to give me proper nouns; we had talked about common nouns and proper nouns. I said, "Could you give me a proper noun?"

He said, "Yes, Mic Mac."

"Oh, what a great word, Evan. Is that the tribe you belong to?"

He said, "No, no, Mrs. Thatcher. Mic Mac, like you get at McDonalds."

It was so cute! He was such a sweet little fellow. I remember I brought him home with me and took him to

McDonalds. He had never been to McDonalds before, and he brought home his napkin and the container that had had his french fries in it. He saved all the paper because he hadn't ever been there.

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Give Them Wings and Let Them Fly

Then I got a new student from Washington D.C. We had this Slosson word list that was one of the things we had to use to identify a student's reading level. I gave this kid this Slosson Word Test. He was a fifth grader, and he came out at about third grade or something on that test. He couldn't sound out anything. But when it came time to read, he could read everything.

At that point I decided there must be something wrong with the way I'm looking at how kids read--if here's this kid who has taken this basic phonics test, and he can't do anything, but he's still this brilliant kid. He was brilliant too. He graduated at the top of his class and went to one of the Ivy League schools. But at first I thought he couldn't read because he couldn't do that Slosson Word Test. That was when I really started looking at what reading was and started the kinds of things that had to do with comprehension rather than just attacking skills.

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When I began to figure out that I didn't know everything there was to know about reading, I thought that I'd better get on the ball because maybe I might want to teach high school English. I went back and got certified in high school. I took some courses in linguistics and things just so I'd have a better background.

I went back and took Teaching of Reading, Developmental Reading, and Remedial Reading on my own. When I look back on it now, they were just wasted courses, but I did start reading because of them. The courses were just making little cards and word games and those kinds of things. That was basically what the Remedial Reading course was. But then I took Teaching English in the High School, and I took that from Dr. Smith. He had gone away to get his doctorate. I can't remember where he went, but in the process of going away, he came back a whole new man. He had a new hairstyle and he had sandals and he wasn't half as conservative as he had been when I had first had him in college; and he came back with new ideas.

He came back with thematic units. I thought, "Well, if you can do that with high school kids, why can't you do it with fifth grade kids?" The first thing I did in my classroom was to take our reading book and take the units and make charts. If there was a unit on adventure and there were five stories, I would put adventure and five stories on the chart and put the kids' names down, and as they read them, they just checked them off. I just let them work

through it on their own, and at the end of the unit we had roundtable discussions. I didn't know why I was doing it or whatever was happening, but I knew that these kids weren't reading books and that seemed to get them reading. That was the first step to get away from that basal reader.

Then in 1975 The International Reading Association was held in Fredrickton, New Brunswick, and our district sent four teachers. I was one of the four people. The Goodmans were there. Can you imagine? John Poeton was there. The people who were beginning in whole language were there. I don't even remember the word "whole language" used, but I do remember that John Poeton gave a workshop that was entitled *"Give Them Wings and Let them Fly."* It was based on children's literature. That really was what made the difference for me.

What he said made sense. I was able to relate it to my life and how much I had cared about books and reading. Then John Poeton came to our university and spoke to a migrant convention--a Chapter One convention. I was so excited when I heard him that other people started going. I think I heard him talk three or four times, and then Jim Trelease came and others. That was how it started. It really was out of how I learned rather than what somebody else said to me.

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Coming to Know

I haven't had my masters that long. I got it through the outreach program. Actually, I was about halfway through when I had my daughter, Kelly, and I couldn't do it. I was taking the curriculum course and Adolescent Lit and things like that, and it was just too much. I didn't finish it up until after she had graduated from high school. Then I went back and did it.

The first time around in the program, I don't remember being really excited, but the second time the program for my masters was really wonderful. It was excellent. The first course I took was a statistics course and I thought, "Oh my God, I must be crazy. What a terrible thing to start with." But you know, it ended up being one of the best courses that I had.

Not because of the content, but because by that time I had already taken some whole language courses. I had taken Reading Process and Writing Process, and I looked at it as how a student would come to reading something they didn't know. All the time I was taking it, I was able to relate it to what was happening in my classroom. Look, I have to learn this vocabulary; look, I have to learn this this way. By making that correlation between the kinds of things my students were doing and what I was doing, I really learned a lot about how kids learn.

I had done a lot of work on the state assessment test

by then--I had worked on designing the reading section, and we had done a lot of work with mean and mode and the whole bit, and I knew what P scores were and things, so I had some prior knowledge to bring to it. I was actually better off than most of the students who were in there because I had practical knowledge. I mean in designing the test and figuring out which questions were appropriate, and I knew about reliability and stuff like that. But it was still terrifying!

I finished my masters in 1990. I started just on a whim in January. Everything I had taken before, I threw out. Kelly had gone to college, and I had just gotten a divorce, and I was somewhat bored so I took two courses, and I finished it in less than two years. But I went during the summer. I went down, and I took some of those integrative curriculum courses also.

That first year, I think there were nine teachers who went from here. They weren't all from our building. It was just a week long course, but we got so much done. You know, to go there as a team and work like that was just incredible--just amazing! That is how we created all of our environmental units. We did all the planning that week. We worked all day and all night. The district got their money's worth.

I guess that's the thing that I got out of my master's. First of all, I took some great courses. They made sense as far as education was going, and there were four or five of

us who started at the same time and who were all teaching, and so we had a study group. We met one night a week just going from home to home; we studied and did our group work or whatever it was that we were doing; we really formed a close group of people.

I had a hard time when I was done because those people were really interested in education issues, and I had somebody to talk to, so when I finished up I was lost for a while. I didn't know what to do. I mean, I had that in North Park, but it wasn't the same level as it was when we were delving into curriculum change and models of teaching. It was very hard for me when I was done.

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I am hoping my new job will help. I'm going to be a literacy consultant for a publishing company and basically what it means is training teachers in the New Zealand model of literacy. I know that I will get challenged because a major part of this now is teacher development for the facilitators. We have to decide on our own action plan. One of the things that I have to do, which I didn't do in the school years, is a video of me working with kids, and then after we've done our facilitating or whatever, the facilitators meet with the leader. We actually look at our videos, and we work through the kinds of things that we're doing, and come up with an action plan on how we're going to change our teaching. It really focuses not only on

teachers, but on growth for the facilitators too.

I have some reservations about the idea of trying to commercialize it [the New Zealand model]. In order to do that, you have to somewhat limit what's happening. All I can think of is an oral workbook, you know, the program part of it. I don't know if that makes any sense, but obviously the company is out to make money and they have the distributorship for it.

But I think in order to get it here, you have to do that. You have to be realistic. Obviously I'm going to get a lot from doing it because the concept of teaching in that way, I really believe in. But I still believe you have to adapt it--there's a different culture; there's different students.

I think the model's just incredible, but it's like anything else, you need that contact with it to maintain it. It's real easy to slip back into the old model of teaching if you don't have someone for support.

The thing that I like about this model--and those things that I like about it are in other models: it's not just The New Zealand Model that's child centered; it's not just The New Zealand Model which sees assessment as something you do all the time, not something you do at the end of things. Those are the things that make The New Zealand Model work--that continuous assessment; knowing your learner; knowing your resources; and knowing how to put them together. To me there's no way that you can argue with

those kinds of things. However, you can argue with the materials. I don't believe you have to use The Ready to Read Books to do it or, well, we have to do it this way.

For example, I think The Ready to Read Books are wonderful, but I think that the school journals that they use in New Zealand are not very wonderful. I ordered them and tried to use them in my classroom, and my students were just up in arms. They complained about the quality of the artwork; they complained about the quality of the paper; they're just not going to accept that. I mean, anyway you look at it, picture books--good trade books--are superior to those journals, and my kids weren't willing to accept them. So in New Zealand, where they don't have access evidently to the same kinds of tradebooks that we have, maybe the kids look at those and say, "OK, this is fine." But from an aesthetic point of view, my kids didn't want those books.

They know better, and the other thing is that many of the stories have cultural connotations in them. When you're talking about the tribal people, or you're talking about animals, you've got to do so much work with prior knowledge to teach those kinds of things. That is fine, but if you have only so much time, it isn't practical. That's not necessarily the best way to do it. In order to do that, you're teaching all kinds of geography, history, and things that have to do with New Zealand, and you don't need to do that for five years in our school system. I could be wrong.

The things that I do like about it are that they give

kids time to be comfortable at their level. They don't push kids on. What we [Americans] do is based on that basal model--going through things quick, quick, quick, and when a kid learns to read at a particular level, you push them to a higher level and never give them time to read comfortably at that level where they are. So they're constantly working and struggling to read rather than it being pleasurable or being able to practice it enough to do it well. I think that's a problem.

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Commentary

Moving towards a holistic philosophy seems to be a natural evolution for Joyce. Several of the basic principles supporting whole language appear in her early experiences. Joyce recounts in her story events which she believes to be important and significant to her, events that have left an imprint on her life and drive many of her beliefs today.

One of the most interesting things she says is that she saw school as being "no different than home." At home books and learning were valued as well as cooperation and collaboration. Her parents modeled the importance of education through their actions and careers and shared their learning experiences. She delighted in her early learning experiences with her mother, who took her to college when she was only five.

She was totally involved with books both for enjoyment and information. She focuses her early experiences both at home and school on books. She could not get enough of them. As a teacher books are fundamental to what she remembers in her classroom. It seems to be no coincidence that they would become central to her later teaching life.

Her first formal school experience was in a one room school house which mirrored her home experiences. She was fascinated by all the learning that was going on around her, and she felt a strong sense of community--a learning community. When she moved to the consolidated school, that loss of community was what she felt most: "I remember moving into the separate classroom and feeling isolation and losing that sense of community." She also notes that besides the loss of community, she somehow felt disenfranchised, demoted, because being with older kids had made her feel more mature.

She relates very few negative school experiences as a student. She tells of her feeling of isolation when she moved away from the one room school; when she was reprimanded for drawing in a new basal; and when things did not make sense to her. She expresses the same complaints in her college years.

Interestingly, when the teacher reprimanded her for drawing in a book, the reasons the teacher gave reflected the teacher's fear of crossing those in power--Joyce's mother the principal, her father the head of the school

board, and the community. The teacher may have thought that because they were her parents, it would strike fear in her. Indirectly, this power that her parents had in the community may have influenced Joyce's sense of her own power in the classroom as a student and teacher. In making her own decisions she says that the choices she made reflected the "kinds of things my mother would have done."

Her earliest teaching experiences show a strong sense of personal efficacy and confidence. She exhibits confidence about what she should do in the classroom and surprisingly little fear of not following the authorities when it felt right for her and her students. Risking and making decisions on her own based on her beliefs about what was right for her students seemed to come easily and naturally to her. When she succeeded once, she became stronger and continued resisting authority without any hesitation.

She found it easy to resist the basal and use literature. She knew the profound and wonderful affect literature had had for her. She rejected the basal model for pushing kids too fast and not allowing them to enjoy reading, echoing Rosenblatt. She was skeptical of the standardized test for reading she was supposed to use when she observed her student reading well despite his score. Many choices were made on her instinctive ability to allow her observations of her students direct her thinking and teaching.

Giving up control of the curriculum was one of the first things that she did in her first year of teaching. It seemed so easy, when in most cases it is the last thing that many first year teachers would dare to do. Giving students choice was natural. She observed the concern that her students had about basketball and turned their frustration into an action curriculum, allowing their learning to become authentic.

Her observations led her to be cautious about believing standard assessments when her own observations suggested something different: her strong sense of herself as a learner. In the one room school she says, "I was surrounded by kids who were learning different things; I was fascinated...." When she wanted to learn, she did.

Her observations and questions led her to go beyond the method and discover the why, the theory behind the method. Her approach to her masters program reveals her need to understand her students. She says that it wasn't the content that was important, but the how and why. She learned and reflected on what she had learned as to how it applied to how her students learned.

Reflecting on her first year at North Park, she says that she felt comfortable with the new progressive reforms occurring in her school. Her own progressive ideas had been developing all along. Joyce seems to be one of those teachers who has always had an intuitive feel for teaching in a way that connects with whole language.

In reflecting on the events that Joyce relates, I can't help thinking of something that Mary Catherine Bateson (1990) writes,

> Those who move beyond discouragement are those who start out with a core of confidence and strength and who are lucky enough to continue to grow through environments that do not exploit the residual vulnerabilities everyone brings from childhood. (37)

A love for literature and reading encompass all of Joyce's memories as well as a belief in the importance of education and teaching. Joyce's belief system is clearly centered in her earliest memories of school, family, the books she loves, and a sense of and understanding of community.

One wonders why she at first did not want to become a teacher. Was it adolescent angst?

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Chapter Eight

COMPASSION AND QUESTIONS

Winnie

"To be theoretical is to be down to earth, *utterly* practical, and fully in touch with reality" (Ruddell 18).

When Winnie first talked to me in her classroom, we sat on the tiny first grade chairs. She was concerned that she would not be able to tell me anything, that she was not a storyteller. But as she began to talk, her sense of humor and that twinkle that betrays her to her students emerged. Later she would finish her story situated in her comfortable living room with a majestic view of the countryside and a story about a moose.

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This is my thirtieth year of teaching. I was an elementary education major in college. I ended up with some minors, but it was classified differently then--elementary education majors, junior high education majors and physical education majors. Those were about the only three categories that Milliken State Teachers College offered at that time.

All through my normal schooling, I leaned towards liking children. But I didn't know I wanted to be a

teacher. I had other thoughts. I had a sister who was an RN, and I thought I wanted to be a nurse like my big sister until I discovered the truth about nursing.... It involved blood. So, actually, I think I went through school not really knowing what I wanted to do and went through most of high school, and then maybe in my junior year I finally realized what I was going to do with my life. We [women] didn't have very many options--there was nursing or teaching.

We didn't have the options that kids have now, and so I started thinking about teaching. Previously I had worked with children at a summer camp for underprivileged children, and all along without realizing it, I think my tendencies were leading in that direction, but I wasn't sure until my junior year. During college for summers, I worked at a girls' camp in Vermont for very rich spoiled children from New York.

I discovered there that I had some leadership characteristics because I worked up to head director of Junior Row which was an honor at that time. So then, I just evolved into teaching.

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It was an unusual event for me to go to college. My parents were not educated people. My father had to leave school when he was eight years old to help support the family. If you think about it, he'd be ninety-five today,

so it was another era. My mother did go to the eighth grade and quit before graduation and didn't have the opportunity to go through high school. My sister is the oldest, and she went through nurses' training. I have a brother who is inbetween us who didn't like school at all and left high school and joined the Air Force. Now he has a very, very successful business because he was self-made, and then there was me. I was the first to go to a four-year college. That was a big step in our family and one that probably made my parents very proud.

I had an aunt who would have been my father's sister-in-law. She was a very loving person and a good teacher, but she didn't quite fit into the family. She was very reserved. My uncle had a very good job, and they had a little bit of money which no one else in the family had. I always respected her, but I couldn't say I was very close to her, and I don't think that she was an influence on my deciding to teach. I was a little bit afraid of her really.

<div align="center">★★★★★★</div>

Bad Beginnings

I'm from downstate originally. My first year I went to a Catholic School. All my friends were going. My parents didn't want me to go, although we were Catholics and we were in that parish. I wanted to go, so they said okay. It was an awful year, just a terrible, terrible year. The nuns and

I didn't agree in philosophies even at that age.

They were so very strict. Lunchrooms were segregated. There was a boys' lunchroom and a girls' lunchroom, and, of course, we had to bring our own lunches as there was no hot lunch program. The punishment for anybody was to eat in the opposite dining room, and I ended up eating with the boys quite a bit. Now I wouldn't mind, but back then as a six-year old it was traumatic.

And then there was this other thing. We were poor back then, and a dime or a quarter was a lot of money. Everyday my mother would give me a dime to buy an apple or a snack at recess time. That was one of my mother's priorities. I was sickly, and my mother thought that if she could put some fat on my bones, I would be healthier.

The nuns had a system that just before recess you were allowed to go to the bathroom. They would assign someone to be bathroom monitor, and after everybody had gone to the bathroom, the monitor had to go in and flush all the toilets. It was my week to be bathroom monitor. I hurried to flush all the bathrooms because I was going to do my duty, and I was in a hurry to go buy a snack. On my way out a nun caught me by the nape of the neck and accused me of stealing somebody's dime. Somebody had lost their dime. She didn't know that I had money everyday, and she would not listen to me. She was not very compassionate. The nuns really gave me a terrible, terrible time that year. I was much happier at public school, much happier.

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Feeling Important

The next year I was put into public school in the inner city. I call it inner city because the town is not a very, very large city compared to New York or Boston--but it was a city school. We lived on the outskirts of the city, and so we were bussed to school. I remember all of the teachers I had.

My first grade teacher was Ms. Banks, and even though she retained me...well, actually, she didn't retain me. I was retained from Catholic School, but it wasn't because I was not able to do the work. I had missed a lot of schooling that year due to illness. Possibly, I had made myself sick because I didn't like the nuns.

Mrs. Banks was quite a contrast to the nuns. She was kind and compassionate and made me feel important. It's funny because I just had a thought that the next teacher that I remember the most was my fifth grade teacher. I was just making a contrast. I teach first grade, Joyce teaches fifth grade, and of course, my opinion is that those are the two most important grades in the world. Those were the two people, I guess, that understood me the most.

The superintendent's office was probably a mile away from the school, and every Friday there were monies to be delivered to the superintendent's office. They used to give

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me the money and off I trotted. I was just a first grader, but off I trotted to the superintendent's office to deliver the money. My mother was quite concerned about that, and she called the principal and asked him. The principal said, "Well, nobody would suspect a little kid going down the street with a paper bag under her arm." So my mother let me do it.

There was a bar and grill down the street from the school. At lunchtime the teachers ordered their lunches from the bar and grill, and they used to send me to go get them. I used to go into the bar and sit on the stool and wait for their lunches to be ready. I guess I must have been more mature than some of the other kids. Maybe some leadership qualities were showing, or else I was such a hellion that they wanted to get rid of me. You know, find a way to get me out of my classroom. Maybe that was it.

My fifth grade teacher was also the assistant principal, and she had a phone in the room. I was thought responsible enough to answer the phone when she was out of the room.

In middle school I was involved in athletics and band. I had a good time. It has good memories. Academically, I don't remember much. I must have done everything I had to do because I don't remember ever being chastised for getting poor grades. So I must have been on the right track.

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Questions

I was a pretty good student, but I was a lazy student.
I was a procrastinator, and I didn't understand the reason
for doing a lot of things that were assigned. I wanted to
know why, and I questioned a lot and saw that some of the
things were asinine, and I wasn't going to put much effort
into them. I think that carried me all the way through
college because I wasn't the greatest student in college,
not at all.

No one [teachers] wanted to answer my questions. If it
was in the curriculum, you had to do it. I also found out
too that if I asked too many questions about why we were
doing such a thing, that probably I wasn't getting the
highest rank I deserved. If I'd shut my mouth and not
questioned, I would have done better. I probably was
labeled a rabble rouser.

Especially in college, I didn't put the effort in that
I could have. I was there to have a good time, and I had a
good time, although things kept surfacing. I became
president of what was called The Student in Education
Association, and I was even asked to organize a field day
through the Physical Education Department, and I wasn't even
a physical education major.

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I have difficulty taking tests, even today--written

tests or any kind of a test; although I appear to be a very calm person, my insides shake like an old washing machine at times. So I really had difficulty taking tests. Sometimes I didn't test the way that I responded in class or even equivalent to the work that I did.

I had an English teacher in high school, I think it was my junior year. She was very compassionate and concerned about her students, and she helped me a great deal. I think she's probably the one that really gave me the encouragement that I could go to college because I think, basically, college was something I felt was not in my future.

I was very, very strong in chemistry. I really enjoyed that subject. Don't ask me anything now because when you don't use it, you lose it. But I was very, very interested in chemistry. At the time, although he wasn't very strong in his influence, the chemistry teacher thought I should investigate that field. But then again, opportunities weren't out there for women. And I wish, probably, they had been because I probably would have investigated that further.

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Secrets and Acts of Wisdom

My father was a construction worker and did everything you could imagine from working with dynamite to.... Even though my father did not have the education, when he was

working on construction, they often made him foreman of the crew. He had an innate ability to lead. Part of his duties were to keep his peoples' time and to keep track of materials that they used on the job.

However, my father had a secret. He couldn't write. He could read the newspaper, but he couldn't write. Instead, he would carry this information in his head all day. When he got home, he would dictate it to my mother, and my mother would write it in his notebook. He kept that hidden.

All through his life, I don't know if it was actually hidden, but his bosses never revealed that that's what he was doing. So he had that innate leadership quality, I think, without education. He knew how to get things done, and he did them.

My mother went to the eighth grade. My grandmother, had begun work in the woolen mills at age nine. When my mother was young, her mother owned a boarding house for the people who worked in the woolen mills. My mother would help serve breakfast to the boarders before leaving for school in the morning. Then she would come home at noontime and help serve lunch and then be home for dinner. My mother was a worker all through her life.

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When I was growing up, my mother worked in a shoe shop stitching shoes. After I had gotten my driver's license in

high school, she would have me take my father to work and then keep the car. I'd say to her, "Well, what time are you getting out of work?" and she'd say, "Three or four." So I'd go to the shoe shop at 3:00.

She wasn't ever ready to leave until 4:00. She'd say, "Sit down here," and the noise in the shoe shop was absolutely terrible. The whole work area was not a good place. She would say, "Now you sit here and you watch what I have to do day after day after day. You'll do something better." My parents believed that what we wanted to be we could be, but they weren't going to influence our direction. My mother was really wise. That was her way of saying, "Do you want to do this all your life?"

My mother--and I'm still amazed at this--my mother would spell words that she had no meaning for, but she was able to spell them. We used to play a game with her. We'd get the dictionary and try to trick her. When I was home from college, and I'd be writing papers, I'd say, "Mom, how do you spell this?" She would spell the word, and then she'd say, "Well, what does that mean?" My philosophy about spelling is I think that you're born to be a good speller or you're not. But that was my background.

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Limitations

We had limited books around the house because of economics. I was born during the war--at the end of WWII,

not WWI, WWII. I was seven months old during Pearl Harbor.
Moneywise, there wasn't any money to buy books. I grew up
reading comic books and trading comic books in the
neighborhood. I spent a lot of time reading comic books at
a very young age. I loved the Classic comics, especially
during junior high when we had to do book reports. We
didn't have Cliff Notes then.

I was always very worried about going into the library,
and I still don't have much of a knowledge about libraries
for that reason. I think I still have a fear of them. The
library in my home town was a great big ornate thing--
cement, very, very high ceilings. When you went in, it was
a Shhhh! absolutely! You had to tiptoe across the floor,
and that would echo. It was so loud. I was just in
complete awe, and the discoveries that I made at the library
were entirely on my own because my parents were not ones to
go to the library. They didn't have time.

My school didn't have many books or even a library.
There were Nancy Drew mysteries in the room, but I don't
remember being surrounded by a whole lot of books, and the
teachers never brought us to the town library. Part of my
philosophy now is to just show kids what books are and
really show them that there's information out there and that
they can go and find it somewhere themselves.

Fourth grade was my first adventure with books. I read
a lot of biographies and the Nancy Drew mysteries. The
biographies were the most interesting. I read every one

that I could get my hands on. Those were the type of books
that were in the school. In junior high we did have a
library. I am an avid reader today, but probably because we
weren't influenced by television.

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I don't ever remember writing in school except the
first day of school. You know, what did you do this summer?
And doing the outlines and doing the reports, the book
reports, but I don't remember ever doing any free writing.
Teachers just said here's what you're going to write. It
seemed to me that there was always some evil purpose in
writing, meaning a book report or that type of thing. To
me there was an evil purpose because I didn't like doing it,
and I still don't like doing it.

In college I only remember writing in one class--The
Writing of Short Stories. That's the only place that I can
ever remember writing and writing something that was my own
choice. Freshman writing was only grammar.

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Purposes and Connections

I had to take a lot of methods courses in college,
Health Teaching Social Studies, Teaching Science, Teaching
This, Teaching That...all very textbook-oriented things.
They thought they were giving us great formulas. You know,

we had to read this, this, and this, and then we'd become great teachers.

I don't really have a lot of recollections of what I learned about teaching in college because I saw no purpose in what they were doing. They just gave you formulas. This is going to make you a good teacher, but there was nothing that we could put our hands on--no hands-on experience. It was all out of the textbook. They showed us how to make great schedules and great lesson plans, but they didn't tell us that a child might vomit and ruin our schedule because we had to tend to that. Or they didn't tell us that the child might come to school very upset because Mommy and Daddy had had a fight, and we would have to spend half an hour cuddling that child while trying to keep the rest of the class going, and the rest of the day that we would have this child clutching at us. They didn't tell us those things.

They didn't tell us that there are a lot of things that can go wrong and how to use common sense to get out of those situations. It was all very textbook-oriented, and the people who were there teaching I don't think had been in the classroom themselves for umpteen years.

It just didn't make sense to the true life situation. I had worked with children at camp, and that was kind of in a teaching capacity because we had athletics and arts and crafts, and we did some tutoring and that type of thing. I had already worked with children one-to-one or in a group, and here I was trying to listen to them [professors] tell me

how to do it by the textbook method, and it just didn't make sense. And, again, when you'd say, "What happens when...?" and they'd fluff you off because that wasn't on their agenda. Oh, they had an agenda to meet for that particular class, and it wasn't practical.

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The very first day of student teaching was the first time I went into a classroom. That's when I almost didn't become a teacher. Yes, my first experience in the elementary school was my first day of student teaching. I hadn't met the cooperating teacher beforehand. That was not necessary because the college told us where we were going. I hadn't been in a school until that first day.

The first day, my boyfriend let me use his car. My roommate and I were both going to the same school. When I got to the school, I froze. I still have the same thought whenever I go to Hillside, and I go to open that front door. I absolutely froze, and my roommate said, "What's the matter?" and I said, "I can't do this."

I was ready to go back to the dorm and pack my suitcases and leave. It was a good thing she was there to push me because I did go through...and, of course, it was a great experience. I think I'd come to where I wanted to be, working with children, and that's a long time ago and I'm sure that I didn't do anything right and I'm sure that my cooperating classroom teacher probably had long discussions

about things that I needed to improve in, etc., etc. But I worked very hard at student teaching.

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That was the first time that I ever did [work hard at school], really--I burned a lot of midnight oil that year. I did work very hard at student teaching and stayed up many, many hours doing lesson plans and trying to be creative--to bring in things that were different into the classroom. That was the first time. There's actually a picture in my yearbook of me in the library. They [teachers and friends] were shocked that I was in the library studying.

Then the second part of student teaching was at what they called The Taylor School. I was in the third grade, and I had a little cooperating teacher. She was about four feet tall, but she was full of energy.

The first day she didn't tell me very much. She just said, "Follow me." I went around all day right at her heels, and she dug her heels in and ran everywhere, and I was right behind her. I thought, "Oh my God, what am I doing?" But they were good experiences. Those were my first introductions to the classroom because even though we had all these methods courses, we did not observe in any classrooms as the kids do now. So we really didn't know until that final student teaching if we really wanted to teach.

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I guess the thing I remember the most about Taylor was the day that Kennedy got shot. That's the big thing in everybody's life at our age. I hadn't had control of the classroom very much at that point, and the principal came in and whispered something to the teacher and she left. She didn't even say, "Take over" or anything. She just left and she didn't come back for an hour. I had to jump in and become very creative, right then and there, and handle the situation. Your common sense plays an important part. I figured that the classroom would function very well with my direction at that point. When she finally came back, it was announced that all the children were being sent home early. Everybody thought that the Russians were coming.

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When I've had student observers, I've always asked them to circulate with the children and talk to the children because they have a tendency to come and sit and not do anything, and that's not useful. But I still maintain that college doesn't do enough to direct people who have no aptitude for teaching in another direction, and that's a shame, especially now when there aren't very many jobs out there. People can't be choosing the very best with so many people getting hired when they should have been told a long time ago that maybe they should put their energies in another direction. And that's too bad.

If you can't associate with the children, if you can't

get down to their level, then there's no point in going into the classroom. And that is not easy for everybody to do.

I was also assistant house mother at the dorm when I was student teaching. Think of this--I'm a poor student, gradewise, but our housemother had had a heart attack, and they needed somebody to do her chores. Ms. Fredel recommended that they make me assistant housemother. Here I am a senior, probably a hellraiser and that's most likely why they did it because I knew what the kids were all up to. I managed to get along well with the kids. I mean, obviously, I wasn't a dictator and I kept them in line, but I wasn't a dictator.

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Confusions

I had to go to summer school one summer because I wasn't going to be invited back to college. The day before graduation about eighteen of us were called one at a time into the President's office and told that we were not going to graduate, and we would not get our degrees. Imagine--the day before graduation.

For various reasons some of the courses that should have been offered weren't offered, and some of us did not get the quality points that we needed. An "A" offered four quality points besides four credits. We also had to have a grade point average, but it involved quality points too, and

you had to have so many quality points. Well, I didn't have

enough quality points. That was really upsetting. Parents,

family, and everybody were coming to graduation, and their

[the university] timing was not very good.

They told us that they could even stop us from walking

down the aisle and participating in commencement, but they

were going to be kind. They would give us a blank folder

with no degree in it. That was even more upsetting.

When I was in the President's office, he said, "Do you

have a job?"

And I said, "Yes, I do have a job."

And he said, "Well, you know, they won't want you

unless you come to summer school here this summer."

And I said, "I can't come to summer school this summer.

I have a contract at camp--Head Counselor."

He said, "Well, you'll just have to break it."

I said, "Wait a minute. I've sat here for four years

in college, and you people have advocated that we should be

professional, and it would be very unprofessional for me to

break this contract at this time."

"Well, then you won't be able to teach next year. The

superintendent down there won't want you."

I said, "Well, I'm just going to have to take that

chance." And I strutted out of there.

I didn't tell my parents. They came and my sister came

from Massachusetts and my brother came, everybody came. I

didn't show my diploma to them when we got outside. My

fiance knew about it, but he was the only one. I had an awful time that weekend. I didn't tell my parents until two weeks later, after I had done some investigating.

To tell you truthfully, there must have been a great need for teachers. I don't know how I got hired. My college ranks didn't speak for me very well, but I had been hired by this school system to teach in China, Maine.

After I got home, I went right away and talked to the superintendent. The President had also said that "If the superintendent takes you, you will have to take a drastic drop in pay because you're not degreed." Pay? My pay was $4,100.

Anyway, I went to the superintendent right away and told him the situation. He kind of fluffed it off and laughed and said, "That's no problem. You'll just teach your first year on a provisional certificate and take a course during the year and everything will be resolved."

I also told him that I was told that I would probably take a drop in pay. He laughed and said, "Drop in pay? You're not making much money to begin with." It was traumatic, and it was an awful way to go through graduation weekend and think your whole career was on the line, but I took a course, and it was resolved and there was no problem.

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Disaster!

My first years of teaching were a disaster. At the time I thought I was an excellent teacher, but when I look back at my first three years of teaching, I think, "My God, what did I do?" I was in a rural school in China, Maine, which is a farming area. My assignment was first grade. There were two first-grade rooms. The rest of the faculty were older ladies, nice ladies, but a little older.

They had grown up in that area, and their families had grown up in that area, and everybody knew about the area except me. They took me under their wings. But the new teacher gets a lot of stuff dumped on her. I was asked to do girls' softball, and I said, "OK," and I was asked to do a girl scout troop, and I said "OK." I did not know that I could say no. We had a principal who was a nice man. He was younger. His name was Mr. Johnson, and actually he helped me out of a lot of scrapes. It was a nice, friendly little school. I was going to do my very best.

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One day we were doing a farm unit, and I thought it would be a good idea to make butter. I got all the ingredients and had the kids shake the jar and shake the jar and shake the jar, and it turned into butter, but it was white. I couldn't understand why it was white. So I went down to the other first grade teacher and asked, "How come

this butter is white?" Well, she laughed and she laughed!
She went next door and got her sister, and they laughed.
She said, "Winnie wants to know how come the butter isn't
yellow," and they laughed and laughed. It was really funny.
I didn't know that you had to put a little dye in it. I was
this naive little girl. Another time the teachers were
talking about somebody who was cutting the lambs' tails.
"Why did they do that?" I asked. They thought that was a
funny question--a very humorous question. I didn't know
that the lambs get their tails all messy so they cut them
off.

They thought that was very funny. But, I managed to
get through the year. I only stayed there a year because I
found out that if I came to the Air Force Base, I could get
$1,000 more. I brought this up to the principal and he
said, "I don't blame you." I could get a $1,000 raise, so I
applied at the base.

I have another confession to make about that first year
of teaching. We had to do permanent record cards, but
nobody told me I had to do permanent record cards. The last
day of school we had a gathering. Everybody was all done
with end of the year records. I thought I was done too.

We were having a little party, and somebody said to
somebody else, "Well, did you finally get your permanent
record cards done for this year?" He laughed and said,
"Yes, I got them done. I don't have to come back and do
them later." You know, I left without doing them because I

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didn't dare ask what they were. I thought it was something
that was going to take me three weeks to do. So, somewhere
out there there's a group of people who would be about
thirty-six years old who never have had first grade entry
level permanent record cards. I apologize for that. They
never called me back, and they never caught it probably
until the next year, and it was too late.

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The next year I started at the air base. It was the
Hampton school system, but it was on the base. There were
two schools there then. The school I was in has been closed
for a number of years now. I taught first grade.

When I had made the application, I was living down
state and expected to be called for an interview. One
Sunday afternoon I was doing lesson plans for the next week.
My living room coffee table was full of textbooks. I had on
an old sweatshirt and jeans. There was a knock on the door,
and I went to answer it. It was the superintendent of
schools from Hampton. He explained, "I just happened to be
in the area, and it would save setting up an interview time
and you wouldn't have to travel up there."

All I could think of was I'm not dressed properly.
You don't dress like this for an interview. So he came in,
and there was that glass of beer standing there, so I said,
"Can I offer you some refreshment?"

He said, "I'd like a beer." So that was easier.

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I taught at Hampton for two years and then transferred to North Park because I was living in North Park. The last year that I was at Hampton, I had a child so it was easier to be in North Park. I had gotten married during my third year.

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Independence

My husband and I were engaged when I was in college. I had had a student loan. I had borrowed money, and at that time it was a lot of money in comparison to the salary I was making.

But I broke the engagement two weeks after I graduated because I wanted some independence. I didn't want to get married having bills over our heads, and I wanted some freedom. So I broke the engagement, and we did not communicate at all for two years, and I guess he waited for me. He kept the engagement ring in his coffee pot the whole time.

I was teaching at Hampton, and a friend and I happened to be in North Park one day. I had been very careful when I did come to North Park. I didn't want to run into him. I was chicken. We were shopping, and I saw him drive by, and it bothered me. About six months later I wrote him a letter because I was too chicken to talk to him. I wrote him a note and said if you'd like to talk to me, meet me at the

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coffee shop at 1:00 Sunday afternoon or something like that.
I got there at 12:00, and he was waiting for me. Within two
weeks we were engaged, and then we were married in
September.

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Teaching at Hampton on the base was interesting. The
population of the base was much larger then, and the school
that I was in had just first and second grades. There was
no kindergarten at that time. First and second grades and a
few third grades and there were ten first-grade rooms, and
they were big classes. There were 250-300 first graders.
There were very few civilian teachers.

We [teachers] were separated because one principal
couldn't have a faculty meeting with twenty-eight teachers,
so we always had our faculty meetings with just the first
grade teachers. Therefore, we didn't get to know the second
grade teachers. It was like a little first grade school
almost. We all had the same things in common including a
very dictatorial principal.

Back then there were very few women principals, and
when they did achieve that level, they would be very, very
dictatorial. Ours was no different. And she did some funny
things. She would run around and peek in the door window.
She'd just peek with one eye to see what you were doing, or
she'd listen in on the intercom system. It had a click to
it, and she would click it on and listen to what was

happening in the classroom and say nothing, and then you'd hear it click off.

I had a system going with my little first graders that when they heard the intercom go click, they'd all point to it and none of us would say a word until we heard the click off again. She was quite sneaky, but we were sneakier.

Most of the teachers were base personnel. Their husbands were in the service, and so they came and went quite often. I did form some nice friendships. We seemed to work together well.

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<p style="text-align:center">Lessons</p>

But, again, at Hampton and at China my first year, it was a learning process for me. We were very, very textbook-oriented. It was more important to fill out your planbook than to actually teach. That was the most important thing. You followed your planbook to the "T," and you followed your schedule to the "T." It didn't always matter that some child needed your personal attention. I mean, it was time to go on to something else, and you did. And I floundered a lot, I'm sure, especially one year at Hampton.

I had thirty-three first graders, and that was a nightmare. It was absolutely a nightmare! I don't think I taught anything to those children that year. I played policeman all year long, and I look back and I think, "Oh my

God, how many real lives did I ruin those first few years?"
I haven't dared go back to China. I'm afraid somebody might
remember that I haven't done those permanent record cards.
I'm sure it must have been sufficient because I was rehired.

I couldn't have made too many drastic errors, but I
don't remember getting much help either. The help that I
did get was from my fellow teachers. I went and questioned
as to what was their idea about something, their method; I
don't remember the principals as being very supportive and
observing very much. Their idea of observing was to walk by
your door, and if everything looked under control, then it
was OK.

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I went back to the Taylor School to another woman
principal. First grade. Yes, I experienced first grade
until probably 1969 or 1970, but then they were going to
bring in learning problems classes, classes for children who
had learning problems. This was a completely new thing in
the system. There wasn't even anyone who was trained.
They did hire a psychologist to set up the program and do
some training, and they needed some teachers to do it, and I
was asked if I would consider it.

At that time I thought maybe that would be good, and
I'm sure it was probably because of my successes with
students in my class that they thought that I could do this.
So I said yes, I would try it out for a year, but I wanted

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assurance that I could go back into the classroom if I
didn't like it, and I got that in writing. I was smart
enough for that. I did that for a year. I enjoyed working
with the children, but quickly lost track of what was
normal. I worked with children all through the school. They
were a special class, but they called it learning problems
class, and I worked with K-5 students.

I worked one-to-one basis for a half an hour with each
student. I enjoyed working with the kids and maybe giving
these children a chance to relate to someone because that
was part of the problem back then. They didn't get enough
of it. But I missed the classroom.

I would stand in the hall in the morning, and the
children were coming in, and I greeted them, and they all
went to their rooms, and the room doors closed, and I stood
out in the hall until I started getting children twenty-
forty-five minutes later. During Christmas parties or other
eventful times, I had no class to call my own. So, I said
no, this is not for me. I had taken nine credits that year
in special ed and went into it wholeheartedly thinking that
maybe, yes, this would be a career change for me, but I
didn't like it.

It wasn't for me. I still had my letter from the
superintendent promising me that I could go back into the
classroom, and so that was when I made my move to North
Park. There was a teacher retiring in the second grade
there, and in the meantime we had purchased a house here, so

it was my opportunity to come closer to home.

I taught two years in second grade in what we called the old building. It was a wooden structure. Some of the teachers were here then are still here. I think it was 1972, maybe, somewhere in that area--1971-72. I taught second grade in the old building, and then this building was built.

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When we made the building transfer, a first-grade position opened again. I thought, "Oh, here's my chance," and I came back into the first grade and have been here since then, and that was about nineteen or twenty years ago. So, I've been in this room for about nineteen years. In thirty years of teaching, I taught twenty-seven in the first grade and two in the second grade and one in special ed. So I've been in the first grade twenty-seven years.

The physical structure of my room has changed over the years. The first year we were here the desks were in straight rows facing the blackboard because we did a lot of writing on the blackboard--the children did. There was no carpeting. It was very structured at that point, still. That was still the way, although at Taylor, before I did move here, I had played with the open classroom concept a little bit and had probably been "avant garde" in that building.

A lot of teachers scratched their heads and said, "What

is she doing?" Yet, I didn't jump into it fully. When I came to North Park, it was very structured, and I didn't dare do the other things in this room for a good many years. It was a very structured atmosphere, but through the process of change, you change. You pick out the good things, and you throw out the bad things.

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Changes

I did not do a lot of changing initially. I don't think that I did because administration dictated what you did. You didn't stray too far because you were always afraid that you would not be doing your job, and you could lose your job. I did always try to make things more interesting and try to move away from or enhance the curriculum. I was a rebel in a lot of ways in that respect.

Over to Hampton I had instigated a fun day for the ten first-grade classrooms, and that was the first time that they had ever done anything that was outside the curriculum the last week of school. I mean there was no fun about it. You worked right up to the last day of school. I had gone to the principal and said we could have a fun day and color code children from each room so that they ended up on teams, but not with their particular class, and they could go from activity to activity, you know, that kind of thing. But that was a big step for them to go through and for me to

have the courage to say "Let's do this" because it was really new.   I was also still a new teacher.

And of course the last twenty years here, many of us in this building have been labeled "rebels." I found the right place for myself. With experience you grow more secure, and you can go to your principal or you can not go to your principal and say I'm doing this whether they like it or not because it's what I believe in.

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Commentary

Winnie is a concerned, caring and competent teacher. Unlike Joyce, as a student Winnie was confronted with a model of teaching and learning that did not seem to value the student, a model based on scientific management. Curriculum, school agendas, rules and texts always seemed more important than the student. She never seemed to feel valued as a learner. She blames herself for not doing well describing herself as a lazy student, a procrastinator. The reason she gives is that she wanted things to make sense. If they didn't, she would not do them.

From the very beginning, she was obviously not satisfied with the status quo. She wanted to learn and she asked questions. Her persistence in asking questions served only to irritate her teachers. Students are not to ask questions in this model, only take in what the teacher and

texts tell them. Her fear of testing not only reflects her resistance to this model, but also its effects on some students.

As a student Winnie learned that questioning was not valued. Knowing why was something that only the higher ups were allowed to know and that sometimes even the teachers themselves did not always know why things were done. She felt strongly that she was devalued for asking questions, and the response or lack of responses from teachers affected her performance as a student. But she never let that stop her. She still questions often and realizes that to question why is not only important for the student but for the teacher too.

The constraints on and resistance of Winnie as a student seem to be reflected in her early teaching life. Her undergraduate methods courses attempted to socialize her into a profession that prized the values she had resisted as a student. She says that they tried to teach her formulas for teaching, but she felt strongly from her own experiences that they would not work. She intuitively understood that students are individuals with feelings and experiences that formulas could not take into account or anticipate.

As a young teacher, however, she felt obligated to follow all the rules of teaching and mandates of the district for fear of losing her job. And yet she tells stories about pockets of resistance to this authority also,

which reveal her desire for some autonomy and her need to do the best for her students.

The teachers whom she remembered most clearly were compassionate teachers who "took a little bit of time to interact personally so that you became a student in a class that had a name rather than just another person who was filling a seat" (J2-1-3), and she also says that

> I think that I remember the things that I would do if I ever became a teacher rather than the things that I would not do because I tuned out the teachers that I would have said I will never do that. The teachers that had qualities that I liked--I probably picked up those qualities from them saying this is what I would do. (J2-1-3)

Winnie, in resisting and reflecting on her own experiences, is a teacher who recognizes that children need to feel good about themselves and about their ability to learn. For Winnie, the sense of compassion for students is the main lesson she carries with her, and a need for a purpose for learning and teaching are at the heart of her role as a teacher today and are the driving forces for her decision-making in the classroom and are her impetus for change.

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Chapter Nine

IT'S IN THE BLOOD

Marilyn

"Teachers teach most profoundly what they are at the core. The lasting lesson is the demonstration of self as it handles its authority and those under its authority" (Boomer 1988, 31).

My first meeting with Marilyn was in her classroom. Actually it was two huge classrooms with dividers which were open to accommodate the multi-age class she had just piloted that year. The theme had been nature, and surrounded by books there were aquariums, terrariums and a tree and a large variety of learning stations. Marilyn talked to me as she was sorting books. It was difficult for her to talk about her past as she seemed intent on looking forward. As we talked, I discovered that that was Marilyn. Learning and changing were central to her concept of teaching.

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I think I knew I wanted to be a teacher when I was in kindergarten. My mother was a teacher and her mother was a teacher, so I'm the fourth generation of teachers in the family. It's kind of in the blood whether you intend to be a teacher or not.

My grandmother took care of me. She had a two-story

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house with four bedrooms upstairs and all these doorways. I would play school up there pretending I was going from classroom to classroom teaching music. We had a music teacher that did that. She'd come in and shut the door and teach her lesson and leave, so this is what I was pretending up there--making all these doors close and I'd trot across the hall to the next room and go in.

However, when I started college I started in the nursing program. That's what I thought I wanted to be then. But in my second semester of college, I had my first child, so I came home and continued my education through the continuing education program at the university. The classes were held here on the local campus, and the courses that they offered were for teaching.

I was kind of forced to become a teacher because that's what was offered. The courses were offered evenings and Saturdays on television, so it was convenient for me. That's how it happened. Probably if I had continued in nursing, I would have become a teacher of nursing because I just think that teaching is in my blood. My daughter is also a teacher. She teaches primary, and she has her masters in early childhood.

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Constraints

In first grade I remember sitting in the little wooden chairs and the teacher sitting or standing up front. You'd

go up for your reading group, and she had those big books--
<u>Dick and Jane</u> and <u>The Boat</u>. There was one little girl who
didn't stay in her seat very well, and the teacher tied her
in her seat one day. That was really quite horrible.

I also remember that I had to stay after school one day
and learn to make my "8's" because I was making "snowman
8's." I had to learn how to make "8's" correctly, so I had
to stay after school to do that.

In first grade I learned to read--all of a sudden.
WOW, I can read this. I was so excited. I wanted to read
that page to the whole class, but the teacher said I
couldn't. There wasn't time.

In second grade I had a teacher I just loved. One day
I was mad at my mother, and I was going to run away and be a
hobo down around where she lived so I could be with her. I
can't remember exactly why I liked my second grade teacher
so much. She had an aquarium, and I had never had an
experience with an aquarium before, and she was a happy
person. She was always "up." I knew her for a long, long
time because she became the elementary supervisor, and she
was one of my mother's friends too. That's the same school
my mother taught in.

The next year we had combined grades--second and third
grade, and I was in the third-grade class. That teacher
would leave me to read with some of the second graders--to
listen to them read. Maybe that was another step in my
beginning as a teacher. Because I could read and I was one

of the older ones and probably one of the ones that did what I was told.

I had my mother as a teacher in fourth grade. She and the other fourth grade teacher swapped classes. My mother could not teach music, so the other teacher would teach her music class and my mom would teach penmanship or health or something for the swapped classes.

I sat in the back row because I was always one of the taller kids in the class. I was a back row kid, and if she [my mother] would call on me, everyone would turn around and look at me. So we avoided that situation. She had a reputation for being one of the best and one of the strictest.

I was not a great student, not a super achiever, just enough to get by because I don't remember anything being very exciting.

I don't know if it was in second grade or third grade, but we had new books and one of the pages had such a beautiful picture of the Northern Lights on it that I kissed the page and cut my lip on it. But I don't remember really ever reading. I don't remember a lot of books in my classes nor do I remember much writing. No, not until high school, in English composition--that's the only writing.

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Choices

Middle school was different. I remember the anonymity because in elementary I was the daughter of one of the teachers. I was well known. I had been selected to be the lieutenant or the captain of the crossing guard patrol. I was in charge of them all. So I lost that recognition going to the middle school, and there were kids there from all over town. That was the biggest deal.

At the elementary all of my friends had been neighborhood friends. In middle school I had a new best friend every year, and that kind of bothered my mother--that I switched friends so often. But, it was exciting. My first year in middle school was the first year that we had harvest break. We had had harvest break all along, but that was the first time we were old enough to do it.

One of my first best friends was a farmer's daughter. I picked potatoes with her and her family that fall. You really do a lot of bonding in the potato field. The next year my best friend was someone who skied. That was the year I began downhill skiing. She had twin brothers that were just a year younger and a brother that was older, so we had a lot of fun. In eighth grade all that social stuff took priority.

In eighth grade I had a writing assignment that I had a lot of difficulty with. The teacher wanted us to read a novel and then write a play based on that novel with no

teaching or training or how to do it--just do this. I was
always--and still am--a last minute under pressure person.
I can remember not having that done and staying up to get it
done. It was a very complicated story.

In middle school Mr. Adams, the science teacher, had us
read an article and summarize it or something, and I didn't
do that assignment. I got an "incomplete" on my report
card. Shameful! I was always just a few points shy of
making the honor roll.

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We had my grandmother from the time I was in fifth
grade on as a bed patient. So Mom was pretty busy. She was
also doing her own course work. She had three degrees.
First of all she had a one-year teaching degree, and then it
was a two-year teaching degree, and then finally they
required four. So she kept going to school all that time.

Hospitals still hold a fascination for me. I have
always liked science and caring for people. Helping people
has always been important to me.

I think part of the reason I veered away from teaching
for a while was because I was not going to do what my mother
did.

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Reading Traditions

My father has always loved kids. He's the neighborhood grandpa now to everyone. He was a potato inspector, and he also read to us. He was the one who had time after supper to read to us because my mom was always studying. That tradition of reading came from his side of the family because he had a lot of portraits of his mother that show her reading. His sister, my aunt, would be the one that gave us children's books as gifts, so it seemed to be a strong tradition. My mother is a no-nonsense reader. You always read for a real specific purpose.

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We had a lot of books around the house. Every night that was part of the bedtime routine. I had an older brother, so I listened in on his stories, and some of them frightened me. My father would read one story, and we both would listen, but it would be for my older brother. <u>Lost on a Mountain in Maine</u>--I remember that one, and I remember the trauma of being separated from your mom for ten days. I was scared.

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I don't remember reading being promoted in the middle school, and writing was pretty much non-existent. And then in high school, in English composition, we usually read

short stories and summarized them. That was all.

In high school I just sort of got by. When we were told to read a novel, I read Nancy Drew. I was royally scolded when I passed in my assignment because it was not appropriate. The level wasn't high enough. I had to redo the assignment and read something else. The teacher finally gave me a list or sent me to the bookshelf in the library. I read <u>The Citadel</u>. I can remember it was like WOW, this is really a good story. That was probably the first adult novel that I read.

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We visited the library on a regular basis. We walked. I remember <u>The Bobbsey Twins</u> and <u>The Hardy Boys</u> and <u>Nancy Drew</u> and Grace Livingston Hill books. I probably read every book in there. We didn't have television. Some of the neighbors had TVs, but they weren't prevalent. I had a cousin in junior high my age, and he liked to play with me because I knew how to play like a boy. I wasn't like other girls, whatever that means.

One summer I had a collection of seashells. I would go to the library and scour through the stacks out back where the non-fiction was to find out about my shells. I knew right where they were on the shelf. I loved studying those books so that I could identify those shells.

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We had to do this research for English comp on a famous
artist or something, but you couldn't check those books out.
You had to use them in the library. So there would be
everyone from the class around the big table in the reading
room, sharing information or downstairs in the stacks. You
weren't allowed down there without supervision. I had four
male cousins that were about my age, so we were allowed down
there together because they were my cousins and not my
boyfriends. I remember being downstairs and using the
newspapers to find out stuff.

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Our biology teacher, a well-known teacher throughout
the state, had this special program. It was a self-paced
program, and you did worksheets, and you had to examine the
specimens, and he gave you no answers. He would refer you
to the book or say, "The information is here in the room.
Find it." It was an excellent program because you were in
control of your own learning. It was not a lecture class.
My cousins were in that class too, and they helped me out.
They were a little faster than I was, so they'd have the
answers before I needed them.

In English we had an old matriarch for a teacher my
senior year. She got sick halfway through the year, so we
had a substitute come in. It was just like a breath of
fresh spring air to have him. I remember reading
biographies in that class because there was a little

bookrack of them that were close to my seat, so I could just reach out and read one while he lectured. I read a series of biographies on women--Amelia Earhart and Marie Curie.

I didn't read about or do sports, and that was a disappointment to my mother. Neither of us, my brother nor I, played basketball. She was a basketball star in her day, but my brother and I preferred individual sports--skiing and swimming. I did lifeguard training and spent my summers swimming. I taught swimming but never for pay. My friends worked at the pool, so I would help out. I clerked in a clothing store during summers in high school also.

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When I went to the local college here, they brought the professors in. I cheated a little. They accepted some things from my nursing program because other required courses weren't available. I never had a Teaching of Reading course, and I never had to have a course on how to teach arithmetic. It was a special program, and they ran that program for a long time. It was answering a need evidently for people who were non-traditional students.

Many of the courses were on television-Public Broadcast Television. We would watch them. They were on a Tuesday/Thursday schedule, and then you would meet once a month on Saturday live and in person for discussions.

We did have the Teaching of Language Arts, and part way through that, the teacher realized that that was going to be

our only course about reading, so she focused a little more on teaching reading than she was. That was it.

I don't know what that means because all you were ever expected to do was open the teacher's manual and follow those directions anyway. We had the traditional classes: the American School and Learner and the Learning Process, Teaching of Science, Teaching of Social Studies, Teaching Art, all those things. We had quite a concentration of so-called English courses because those were required. English courses like very early English novels. Just what an elementary teacher needs. I had also had some comp classes.

I was a better student by then. I had a friend whom I'd known since my early, early childhood. We hadn't had the same group of friends, but we ended up finishing our last two years of college together. She was the kind of person, if you're going to do it, you're going to do it and do it the best that you can. So it was a challenge for me. When I graduated, I graduated with distinction. I can't remember my grade point average now, but it wasn't important.

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I did not get a job right away. My third grade teacher had become the elementary supervisor. I had graduated in January of 1971, and she called me soon after that. She had a student that needed tutoring. So I began tutoring. I had three students. I tutored them for five years. They were

students that had special needs, and that's how I got started. I started in the evenings and went into their homes. That suited me because I had my daughter.

I did that for five years in the system, and then they had programs in the schools for those kids. One was autistic. One was learning disabled. It was which came first, the chicken or the egg, a learning disability or a perceptual problem. And one boy had a bone disease. He had brittle bones. I was also substituting.

I hadn't had any special training. But, I was still studying--independent study. I liked doing that.
I had started tutoring in 1971, and two of those students could have been in school if the schools had had the special programs, but they didn't have them, and by the end of that five years they had them in place.

I think that when you teach in special ed, you really focus on the learning process, and you use so many directions, you know, kinetics, auditory, visual--you tap them all.

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My first job was a one-year position for a teacher who had a leave of absence for maternity at Oak Valley School in second grade. The classroom had nothing in it. Everything had been removed. I think it had the reading series textbooks, and that was it. It was a tough first year. There was also a set of music books, but another teacher had

the records. I'd borrow the records and use them first thing in the morning so she could have them back in the afternoon.

I went to my first conference when I was teaching there. It was the County Right to Read conference, and there I met Joyce Thatcher. Actually, we had had some college courses together, but I didn't really know her then. We were in a class called Books for Use with Gifted Children. That was really exciting. We were using children's literature. That was a beginning. The second year I taught, I moved to North Park.

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Changes

I taught kindergarten for one year. The next year they cut eight teachers, and I was bumped by a teacher who had seniority out of that kindergarten room, or I might still be there. I loved the little kids. Anyway, I happened to be downtown one day. I didn't know that I had lost my job, but someone downtown said, "Marilyn, we're so sorry to hear that you don't have a job next year."

And I said, "Oh, I don't? I didn't know that."

They said, "We know how hard you work, and we're sorry."

That same year a first grade teacher was retiring. I went right straight home and called our principal, and said,

"I just heard that I don't have a job next year. So I'm telling people that I'm going to be teaching first grade."

He said "OK," knowing that that teacher was retiring. I slipped in there, and I've been in first grade ever since. Everything kind of fell into place.

I had started teaching in 1978, and I've been here since 1980, that's fourteen years. I will probably be here fourteen more years. It all depends on the conditions. The change that we had this year, the 1-2-3 multi-age class-- that came along at the right time. I'm not tired of first grade. I like it. But, I like change too. It is never boring because there's always been change happening.

I just think change is good for the blood, you know, to be learning something new. Learning to manage three grades is a challenge.

If I were in a basal reader, reading those same stories, I would not have lasted fourteen years, and that's the way Winnie feels too. She's just really energized by making the change to using literature. You take the interest of the children and collect books around that, so there's always going to be something new.

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I do a lot of independent study too. We've always gone to the County Right to Read and State Reading Association conferences. That was in the fall. That makes a good fall trip before the snow sets in. At those conferences we have

heard Charlotte Huck and Frank Smith and Jim Trelease. The

consortium--The County Consortium--too, also had great

people: Don Graves and Frank Smith.

I took The Writing Process from a new university

professor. She really brought change, a fresh approach, to

the area. Prior to that, the university didn't have new,

fresh-ideas people. If you had taken them in college, you

didn't go back and take courses from them again. I get many

of my ideas from reading. I'm a compulsive reader. I

subscribe to The Reading Teacher and The Arithmetic Teacher,

ASCD, Educational Leadership and Language Arts.

Then the year getting the grants--The Innovative

Education Grant--we had to do research. We had my writing

professor work with us for a year, so we essentially had

another writing process course and reading process. People

don't think they had it, but they did. They just don't

recognize it.

Joyce did work toward her masters, so through her, we

all have ours. Just the sharing. We meet on a regular

basis for reflective practice. We call it our Whole

Language Study Group, but we decided not to use that word

anymore. Others in the system would also come when we could

coordinate the schedules because every school has its

faculty meetings at different times. When we have our

summer retreat day, if we remember, we invite others to

come. That's essential for us, meeting and sharing. You

can't take a summer course and then come back and keep it up

without support. You soon fall back into the old ways.

The female contingency from the school does the retreat. We go to our cottage at the lake for a day and plan what we're going to do for a school-wide theme the next year and what goals we want to set for ourselves. We attempt to accomplish everything for the next year.

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I was just thinking, the people that I work with are interested in learning, too, and we feed off each other. "I've read this, you read it and see what you think of it" or "Let's try this and then we'd like to give it a try." We have the closeness, we have one teachers' lounge; we have the openness of the school. You see each other. You know what's going on. Maybe I do more than others because I'm at the end of the building, and I have to walk by everyone else. They don't know what's going on in my room because they don't pass by. Like I say, I am a compulsive reader, and so if it's there, I'm reading it.

I have worked at some other schools, and I know that that oneness isn't there. They're off in a wing, and it's you're on your own. There's always a leader in a group, and that can be a positive force or a negative force, and if it's negative then you don't make changes.

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Our principal is a real help. Lots of times we will

meet during the day for an hour, and he supervises the students through his "meetings with the principal" program, and at recess so that we can have an hour of school time to get together. That seems to be one of the ways he will support us, and he's very supportive of us.

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Our becoming a whole language school started in 1986. We wrote our first innovative grant. We did that because we had worked with the same basal reader for about eight years and, knowing that soon the school system would be buying new ones, we wanted to be a little ahead of it so it wasn't dropped on us all of the sudden--choose one [basal] in the next two weeks. So we did a little research. We had been attending conferences and we heard Frank Smith say, "The wrong way to be doing it is if you don't like to read." The research all seemed to be pointing to "whole language."

When the innovative grants were made available from the State Department, we applied. That was the year I was taking the writing course, and so we wrote right into the grant that we would have my professor work with us that next year. She had planned to leave, but because we got that grant, she stayed. She did that with us. Our interest in knowing what was going on, being informed, led us to that.

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Focusing

When I came here, at the first faculty meeting of the year, our principal asked, "Our main purpose is to teach kids to read; does everyone still agree with that?" He asks that every year. So we've always had a focus on reading.

We applied for the grant because we wanted to learn about whole language so that we could do a better job teaching reading. It was for our professional development, for implementation of materials and dissemination of materials--to share what we learned. We thought we would be a pilot school for the rest of the district and what we learned would be shared with them. That didn't happen.

We read lots of articles. Our whole goal was to get away from the basals and introduce the writing process, too. The New Jersey Writing Project had been offered one harvest break, and there was a corps of teachers who took it. I think that was my first year here, and then those teachers, they then had to teach writing process to the rest of us.

So Winnie, Joyce and I did that together. So that was the beginnings then. That was in our grant. It was a $10,000 grant. About half of it went to our professor and half of it went to the materials, the books. We started collecting, through the book clubs.

We put in for bookclub money. That is the cheapest way to get books, and we earned bonus points to get more. Whenever a new basal series is purchased by the district, we

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ask, "Can we have our share that would be spent on those consumable workbooks? Can we have that for paperback purchases?" The system always tells us that we can't. The system can't give us money for paperback books because they use Chapter IV monies or whatever to buy them.

We still buy a lot of books, but we wouldn't have to. I've cut way back. It's like how much of this do you really need to own? You need to add on to your house so you have more room for your books. But we do--we spend a lot. You see new books, and it's "I've got to have that one!"

We don't have to use basals because after that first year of the innovative grant, we wrote for a second year to write the curriculum based on the learning that we had done. We wrote a language arts curriculum, and we have that curriculum in place. Therefore, we are "allowed" to continue as a whole language school.

Our principal has been an advocate for us. We were given a five-year grace period to pilot that whole language study the first two years with the innovative grant, and if our standardized test scores did not drop, then we could continue.

I don't know, maybe because we are the school that we are, seven miles out of town and it's the community that it is--we're ignored by most of the others. We've always had the reputation out here as being special, different, rabble-rousers, radical. We see ourselves as a school that teaches kids to read. Reading is our focus. That was never

announced or discussed at the other schools I worked at. They never articulated a focus, a central focus for the entire school.

Our principal is a leader and respected. The other schools I worked at had weak principals. Weak in management. There seemed to be teacher aides that were more in charge. Or teachers...and I imagine the positive and the negative--and it seemed to be the negative ones were the ones in charge, and the people who might have had ideas and would want to do things weren't in charge.

Yes, and we know he does battle for us, but he never mentions the pressure that he's taking, but you know it's there from some of the things that he says, but he never shares that with us. We have the community too.

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Isolation

For a few years we met at the grade level on our own because there were other teachers who were interested in talking about learning and books. We put our own grade level meetings together and did that a couple of years. Then, the district got the news that we were meeting and decided they'd do them districtwide. We lost ownership of it. They dissipated, and even the district ones have dissipated. We didn't have any this year.

When we set the agenda, we discussed what we wanted to

discuss. It was fine. But then when someone dictated it, when the curriculum director was there at the meetings we discussed different issues. Report cards became a big issue because that was something he could do something about.

We had difficulty meeting with other teachers. Teachers from other districts could come and visit us, but within our own district they weren't allowed to visit. We're no longer a pilot; we're no longer an experiment.

There was a lot of interest in our multi-grade class. A lot of people seem to be thinking about doing that: some for the reasons of cuts and declining enrollment and others for its real value.

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Hidden Awards

A notice came to this school that an award for excellence in education was out there, and we were asked to apply. Our principal passed it to Joyce and said maybe we'd be interested. Joyce and I had written for the innovative grant that we had for this year, and a lot of the background work was already done, so she said, "Sure, I can do that." She wrote it up and mailed it in. We won.

But, it hadn't been passed by the superintendent that we were applying for this recognition. The district was not pleased because the superintendent doesn't want the focus to be on only one of the schools. Everything needs to have

district recognition. So it was kind of kept low key.
When it was presented to the school board, it was presented
in the way that even though it was North Park School, it was
for all of the district.

We were gung ho. We wanted to do this, and we wanted
to do that, but he keeps saying, "I have to think of all
five elementary schools. I can't favor one." Well, we
didn't get the reprimand, but our principal did.

It is interesting because way back the first year we
did the grant, there was the opportunity to apply for a Blue
Ribbon School. It was a 1632-page application that was very
involved, and the superintendent wanted us to apply.
But we just said, "We've got too much going on. There are
things that we don't have a handle on yet; we don't want to
put our focus on completing that report." But he wanted us
to do it then.

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Giving up that teacher control and giving the students
the control was more important to us at that time. Our
facilitator had started us on the writing process, and I
don't know if it was her plan or if that's what was
convenient for her because that was where we started. I'm
not sure. That training for the writing process and allowing
the students to choose their topic gave us training in
giving up control. You know, that the kids can do this, and
that you don't have to spoon feed them.

So the next step was letting them choose their reading material. They can do that too. Yes, and you know, now it's a real battle to give the students an assignment. They really resist. "We don't want to do this." "Can't we do such and such?" We've come a long, long way. Yes, they've taken the ownership for their learning. They're learning the real world.

We have kids come back: "Haven't you got some books I could read?" "We don't have any books to read."

"What's new?"

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Commentary

Marilyn is constantly focusing forward and sees change as an essential consequence of learning. She actually relates very little about her early school experiences. What she does reveal reflects very controlling teachers, teachers who would tie a child to her seat to teach obedience, teachers who assume a child knows what to do because they tell them to do it or the curriculum says so. The one experience that she feels rewarded for, reading with her younger classmates, occurred because she did what she was told, not necessarily because she was a good reader.

And reading was not an experience that she picked up in school. She remembers very few books or any reading being done in school accept for summaries. When she learned to

read, there wasn't time for the teacher to let her read to the class, and it seems even less likely that the teacher would have called her mother down to hear her.

In high school her story of reading biographies while the teacher lectured hinted that it was not expected and to do it was almost a subversive act. Her love for reading seems to have been developed at home. Reading for a purpose, to find information, was modeled by her mother. The joy of reading for pleasure and reading outloud was cultivated through experiences with her father. She says that she is a compulsive reader and that's where many of her ideas come from. For reading to be the central focus of her teaching seems only natural.

She, like Winnie, says that she was not a very good student because nothing seemed very exciting. And yet through her stories we see that she is learning all the time and that learning was/is important to her. In her first teaching assignment she was in a new field, but it did not bother her because she was still studying independently. When Joyce got her masters, she too got hers.

The fact that her first teaching experiences involved working and learning independently, outside a formal school and classroom atmosphere, was probably a critical event. It allowed her to develop her teacher autonomy, focus on how children learn, and develop a wide range of strategies and supports for her beliefs. It gave her time to reflect, and reflection is important to her as is sharing information.

Sharing is central to developing the support she needs for growth and change as a teacher.

Even though teacher control was central to her early memories, except for her one biology class which she loved, giving up teacher control, giving students ownership of their own learning is a central. focus now--possibly building on her own need to know and to own her own learning. She credits learning about the writing process as a motivator for and model of releasing students. She obviously has been successful. She says "Now, it's a real battle to give the students an assignment."

She equates change with learning, and she likes it. "I just think change is good for the blood, you know, to be learning something new." It's quite easy to see that Marilyn is an innovator and a leader. She is focused, energetic and confident.

For Marilyn controlling one's own learning is at the heart of all that she is. She is determined to share the joy and excitement of reading and learning she feels herself with her students. Marilyn seems to be a teacher in transition, always in the process of becoming. Her strong desire to learn, to inquire and to grow have brought her to where she is now, and also leaves the future open.

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Chapter Ten

TOWARDS CHANGE-MAKING SENSE

Marilyn

"I can remember talking to Joyce lots of times saying, 'The way we do school doesn't make sense for kids. There's something wrong with what we're doing.' I just always sensed that, and knowing how active kids are, asking them to sit in a seat all day. That's just so contrary to the way kids learn. I was always trying to find a way that made sense to kids."

We had done some research and realized that instead of a basal reader, most reading authorities were recommending real reading from real texts rather than the basal reader. That was when the innovative grants became a real possibility. So, we wrote an innovative grant to help us study and implement whole language reading and writing. That's how we got started. We had a consultant work with us for a year. She came two afternoons each month, and we had release time. The grant paid for the substitutes.

What she did was introduce the whole staff to writing process the first semester, and then the reading process the second semester. None of us had had recent courses in teaching of reading, so psycholinguistics and all of that was new.

Whole language was the term that was being used, and I

think what we entered was the book flood where you make all these tradebooks available for the kids to read, and they make a choice for reading, and we did realize we needed accountability.

We had kept records of what the kids had read but really not anything that showed what they were doing as they read. I think we still had kids that we were losing--falling through the cracks and that kind of thing. We looked at whole language thinking we were looking at speaking, listening, reading, and writing, not sure that we focused very much on the listening and the speaking part. It was a school project, and all of us agreed. In the beginning everyone did it because we had the release time. It was easy to buy in, and you know, we had the consultant there leading us. So if your substitute's coming in this afternoon, you're coming to the meeting. Philosophically people weren't opposed to trying something new. But not until the grant did we really have the time. And our teachers were always there.

It was mostly writing and reading--making the transition to giving up teacher control and teaching the kids to take control, to make choices. I think we had always been a literature-based school because we had a migratory teacher who was well versed in children's literature. She'd go to conferences and come back and say, "Hey take a look at this book," and it would go around to all the rooms and everyone would read it. I had often

listened to my students tell me as we were doing basal
reader work, "Mrs. Lakers, this doesn't make any sense."

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Making Sense

I can remember in one book, for example, there was a
picture of geese on the page, and the word that the child
was having trouble with was "guess." There were white geese
on the page and the word that she needed help with--support
with--was "guess." So she tried goose because that's what
was pictured, and it didn't make sense.

When I began teaching, I taught kindergarten. I guess,
really, when I began my career I was a tutor, a tutor for
special ed students, so there was nothing there except to
study what these kids needed--and the same with
kindergarten. There was no curriculum developed at all. It
was always theme-based.

That was an easy way to do it and logical for little
kids, and that kind of transferred to first grade when I
began teaching first grade--try to keep things together and
connected rather than a basal reader that had nothing to do
with what you're studying. So I guess these are all ways of
making the transition to theme-based, student-centered
literature and writing, and looking for ways that it worked
for kids--what made sense to them.

I can remember talking to Joyce lots of times saying,

"The way we do school doesn't make sense for kids. There's something wrong with what we're doing." I just always sensed that, and knowing how active kids are asking them to sit in a seat all day. That's just so contrary to the way kids learn. I was always trying to find a way that made sense to kids.

Working with special ed kids, you always try to use all the modalities so they can get the message, and if it's good for them, then it's good for any kid. That's the way I felt. You have to actively involve the kids.

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Just an Accident

The grant had to be signed by the school board, and we were right at the deadline. Our principal called the curriculum director to have him sign it, and he said, "I can't do it. It has to be signed by the school board. Too bad."

That night we were having a parent organization meeting at our school, and the superintendent had been invited to join us. One of the other teachers said, "Ask him, Marilyn." So I presented the problem to him--that we had been writing this, and the curriculum coordinator had said we couldn't put it through because the school board had to sign it first. He said, "Oh, that's no problem, I can sign that for the board and they will back me on that. You

go ahead and finish writing it."

The next day we were down to the budget. We got the budget written and sent it in. He signed it without reading it. In the grant was the release time, and that's something that he usually does not approve. He wants the teachers with the students. He hasn't sanctioned release time or any other time off for teachers during school time.

In the fall when we started and the request for subs started coming across his desk, he wanted to know what was going on. But, because we had the grant, he allowed it. The next year, however, when we wrote for the second year of funding to develop the curriculum, he said no release time in the next one. However, due to that release time in the first year, we were able to make the change that we did. It gave us the chance to be together when we weren't totally exhausted. After school everyone had sports activities to take their kids to, and other commitments. The release time was essential.

It was by accident. He believed teachers should always be with their students, quality student time. Now faculty development time can only occur when we don't have students.

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Differences and Common Ground

It [the grant project] was presented as a pilot study to look at reading-teaching reading in a different way. But

there are five elementary schools in the district, and he
[the superintendent] would like them all the same. But, I
think we have a different philosophy than the other schools,
and that's kind of a thorn; we are a thorn in his side
because we're different. We work hard; we're different in
that way. We have a sense of unity; we share a philosophy
which was developed with that grant and with everyone's
input.

We're different in that way and we write grants, and we
go to conferences, and we're constantly trying to improve to
make school better for kids. We get a lot of criticism from
other schools in the district, you know, all those North
Park teachers--what are they doing now?

Others think that we get special treatment. We get
whatever's new and going. But we get it because we give up
other things. If we have more computers or better
computers, it's because we've given up ordering supplies for
our classrooms in order to have that computer, or to have
these books--we give up other things so...well, we write a
grant. The others do have the option. But I don't think it
would ever happen unless they did something like we've done.
You have to build that common ground.

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I think that the lack of support or the feeling that
the lack of support was there was an obstacle. And yet, if
I mentioned it to the superintendent, he'd say, "What do you

mean we don't support you? You're doing it, aren't you?"
He has to view the district as a whole in this. Having one
school different is politically incorrect.

But we had the support from the parents. We kept them
informed from the beginning. We had newsletters; we had
meetings; we had state department people and other respected
teachers come in to present the theoretical background so
that it was solid and not an experiment, but research based.
The parents-just from the attitudes from their children-knew
the kids were happy, and if their kids are happy, they're
happy.

We've always had lots of parents in the school, so
they're there and they're aware. They see what's going on.
We have an open door policy.

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The report card is an obstacle because there was
nowhere on the report card to show what we were doing, so we
petitioned the superintendent for the right to make a change
in the report card. We had a meeting with him, and again,
trying to keep everyone consistent, the same, he said "No."
We were required to use the report card but could have an
appendix. So in the Language Arts area, we have a "See the
attached sheet" note. We had a checklist for a few years.
It was one that we had borrowed from another school--made
some changes--revised it--until that, too, was inadequate.
Then two years ago we went to the anecdotal records and

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notes. We didn't ask this time. We just assumed it was OK.
We just revised it.

The parents loved the anecdotal records. What we
haven't developed is a consistency in what we report or how
we report it. From the beginning, that's been one of our
major obstacles--assessment and evaluation. And again, I
think it's the lack of time to focus on that and really
develop it.

That's what we tried to do with the grant this year,
but that was frustrating getting the state consultant here
because she had to run the state test scoring. That's her
baby, and we ran into weather problems one time and we were
closed. But anytime she came we really got work done. A
facilitator is a key--it really is. You can't step away
from it and do it yourself.

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Another way that we handled the time problem, too, was
that we hired two substitutes for the day with the
understanding that they would move from class to class so
the teachers from the first grade were released for an hour
to go and work with the consultant, and then they would go
back to their room and the substitute would move on to the
next grade. When we did some grade level work, that's how
that was handled, and that worked. That got by somehow
because he [the superintendent] had to give permission. But
when you have a grant, you can say, "Well it's in the

grant." It's because of the grant and that's accepted.

There's power in a grant. It's not even the money. It's the commitment to it that's more important than the money because we've spent money, but we could have done some of it anyway. The grant makes you clarify what you're going to do, or define it, and it gives you more commitment to it.

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Owning A Living Curriculum

Our second year grant was devoted to developing our curriculum. That's an area that we really had no training or background in. We had to learn all about curriculum. Fortunately, the State Department had just done the exact same thing, and they had developed a framework for curriculum design which we had a draft copy of. We could use that to refer to, and we had a consultant. One of the State Department consultants would come every once in awhile. Again, I think that's one of those things where you don't understand it until you've done it, and then you can look back and say, "Oh, well, that's what we were doing."

And we tried to include everyone in the writing process for the grant. However, we learned you can't do that because you have six people hassling over what word to use. You never get anything done. You need to have people giving you the input, but have one or two writers. Joyce and I

worked on that throughout the year. It took us a long time just to get the philosophy done, and then come summer and it was time to sit down and get some real writing done. Then Joyce's husband sprung the divorce on her. It wiped her out, so I ended up being the primary writer.

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I think if we were to go back to that [the curriculum] and look at that framework now, it would make perfect sense. The curriculum has, first of all, a whole language philosophy. That language is a natural learning process, and that as children learn to speak, they also learn written language through the same process--approximation and consolidation and so on. As far as what the curriculum looks like--it's been a while since I've looked at it. It's very student-centered. We have a section in there where a child, a novice, has these characteristics; a child that is independent has these characteristics, and so on. A curriculum should be a living document, not static.

We got it out and looked at the philosophy this year, but we really haven't looked at it for a while. Maybe we don't look at it because we wrote it, we know it, we own it, so we don't have to refer to it; and it's not just a list of subjects or objectives and outcomes, or philosophy. It's organic.

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There is a section in the curriculum where each of us developed a theme and webbed it. We did a lot of webbing. Each person did one, so there's one for each grade level, each subject area, each person's perspective. It's interesting. That was a way to make the transition--to have a web of that theme gave you a framework so that you knew you were covering your subject areas.

When we had developed this curriculum web, we included science and social studies, and music and art. We would get together, a couple of people, and work on them together and collect all the books that would support the theme. We do that now. We do one school-wide theme a year. In fact I think what's in the curriculum is our round-the-world web where we each studied a different country.

We did one on the sea. We did a Mother Goose theme. It gives people a sense of the way you're changing your thinking of integrating all of your reading and writing rather than having separate subjects and disconnected. It's just the way we do things now. We don't have to think of it consciously.

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Everything's in transition. When we started, we tried to gather all the books on eight topics. The sea might be a topic. We might read some non-fiction books about sea animals and habitats. Students would write about those animals. In reading we might use a fairy tale like "The

Magic Fish" and use that in poems, in songs, and in art projects just all based on the sea theme.

I can remember "Six English Fisherman." There's always a rhyme or a chant or a little poem. I'm talking first grade level again. Students also would write word problems, that they knew to use vocabulary. That's how it would work into math. Kids write their own word problems and answers.

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On Writing and Risk-Taking

Writing process, journals--everyone adopted journals, everyone did journals. That was the first change, and accepting inventive spelling in whatever, phonetic spelling. Doing that, you take a look at the way the child is thinking. That was a major study for us--figuring out the way their [students'] brain is working.

Maybe as a first grade teacher, it's just more prominent. I don't know. I think you tend to be at the ground level. And to have it in kindergarten too. There was a time when we didn't have the kindergarten teacher that we have now. The previous kindergarten teacher didn't believe that kids could write, so she didn't have them write. When we got the good teacher that we have now, she said, "Yes, they can. They can be writers."

I used to have to take about six weeks in first grade to convince them [students] to take the risk, to try

writing: "You can do it." Now they come that way. We don't have to overcome that. They start in kindergarten--learning to be risk takers. They just accept it.

I think as teachers, too, we've got to learn to take risks. I can remember we had a discussion on the concept of risk-free learning. Well, we decided that nothing is risk-free. You have to take a risk. It's OK to take a risk. There's no such thing as risk-free. It's what do you think? Tell me what you're thinking, so....

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Bringing Reading To Everyone

After that we bought a lot of tradebooks to have the tradebooks available, and we used our bookclub bonus points to get even more. There was a lot of grant money. I think then we went to a lot of whole group instruction--sharing a book, discussing a book together as a whole group, using a poem in large print so that everyone could see it, and teaching reading process that way--whole group, and then independent practice.

In the past, we had reading groups, and, I think that once a student is in a group, she doesn't move out of that group. Students don't have the exposure to the better readers and the things that they do. This whole group instruction brought the conversation about reading to everyone. It wasn't just at your level anymore.

I remember we had a visitor once. She came and observed and said, "Well, I see that you do independent reading. I thought I was going to see something else." I said, "No, we have the whole group instruction, and then independent practice." This was the pattern that we had developed anyway. A lot of people who have been around a long time remember independent reading. Way back in the '60s, there were a lot of tradebooks by Scholastic.

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Just by trial and error we discovered the books kids would read. We used the bookclub offerings like SeeSaw and Lucky. Someone would get one, and it would go around the teachers' rooms and, "Look at this, this is a great one," and we'd see what appealed to the kids. Then we might buy multiple copies of it so we could have a handful of them instead of just one each.

I think I've refined that now from buying one of everything to realizing what beginning readers need--books with patterns and books with everyday experiences in them, large print, two words on a page--those are the kinds of books I select now. I guess we had booklists of pattern books that we shopped from. We used wordlist books-- comparative wordlist books where the kids used the book and developed their own stories from it.

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Another activity that we began was readers reading together. Everyone joined in in partner reading. We created cross-grade/cross-age-mixtures. That was one of our steps--readers reading together. We would match a fifth grader and a first grader, and have a third grader read with a kindergartner, a fourth grader read with second grader. It was just free choice of books, half an hour a week. That was one of our steps towards the change.

I noticed that when we'd go to the library, the kids would pick a book off the shelf and say, "My reading partner read this book with me." It's a neat way of getting to know books.

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One of the changes is having the students involved in what they're going to study and learn about. Giving them some options and then choosing one, giving them more control. We might say to them, "These are some things that we could learn about next," or "What are you interested in learning about next?" and then brainstorming a list of topics with them and then sorting through that and finding one that's common for everyone. Any time we start a new section, we work through with the kids--what do you already know about this, and what do you want to learn?

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On Hiring New Teachers

Our principal does try to find someone that will share our philosophy and will be willing to work on developing it. He's been accused of that, hiring whole language people. We do have a whole language curriculum which we are allowed to use because we have that written curriculum from the grant. We're allowed to say we're a whole language school, so yes, you're going to hire whole language people. It makes sense.

It is nice to have someone who shares the philosophy and has the theory--not just who can do the activities, but have an understanding of why. That's the key--knowing why you're doing it.

The teacher I am working with now in the multi-age classroom is new. She wanted to make the change because she had worked with Joyce. Both of them were fifth grade teachers, and so she had used Joyce as a resource on using tradebooks in the classroom rather than the basal reader. So she did have that. She did change from fifth grade to second grade when she came, and that was an adjustment for her.

She doesn't have the background even though she recently earned her masters. It was from a school that is curriculum-oriented, not from a school that's process-oriented. So she hasn't had the writing process or the reading process or that background yet. But she is learning. She shares the philosophy and believes in it.

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Reflections

Obstacles are time, support, and to some degree material, but not to a great degree. We can have just about anything that we want. But time and support I think are the biggest problems with change--and will it continue? As long as some people are still there, as long as our principal is there we will move forward.

Our principal's philosophy is that if you are interested and it's valid, go for it! His main focus is that the students are in control, disciplined, and learning the basics, so any way you want to teach them that, that's up to you.

He's always been criticized for not keeping his teachers under control. But he just isn't that kind of person. He doesn't have that attitude, "I'm more powerful than you." It's almost a shared decision making. It's always, "Do you agree?" He doesn't make a unilateral decision usually. It's just, "This is a problem. What do you think we can do about it?" We discuss it, and it's a group decision. So we're kind of used to that. He always supports the teacher. If a parent comes in with a complaint, there's no question whom he supports.

Curriculum doesn't tell you what to use: it tells you what to do. So he's critical to it, and I don't think one

teacher can do it either. You need a corps of teachers that are supportive of each other and interested in learning, teaching, and studying.

I think another critical piece is that all of us have presented workshops. One of the components of the first grant was dissemination--sharing what we've learned, and so we took turns doing that at different times. Some people still continue to present, and when you do that, you have to clarify what you're doing so you can articulate it.

Having the confidence and the understanding and the guts. When you're standing up in front of someone, they think you're the authority and you always clarify that: "I'm not the authority. I'm just stupid enough to say, yes, I'll do it." It's kind of a reflective process, and that's what makes it valuable.

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We've been left alone because our standardized test scores have been good. I think there'd be a real battle if we were told we had to use basal readers. All we want is a better school for the kids. That's all we're trying to do.

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Chapter Eleven

THEORIES, REFLECTIONS, AND QUESTIONS

Joyce

"It's very hard for me to look at theory separate, without
looking at it with a child. I'm so much better if I'm
looking with kids as I'm doing it. That makes a lot more
sense to me."

It has been eight years since we began. We haven't had
a continuous grant, but we did for about three years. Once
we were studying, then we were developing curriculum, and
then we took a pause in the summer. But we've always had
something that we were working towards.

As I look back on myself, there are definite stages
that I went through. I think for me it's different than it
is for most people because most people move from writing to
reading, and I moved from reading to writing. I'm not sure
why it is. Possibly it is because kids always read, but
kids didn't always write.

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Questions

One day we were talking about how, as we moved towards
using theory to teach reading; we have a lot of terms that
we bandy about, like strategies and skills and prior

knowledge. And we questioned whether we really know what those terms mean in terms of reading.

One of our discussions was that perhaps we needed a definition like a glossary of terms. But we came to the conclusion that that was not so, because all you're doing then is providing a definition, and you need to come to a working definition by actually knowing what you're doing, and by being able to use terms interchangeably.

For example, not to always use the term "prior knowledge," to know that prior knowledge is background. So when you ask, "What strategy are you using here?" kids don't say "prior knowledge." The question came up, "Is prior knowledge a strategy or is the strategy activated by knowledge?"

What's the definition of strategy? What is the definition of skill? Can you teach a strategy? No, but you can teach a skill to make it so that the process of using a strategy becomes automatic, a reflex--raise a hand in front of your eye and you would blink, so as you're reading you would automatically activate prior knowledge. But I haven't worked that out yet. But it does make sense to me that the strategy is an in-the-head process.

Someone said that the word "technique" was interchangeable with strategy. Now, I don't see that at all. A technique might be something that I, as a teacher, would use, but a student wouldn't. But it certainly points out the need for really understanding reading process. It's

easy to give labels to words but not really understand them.

One of the things we have in our resource book is what's supposed to be a schematic guide on reading process which shows the interaction of text and reader, and then it has predicting and sampling and searching, and a whole definition like that. What happens for me is that I see the diagram as very linear. But it [reading] is recursive and depends on the difficulty of text and what kind of background knowledge the reader brings to the text.

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I think it's pretty obvious that we make it [the teaching of reading] too complicated by segmenting. I was rereading Constance Weaver last night. There's a list in there [Reading Process and Practice] of just the rules for phonics and then the percentage of accuracy. It was scary. I don't understand how people could buy into that, myself included fifteen years ago.

It has something to do with valuing math and science. We had to be able to make it [reading] into something concrete and testable. It also has to do with what's happening in society. People don't look at teachers of reading and literacy as being as intelligent or as valuable as people who are involved in math and science. Just look at the endowment monies to get teachers to go and study. You can get all kinds of money to study math or science, but not literacy.

In order to buy into that [public perception] and to make ourselves more valuable, we attempted to do that to teaching of reading and writing. We tried to make it as concrete as math and science. Isn't it ironic, though, that now the math and science, especially the math, are coming around to the process part of it too?

I think it comes down to how pure your theory is, whether you can accept it or not. That's basically what it is--how much can you adapt what you're doing to [your] theory?

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I talked with an old friend last night. She had found a grant that we had written which was the very first one we used to get books. I think it was the first big grant they'd ever had to process. From that, we brought in kids who were not in the top reading group to a program which had started out as the GT [gifted and talented] program. Kids could apply no matter what, and we found that kids who were not in that top book could work just as well as the others and could make some good starts and were improving. They were actually wanting to read and being involved in reading, and they hadn't been that involved before.

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When stuff hits you in the face, you have to think about it. I had used novels the first couple of years when

I was teaching in the middle school. I thought, what would be different about using them in the fifth grade? Then I moved into read alouds, and looked at read alouds as a part of the curriculum rather than something to entertain or keep students quiet.

That was a big step. I mean, people have always read out loud. I don't think we always looked at it as a part of the curriculum--as being something productive for the reader. So, to me, that was a big step. When I really started choosing the kinds of things that I read out loud to enhance kids' understanding of reading, I really began to look at reading.

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Awakenings

When I did my masters project, I did it on reading aloud. I wanted to investigate read alouds in our district. I knew what I wanted to do, but when I talked to fifth grade teachers about the kinds of things they wanted to do, it was very different because their understanding of reading was different from mine.

I met with the other fifth grade teachers in the district and told them that I was working on a project, and that I was going to be looking at the kinds of books that people were reading aloud in their classes to see if I could make some correlation between content areas and read alouds.

For example, if you were teaching the American Revolution, you could read aloud <u>My Brother Sam is Dead</u>.

They all wanted to know how many multiple copies people had of books, and what study guides people had, etc. It was so far from what I wanted to do. But, by the same token, the purpose of my masters project was to make a change in curriculum in the district, and I had to demonstrate that I was working within my district.

So I got lists from everyone who was teaching fifth grade. They gave me the titles of the books they had multiple copies of, and I developed a database of the multiple copies and what study guides there were to go with them-if there were audio tapes or if there were movies too.

I'll never forget one of the things that somebody said to me when we were meeting. Someone said, "Well, I do <u>Johnny Tremain</u> with my fifth graders."

My question was, "Do they like it?"

She said, "Oh, I don't know whether they like it or not, and I don't care--I like it and I'm going to do it." I was stunned. I was just absolutely shocked.

I backtracked and did a lot of research. And you know, there wasn't any research. I used ERIC and found there was very little research on reading aloud in the fifth grade, (intermediate) classroom and the impact of it.

I ended up going into story telling kinds of things, and I did use some Shirley Brice Heath. That's where I first learned about her and the kind of research she had

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done--but I looked at what makes a good read aloud; what are the qualities of a good read aloud; what is the purpose of a read aloud; how do kids interact with reading aloud?

I don't know if it made any impact on the teachers or not. I think they [the teachers] were more impressed with getting a database. I was just amazed. I would say, "How did you choose that book?" and most often the response was, "Well, it was a Newberry Award winner," or they chose it for the resource rather than for the student.

Their choice was never based on the needs of the student, and most often it was because they had heard someone read it some place, or somebody had said to use it.

A lot of them were using Summer of the Swans. Now, I grant you, that's a great book. I like it a lot, and it did win a Newberry, but I don't know that it has a lot of relevance to kids who haven't been involved with having a brother or sister who has some kind of disability. There might be three or four kids in a class, but to read it to a whole class. What's your purpose in reading it outloud? What are you trying to do? And their objective was only to read a class novel. You know, that's it.

Very surface kinds of things. What I found was many times people would be reading books out loud that don't have very many challenges at all: books students could read on their own and enjoy. I read books that have more challenges than supports, and so I'm building on that knowledge for students as I'm reading out loud. Knowledge about reading

itself seemed to be a real problem.

You need to be careful not to get away from that, but by the same token I think you ought to know what book it is that you're choosing and why you're choosing it.

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I'm excited because we bought a new video camera, so we have one for each wing of our building, so we can really do lots of learning videos. The kids do it themselves. Fifth graders can do the work themselves. Then they can be aware of the kinds of things they do when they read. I think kids learn in isolation so often because we do things to them, and we expect them to do things, and we never talk to them about it. They spend weeks taking tests, and they never have those test scores discussed with them or how they do or what the purpose of it is. They never see them, and so they have no basis for where they are as a learner. They have no idea. They all think they're "A" students or....

They need to be involved in evaluation: that's all there is to it, because if they don't know where they are, they don't know where they're going.

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Misconceptions and Abrasions

In the district itself I think there's a lot of misconceptions about what's happening in our school. Seven

miles is a lot of distance. It shouldn't be, but it is. It keeps us out of the politics of what happens in the school district. So we are always trying something new--the group of us who are always together. We are always going to conferences or something, and that's scary for people who have busy agendas already. They say, "Oh, God, they're at it again."

I think that they think that we think we have the one right way of teaching, and that we're trying to get everyone to buy into it, and that we feel elite because we have the funding. It goes far beyond what we did with literacy because we're into other things. We're really into computers. If you were to go into our building, you would see that we have many more computers than they do in other schools. We have Prodigy; we have a laser disk; we have Renaissance Signs; we have the modem hook ups in the classrooms, and there's not another elementary school that has that kind of thing.

They have the same choice. They don't choose to do it, but they complain because we've done it. They say that we get preferential treatment; it's a new building. We just have some diverse interests. I mean we have a couple of people who are really, really strong in computers, and somebody else is strong in another area or whatever, and they pursue their own thing. They don't have to just sit back and complain.

Two years ago when the district instituted writing

grants, teachers could get up to $500. Well that year alone
I think four or five of them went to North Park. Nobody
else bothered, and that's not to say that teachers in North
Park are one bit better than they are anyplace else. It's
just that when you get a little piece of that pie, you want
more of it. Success breeds success. I just think that
we're go-getters and risk takers. Generally teachers aren't
risk takers.

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Values and Identities

I definitely think there's a problem. The
administration created part of it, and I think we created
part of it in the beginning because we were so gung ho. You
can't have five elementary schools and have them all the
same. They all have their own identity. I understand where
the administration comes from in their intent to do that,
but by the same token, I'm sick and tired of hearing it.
I'm sick and tired of hearing, "Well, you can't do that
because the other schools feel like you're getting
preferential treatment." Go and do it. It has nothing to
do with the schools. It has nothing to do with the
teachers. It has to do with what's best for kids.

We've become so aware of it that now we try to hide
what we're doing, or try to keep it quiet. That's not such
a bad thing because the kids are still benefitting from what

we're doing. We have a sense of community and support, and that is so important for anything.

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Winnie is a very strong part of our group. She is a practitioner. She's not the theorist of the group. Marilyn is the pure theorist. She knows a lot of theory. She's very laid back, but if you look at Marilyn, and you talk to her, she really knows the theory very, very well. I turn to her often. I don't think she realizes how much of it she knows, and she is the purest of any of us.

The only reason why people would say that I would be the leader is because I've had the contacts with outside people, and I've had more outside contacts than they have. That's why. But I think that underneath it...I've really learned a lot about it by working with Marilyn because our relationship is very frank and each of us has different strengths.

Our district doesn't understand that. A few times others have asked to do things with literature or curriculum and our coordinator has told them that I am the only one who can do it, for whatever reason. That has made me so angry. That's exactly what the curriculum coordinator said. A couple times he has said it to me. He said, "Not everyone's a Joyce Thatcher. Not everyone can do this."

It was so awful that I went to our principal, and I said, "John, I know that he thinks he's complimenting me

when he's saying that, but he is really making it difficult for me to work with people in this district when he does that." It was just a really horrible thing to do. It really was!

One of the problems is that most of the people won't stand up to him. You know, they'll complain, but they won't say, "Look, I'm right and you're wrong. You don't know anything about reading and I do." But, it has nothing to do with what I know. It has to do with who I am.

Teachers are not valued, and that's real clear. I mean, that's clear in any setting. I mean, this is just another example that we'll find just about anywhere we look. There's not enough written about it. They don't have models. Teachers, like everyone else need models, need heroes, need whatever, need to know that they can be in power. We don't value teaching enough.

The idea is that anybody who teaches elementary school is not bright enough to do something else, and once you start getting your masters, there's this real elitist idea. Clearly, they don't understand how important elementary teachers are and how much we need to value them, and how much they can teach us about how kids learn. There's nobody else in the profession who knows as much about our kids' learning as elementary teachers.

Their job is to observe and to encourage. And it goes right back to the concept of tangled readers--the tangled readers that people have in the elementary school or the

high school or the middle school have to be untangled in the same way you would untangle primary readers. And therefore, we should all be reading teachers. We should all be reading and writing teachers. It doesn't matter even whether we're teaching math or science. So we really, truthfully, need to do something about the system of educating teachers.

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I'm still not sure I have a definition of "strategy," although it is an in-the-head process that we use to make meaning. So, for example "prior knowledge" is something that's involved with reading strategies. But what is prior knowledge? So lots of times when people would do a case study, one of their objectives would have to do with prior knowledge. So is prior knowledge a strategy? Can we teach kids that? No, they already have prior knowledge, but can you teach them to activate prior knowledge? That would become your objective. Does that make sense?

When you're working with students in guided reading, what would be some of the ways that you would get children to activate prior knowledge, and can you teach prior knowledge or is it just there? That would be an in-the-head process. That makes sense to me. But you could give them the skills--you can teach the skills to activate it. So then you come back to was it a skill or strategy?

But if you think of prior knowledge, and if you think about sampling and predicting and those kinds of things as

strategies, the kinds of things that are going on in your head, then you can know what kinds of skills you can teach. I've really started thinking about what do I know about how kids read? I think that I do know something, and I use the words, and I talk about them, but do I really understand them?

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Models

To me if I'm going to work with a model like the teaching/learning model that I'm working with this summer, then what I employ in my classroom, the same model, is part of the process. When I'm working with the teachers, then that same model should be used by me, and when I'm working with the lead facilitator and the New Zealand person it should be used with me. So that model, if that is the model that you believe in in teaching, and that's the model that we're trying to present--then we ought to use it anyplace. It should apply to all learners, not just those in the classroom. But I don't know that everybody believes that way. I think people say they do, but I think that the learner is in the best place to evaluate that model. If you understand that model, you have some responsibility yourself to figure out what's happening with it.

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My idea of a teacher is someone who, I hate to ever use the word "facilitate" because I think that's overused. It's almost like you're ready to give them [students] a little push to make them go that next step to do whatever it is they need to learn so that it becomes continuous. I think about it a lot. I've seen people who don't have a masters or don't even have a college education, and they're wonderful teachers.

I'm sure they would be even better teachers if they had more information, but I'm not sure what it is; I'm not sure it can be learned; I don't think the best teachers in the world are taught to be the best teachers in the world. I think they may hone their skills, but there's something there to begin with.

I don't know, but I think it's the ability to assess the students that they're working with. I've thought about this with a lot of my own coming to believe in whole language. I worked through that process without ever having a theory--without having a teaching/learning theory because I don't ever remember learning [one] in college, or anyone even discussing a teaching/learning theory.

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Rebels and Models

Our principal has said to me that he looks for people who have strong beliefs. He doesn't care if everybody has

the same ideas. And I think that's very true in our building. We're all considered to be rebels. That's true because we are.

He looks for people who believe in something and care really deeply. To me that was a very interesting comment about hiring. It says something about what he values and also says something about the model that he wants to set for students. You talk about what you want kids to think and that you want kids to be whatever, but as a whole teachers aren't allowed to think. Everything about education prevents people from thinking.

We believe that kids learn from the model that we give them. Kids are smart enough to figure out that we're feeding them information from a teacher's manual. I mean, you're sitting at a table with that in front of you.

It's interesting, though, because I've looked at that from a new perspective as I'm working on this new job this summer. Whatever I'm doing, I'm looking at myself as a learner and how this applies to what's happening in my classroom. During the first week I wasn't even facilitating. I was just sitting and going through the concepts. I'm really low man on the totem pole.

I thought, "Wow, this is kind of interesting" because when I'm at home and I'm talking to teachers, people value what I say because people think that I really know what I'm talking about--that I'm experienced and that I've done this before. I have this feeling of worth as I'm working in my

classroom. Whether I'm at a teachers' meeting or at a conference, I measure what I say because I know people are going to be listening to me because they think I know what I'm talking about whether I do or not.

But as I move into this new job, nobody knows me from a hole in the ground, and they don't think I know anything. It's very difficult for me to sit at the bottom and realize that these people are way ahead of me; these people know so much more than I do as far as theory goes. I have practical experience in my classroom, but I'm working with people who have worked for three or four years using this model.

So I'm thinking, "Mmmmm, this must be how my students feel in the classroom. I've got students who want to be members of this club, who are working real hard to know what's going on." It's a real new perspective for me. How am I going to get to this as fast as I can? What can I do to facilitate my learning, or do I just take my time? But we don't allow kids in our classroom to take their time. We don't ever say to them, "Just a little teeny bit--get this right today." That doesn't happen. But if people were saying that to me, I'd be overwhelmed and totally stressed out.

That's been real different for me as a learner and as a facilitator. To say at the end of the day, "Well, I've screwed that up in good shape. Well, that worked and I wondered why." For example, one day I had just had a horrible day, and at the end of it we were just talking

about running records. I didn't feel particularly

comfortable with running records, and I went through the

conventions of running records and broke them [teachers] up

into groups. For maybe forty-five minutes the groups went

really well, and I just kind of walked around and talked to

them individually. Then I got into this discussion with

somebody.

It was a very one-on-one discussion, and I knew that I

was losing the other four groups, but I didn't know how to

stop the discussion and to bring them back into it. So

people just kind of got up and left, and there was no

closure to it. I thought I should have brought closure to

it, but I wasn't experienced enough at facilitating to

disengage from the conversation that I was in and to bring

the group back.

When we had our facilitators' meeting that night, we

talked about it, and people were saying, "Oh well, these

people, they're not interested, and they're not this, and

they don't want to do that." But I couldn't say that in

that case because I knew that I had not taken care of the

learning situation. I had not made it easy for those people

to stay. As a matter of fact, I made it easy for them to

disengage.

For me those are really strong learning kinds of

things. My kids aren't going to get up and walk out of my

classroom, but they're certainly going to disengage from

what they're doing if I do not know how to keep them

engaged.

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On Change and Changes

I think that when you say the word "change," you automatically think of it as being big change, a radical change, systemic change. To me it's not that at all. It's just taking that next little step, the next step, one step, one little step. And if you don't continuously evaluate it, it might look like big change, but it really isn't. It's just working to make things better, hopefully.

My reason for change is to be the best teacher I can be, or to be the best person I can be, or to grow or....I think as I get older I keep thinking, well there's not that much time left, I've got to get this right sometime.

I would be bored if I did the same thing over and over again in my classroom. I would be very bored. I don't ever use the same thing. I don't ever save papers. I don't file activities. You see teachers that have these big files, and they go to them regularly and say, "We're going to do that." Not me. I might use the same thing, but chances are that I wouldn't depending on what the students wanted or needed. Even if I used the same thing, it wouldn't be the same.

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What I would have considered a roadblock or an

impediment to change two or three years ago, I would not consider to be the same thing today. It's real easy to say things are impediments and say they're in your way. That's something that I've really had to learn. There are some things you can change, and there are some things you can't change. If you look at that, it's just a problem to solve and there's a way to get around it. It might be a lot longer road, but you get there sooner or later.

I used to get really angry with our superintendent because I felt we were trying to do something really wonderful, and he was impeding us from doing what we wanted to do. I used to think, "This is his fault," but I've come to see that it's not his fault. He has a different job than I have. And we still do it. We have accomplished a lot, and he has not stopped us.

We would like to say that it's his fault if we don't change. That would be easy. But we need to look at the faults within ourselves. I'm not talking about personal faults: I'm talking about the fact that we were go-getters. I'm trying to think of what the term is that Fullan uses or Russ Qualia uses: "Yabuts"--the people who are the Yabuts. I used to get really angry, but the Yabuts are the ones who really make you stop and think about what you are doing because if you can't define what you're doing to the Yabuts, then you don't really know it.

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The greatest impediment is not understanding change, as far as I'm concerned. If you want to change, you've got to understand what's going to happen; you've got to understand what happens to people and how different people react to change, and that it's not linear, that you go so far and you come back. If you understand that, then you're already on your way.

When we first made changes, we did not understand that. We went into changes in curriculum, looking at how kids learn but did nothing with the change process, and that was the biggest problem.

I have learned that change takes everybody and that some people are going to do work and some people are going to sit back and say, "Yeah, but," and that's just as valuable as the people who are out making the changes. Change is really hard work. It's not easy. It's like throwing a pebble into the water and those little ripples come out, and they just keep coming out and coming out, and they touch other ripples. It affects everybody.

I learned you've got to have parent support--it's critical--and that the change that you make, you have to understand the research behind it--there has to be a reason for it. It's real easy to make changes, but you've got to know why you're doing it, and you've got to be able to say, "Look, I can prove to you that this works." And then there's always going to be somebody who says, "Well, yes, but statistically, I can give you another statistic that

proves that."

But this is more than statistics. This is "Look, see," and when they see it, they can't argue with it. They also have to relate it to their own learning. They have to be able to see it from their own perspective. You can't just tell them about it. They have to buy into it. Everybody knows how to teach. That's what was hard about change in education because everybody has gone to school, so they all think they know how to be a teacher.

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If you're going to change, you need time to think about it, and educators don't have any time. When we want time, we always have to go do something, or that time has to be active time. You've got to be prepared now, so you've got to be going to the library to get the books, or whatever. You need time to just figure out why this worked and why this didn't, and that's not built into our schedules in any way.

If you were keeping a journal or you were dialoguing with somebody else, you'd feel guilty that you were wasting your time. You wouldn't be thinking that that was productive use of time at all, when it is. It's necessary, and I don't know how you change that. But, I don't think anything's impossible. I don't.

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Eight or ten years ago when we started this whole language in our school, we fought really hard to get what we wanted. We were lucky we got the grant to do it. But, we didn't see any progress whatsoever. We felt what we were doing was not valued. But, if you look around the district now, you find little pockets of it happening all the time.

Wouldn't it be nice, however, if we were all based on the same theory--we all knew what it was we wanted kids to do, and if kids were on a continuum so when they came from the class before you, you were able to say, "Yeah, look, this is where they are, right here, and I'm going to pick them up exactly where they are, and I know what the next step is going to be"?

But there's no philosophy about teaching in most cases. Even in our school where we say there is, there really isn't. It's not a continuum. I mean, there's you and them and us.

I think that just like there are students in your classroom who are at different stages of the learning process, here and there, there are teachers the same way. It used to make me very angry and think that we are cheating the kids. I still think we are: however, I know that it's very unfair to expect everybody to be at the same spot you are in your development. Especially when I would like our students to be the best.

I think they deserve to get the best there is, and I don't think there's an excuse for having poor teachers.

There are too many good people who want jobs to keep around the people who are not.

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Politics and Equity

Everything's political, especially teaching and learning. That's one of the reasons that whole language is so threatening--because of the politics--because of the model that we have for school districts. I mean, because of that old industrialized model, teachers have to be controlled, and if you have people at the very bottom of the hierarchy making decisions, that's pretty threatening. That's pretty political.

It comes back to what your definition of "equity" is, which is a word that's getting thrown around lately. What is equity? Is equity everybody taking the same courses? Not in my mind it isn't. Is it equitable when you assign a homework assignment for kids to go home and look up some information on the states, and those kids who have parents who are teachers or professionals have a set of encyclopedias, and those kids of parents who might not have a job or whatever don't even have enough to eat, let alone a set of encyclopedias? Is that equitable? It's something we need to look at, as teachers--to think about what is equity in the classroom?

I'm not sure that we're looking at it in the right way

at all. I'm not sure I am, but it's something that I certainly want to think about. We talked about it as far as equity for girls and boys in the classroom, you know, equity in sports or whatever. But what about equity in education? What about equity in what we require from kids? I think it's a real important issue, and one that's not really talked about.

I was reading something in the paper yesterday. The state scores are in the paper, and they were writing about the difference between the girls' and the boys' scores in writing. The girls scored higher than the boys in writing. The state coordinator commented that a good paper was about 2 1/2 pages long, but the boys were only writing about a page. Therefore, they weren't scoring as high as the girls were.

I wonder why that is. What's the reason for that, and if that's the way it's happening, should we be expecting the same number of pages from the boys? Do our expectations have anything to do with equity? I really need to sort that one out--figure it out. For some reason it really bothered me when I read it, and I cut it out to think about for later.

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I had a little boy last year who's LD behavioral. I was reading his scores, and they were two point something. When I did a running record on him with his books, he zipped

right through them.

But he was such a pain in the neck. He and I decided that if he could go two weeks and he didn't have any checkmarks on his behavior modification book that came from the learning class, I would take him to McDonalds to eat. So he made it, and we went to McDonald's.

It was a horrible day. It was one of the worst storms of the winter, but I made that promise, so I figured I'd better go. Going in, he started talking about trucks. He's talking to me about engines, and he's talking about combustion. The learning disabled person was me! If you had evaluated us at that point, this kid would have been gifted, and I would have been learning disabled, and I thought WOW! Just think about this. Just think what we do to kids in the name of education. That's pretty scary! This kid can't behave, this kid can't learn, but he's saying "Look at that truck. Now that truck gets so many miles per gallon." It isn't that he can't learn.

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It's the Questions That Are Important

The theory is necessary because I think I came as far as I could and I couldn't take my students that next step. I didn't know what it was I had to do. I think that's why, even though I experimented with whole language. I think that's why when I look at this New Zealand Model, it was

based on research and it was theory based, but I knew "I can do this." I could keep building on this, and I can understand this, and this makes sense. So I came to theory from practice. I think there are some people who come to practice from theory, but I know that I didn't.

As I look around and I see the people like Janet Allen whom I think is an extraordinary teacher, or Mary Gierard, or Winnie--those people came from practice to theory. They had something to begin with. That ability to look at their students and see what they need, or to say, "This isn't working--what I'm doing is not working; these kids aren't learning; there's no relevance in this to their everyday lives, and they're not becoming readers and they're not becoming writers."

When they see a student is having difficulty, they do not blame the student. They look at themselves and see what they might not be doing or seeing because they know that the student is capable. They see themselves as learners too. They don't have all the answers. I think that's a real critical piece for being a teacher. That they're life-long learners, and they're not afraid to say, "I don't know--let's figure out where we're going to go to find that answer. What is it we need to do, or who are we going to go to?"

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This is not going to be my summer of answers. I think

it's going to be my summer of questions. The fact that teachers don't always have answers and are willing to admit that they don't have answers, but they're not afraid to raise the questions, is really important. It seems to me that that is what is valuable, maybe even more than having an answer. I'm not sure. I like to question. That's one of the reasons I like teaching.

I really do like those questions, and I like thinking about them, and going through and coming to those great "ah hahs"--going "Ah hah, yeah, that's it. That makes sense. I've got it." And I like the challenge of it. I can't imagine anything that could be more challenging.

To me, it's ridiculous to think we have the answers. It's the questions that are important. Teaching is like being a doctor and having a patient that comes in and they have this really strange disease, or something that's really wrong, and you've got to figure it out. What is it, you know, and what am I going to do with this stuff? I love the term that they use in New Zealand--"the tangled readers."

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Winnie the Pooh and Metaphors Too

That's like kids who are struggling. They call them "tangled readers and writers." I just love that picture-- that metaphor of just unraveling that whole thing and finding where it is, picking at it and working at it, so

that you come up with a way so that it's untangled. I think
it's such a nice picture as opposed to some of the other
ways we have for describing kids who aren't really ready, or
doing the same kinds of things that we think they should be
doing as readers and writers. I love it.

Some of the greatest learning we've done in our school
as professionals, and actually as students, was this year
with what we did with that Winnie the Pooh metaphor. It was
incredible to watch what people did with that and to relate
it to their own experience, and then relate it to Winnie the
Pooh quotes. It was amazing.

People could buy into it at their own level. They
could extend that metaphor as much as they wanted to, or
they could do it as little or as quick as they wanted to.
It was really neat. And it was interesting too, because
I've seen people use a garden as a metaphor for education,
and those kinds of things, but this one was different.

I like the concept of exploring. I think that's really
what we're doing in education, and we sure have a lot of
exploring to do. We looked at education as exploration or
teaching as exploration, maybe not education but teaching.

I think it's real important to think about how kids
learn and putting those conditions for learning in place. I
think if you use those conditions for learning that Brian
Cambourne talks about, and you have kids who take
responsibility--who are engaged--and you have those other
conditions and approximations, and all those kinds of

things, that we'd be a lot better off. But who talks about teachers teaching teachers? Who talks about teachers as explorers?

It goes back to that question, "When does learning occur?" I know for me that I learn most when there's some kind of "abrasion."

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Something I've been thinking about too is what we do with words. For example, we talk to parents about inventive spelling, and we talk to kids about it's OK to use inventive spelling. What is the connotation of the word "inventive"? What is the connotation that when you invent something, you're creating something new?

In fact, what kids are doing when they're writing is approximating because they're using the knowledge that they already have. What they have down there is an approximation of the accepted spelling. It's not inventive; they're not creating something. If you look at it, there's something in it that they're approximating, and you need to show that to children, and you need to show that to parents because that goes right back to if you're looking at this as an approximation, what are you doing next--moving closer to that accepted spelling or that accepted writing; and if you really think about writing process, and if you really think about the way kids learn, then you should say what you mean, and you don't mean inventive spelling.

Or what do you say when you say to kids that this is your "sloppy copy"? It's a cute little phrase, but they take it literally; and when you say, "I can't read this," "Well, it's my sloppy copy." Why wouldn't you say, "This is your draft?" The connotation of "draft" is very different from the connotation of "sloppy copy".

If you truly believe in writing process, and if you believe that spelling is a tool for kids to write, then why do you give them an eraser when they're doing their draft? Right? If their approximations are an indication for you to move them to the next step in their writing or the next step in their spelling, therefore to make their writing better, why don't you just have them draw a line through it? And then you can see the process that they're working through in their approximation. I mean, if you're really going to believe this stuff, then you have to do it. You can't just talk the talk. Well, that really makes sense to me.

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This year in our reflective practice group, we did <u>Run School Run</u>. It's great--a wonderful, wonderful book. It's about change, and it talks about school culture. Where is the center of power for being individual schools, and would all schools in the district have to be the same? It's very readable. Everybody in our school has a copy of it, and then a couple of other people like the GT teacher and the itinerant people picked it up too because everybody was

talking about it.

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On Whole Language

I do have a problem with the term "whole language." I have a real problem with it because what we're doing, I think, has gone way beyond whole language. It's basically student-centered learning. Not that whole language isn't. When we started, we were talking about doing literacy kinds of things, reading and writing, but now it's more. It's affected how we teach math and science; it's affected how we teach other things.

There are so many definitions of the term whole language that it doesn't mean anything. It's like saying "stuff." I've got a lot of stuff, whatever stuff is.

I know a lot of people refer to us as whole language teachers, but I think that's wrong. The thing that bothers me about the term, and there are lots of arguments, [is] it's exclusive or many people see it that way. When you use the term "whole language," that is exclusive of other learning theories or other ways of learning. Automatically when you hear the word "whole language," people who don't know that much about it say, "Oh, well, they don't teach phonics."

It becomes exclusive of that; it becomes exclusive of textbooks; it becomes exclusive of--you think of the things

that the term whole language excludes for people. It even excluded some teachers from the rest of the school.

I think that that's indicative of our understanding in our school. At one time we used the term "whole language", and then we moved from "whole language", and we said "literature-based" and "writing process." Still, look at what you're doing when you say that. I just like that child-centered learning a lot better.

That doesn't exclude any kind of thing. When you say child-centered learning, what does that exclude? It doesn't even exclude a basal reader, if that's what you want to use. It certainly would change my definition of how I'm going to use a basal. I would use it as an anthology, and I'd base it on the needs of my child. But I wouldn't not use a basal reader. If that was what I had, then that's what I'd use. I'd just look at it a different way.

The resources do not intimidate me. If I were told tomorrow, "This is the reading series you're going to use," I'd still teach the same way.

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Challenges and Supports

I don't think I've always had confidence. I might have thought I always had it, but I didn't. I think it comes with experience, and I think it comes with reading and talking to other people and looking at how kids learn, and

how kids read and write, and knowing the learner. And
knowing the resource. That's where it comes from. I could
look at that basal reader and say, "Oh well, look at this
story; there are lots of challenges in this story that my
students can't overcome without me really working with
them." I would never have done that five years ago or ten
years ago. I never even looked at challenges and supports
in texts, or challenges and supports in classroom set-ups or
stuff like that. That's very different now.

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I think that we need a rest. By a rest I don't mean
that we'll stop growing individually or whatever, but we
need a rest from the grant--from the rigor of having to
follow it, to document it, to do whatever it is, even though
I think that's an incredibly valuable process. It's only a
valuable process for those who are buying into it and those
who really feel that they're part of that club.

I think what has happened is that there have been three
or four of us who have carried the burden of it. It hasn't
been a burden for us, but for those people on the outside
who have looked at us and said, "I don't know what they're
doing," or "I don't understand that." I think that we will
become more tolerant of where we are, and those of us who
are involved and believe strongly in what we're doing will
try to manifest change by really working with our students
so the people won't say, "Good Lord, what are they doing

now?" but will say, "Gee that's working. What are they
doing? Let's go do it," or "I think it's time for us to do
it."

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Marilyn strongly believes that we have to have a change
agent from outside, and I agree with her a hundred percent.
But there are other ways to implement change than having
grants. For myself, or for Marilyn, or Winnie, we could
have some kind of grant that applied to our own classrooms,
where we would be more teacher researchers. We would
actually be looking at the theory rather than the change.

I think to a certain degree we focused more on the
change rather than on the theory. And I don't think we've
done a bad job. I think we've done a real good job. I
don't think everyone knows it and can understand what we're
doing, and I don't think the test scores necessarily
indicate what's happening, but I think if someone came in
and looked at the kinds of things that were happening in our
building, they would really be amazed, because those kids
are readers. There's just no question about it in my mind.
They think they're writers, and that's really important, but
I think they've got a longer way to go in that.

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Chapter Twelve

AN UNCOMMON COMMONSENSE TEACHER

Winnie

"There are doers in life--there are people who do, and there are people who hold back, and there are people who never do. I am probably a doer. I am not saying that I always do the right thing, but I do things! I really believed that what we were doing was right, and I still do."

As a student I questioned a lot. Why were we doing things? Why were we studying things? What was the relevance? That's what made me such an unproductive student, and that probably has helped me in the classroom because I question often. Why are my children doing this? Is it because I have a need for them to fulfill, or is it because they can use it in their daily life and their lives for the future, or is it something that they're interested in? As teachers we have to stop and think of that very often. We have a certain curricula to meet: we have goals that we have to meet because they're written down somewhere, and in that process we can meet the child's needs, and we can know why we're doing things.

Looking back in my schooling, even through college I questioned a lot of things. Will I ever have to use this? What good is it for me to learn this now not needing it now? I may never need it. I'm more of a practitioner. I want to

get out there and do it. I don't want to hear a whole lot of theory.

However, I do think you have to formulate theories before you start. Once I formulate a theory, I don't want to beat it to death, and I don't want to get into the theories so deep that I never can get out and put it into practical use. I think a lot of people do that. They're great theorists, but they don't ever do anything that's practical. They carry a lot of information in their heads, but they don't use it. Kids don't learn by theories alone.

You have to have a foundation for what you're doing, and you have to have a direction, but you can sit back and talk about it and talk about it and never do it. I'm not that kind of a person. Once I formulate something in my mind, I'm going to go ahead and do it. Sometimes I don't always take enough time and think it through, and sometimes I jump to things faster than I should. But I feel that that's OK too because you learn in the process of making mistakes.

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From my years as a student, I remember the things that I would do if I ever became a teacher rather than the things I wouldn't do because I tuned out the teachers that I would have said, "I'll never do that," "How can she do that? I'll never do that." I tuned them out. I picked up on the teachers that had the qualities that I liked. The ones that

I liked the most--the ones that I got the most out-of--were those that took a little bit of time to interact personally so that you became a student in a class that had a name rather than just a person who was filling up a seat.

I've earned a lot of names from my students, like the crazy woman. The things that they [students] remember I've forgotten. When they come back, what they remember are the things that showed that I touched them personally rather than "I remember the day you taught me that 2+2=4." Nobody has ever told me that.

But they come back and they say, "You gave me such and such a book to read, and I remember that," or "I remember the day that you said...." For instance, Joyce had her fifth graders write about things that they remembered about their experiences at North Park, and one of them remembered something I had done.

Every year I bring my class up here for a picnic at the end of the year. We were up here for the picnic, and one of my first graders was kind of sitting on the lawn, not moving, not enjoying himself, and I couldn't figure out why. So I went to him and asked him why he wasn't participating, and he said very quietly, "I wet my pants."

I knew that this was a terrible situation for him to be in. I didn't want to say, "We'll go call your mother, and she can come pick you up or bring you some clothes" because that would have drawn immediate attention to him. So I said, "It's a very hot day, and I think we need someone to

play a joke here. I'm going to go over to the hose, and I'm going to turn it on, and when I do, I want you to get up and run. I will hose you down with the hose to be funny. I'm going to really water you down."

It went according to plan. I really wet him down. He was the only one that I really wet down, and we left it at that. He was all wet, but that was okay, and he was okay.

Before school got out Joyce was asking them about their best memories at North Park, and he told that story about how I had saved face for him. That's personal contact with a kid and not reacting as a teacher. As a teacher I should have said, "Oh, you'll have to go call your parents to come and get you to bring you a change of clothing" and not acted like a fool, turning on the hose and watering down the child. But that's the way I react to things--help the child and sometimes act foolish myself. A lot of kids remember those things a lot longer than theory or lessons.

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Sameness

When I came to North Park and the second grade, we were using basals, and everybody used the same basals. Those two years don't have many memories for me because I don't think that's where I wanted to be. At the end of the second year, there was a first grade opening, so I jumped at that and decided that's where I wanted to be. I didn't

notice a big difference between first and second graders, except that second graders didn't seem to show the same progress that first graders do. First graders come to you as emergent readers, and they develop into almost independent readers. And second graders kind of stayed on the same level all the way through. I didn't see the same progress, and that's where I lost some of my motivation. I think most of what I did my first two years of teaching was experimentation.

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First grade at North Park wasn't any different than first grade anywhere else I had taught because we were all tied to the same basal, the same reading series; we had to get through the same set of tests, the same set of criteria, so there wasn't much difference. The only thing that made it special here in the first grade my first year was that we did go into this brand new building.

We felt like we were in heaven when we moved over into the new school. It was the first time that the faculty was really united. Even though I had taught two years in the older building, they were on one side of the building, and we were on one side, and we didn't really get to know each other.

It wasn't a very close faculty in the old building because of the physical structure. Then when we moved into the new building, things opened up in a lot of ways. It

brought the faculty closer together. My method of teaching
wasn't any different because we were still tied to the
basals, and we were tied to the science series, and we were
tied to all these other things, and I still was a firm
believer that we had to go by what the district had
prescribed.

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And A Child Will Lead

That first year in first grade at North Park, Kelly was
a student in my room, and she was not the norm at all.
That's when I began to see that children definitely came to
school with things in their minds, prior knowledge, and that
they weren't just empty receptacles to be filled up. She
helped me to see that. She was a delightful child, but she
made me sit back and take a look.

I knew Kelly had ability far beyond any of the other
children, and I was trying to give her materials that were
more appropriate for her. But Kelly wanted to be part of
the group. I had my three reading groups, and she said, "I
want to be with them."

I said, "Well, Kelly they're doing things that you
already know how to do, and it's going to be kind of boring
for you to have to sit there and go through the books and do
the worksheets."

But she said, "I don't care. I'll pretend I'm

interested because I want to be part of the group."

That was when I realized that you can't do the same for all kids. I mean here's Kelly who is willing to pretend that she was interested. How many other students had I had who pretended to be interested?

It makes you start to think. When we put them in those reading groups or those other levels, how many pretenders did I have when actually they were sitting there really bored to death?

Teaching out of the basal, three groups sitting there in a circle around the table was boring. There were afternoons that I even had to fight sleep. I was terrible in the afternoon, but I still had to have my hour of reading. My God, it was painful sometimes to try to stay awake to listen to these poor little kids try to read. I think maybe that was the beginning. Kelly did it.

Probably having had second graders for those two years and not really being enchanted by the whole thing, maybe that caused me also to stop and question, "What's happening with these first graders when they go into second grade? Am I doing the same things to them that I see happening that I was doing in second grade?" That's when it began, but I didn't really do too, too much about it then because we didn't have that empowerment or didn't feel that we were empowered to go beyond the basals yet.

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Partnerships

Long before it was fashionable, Joyce and I had
arranged a program of partner reading where fifth graders
read with first graders and first graders read with the
fifth graders. This was long before we'd ever read about it
in any books because I think basically we knew that that was
a good thing to do. The structure of the building also
played an important part again. I had taught with Joyce two
years before that and didn't know that she was at the other
side of the building. I think the physical structure of the
building put us closer together as people, and we were able
to communicate a lot of things and found out that our
philosophies were the same.

We started that program, and then before the grant was
even written, we started to attend a lot of workshops
because then the term "whole language" started to come into
focus. We started to attend a lot of workshops basically
with writing and using children's literature in the
classroom.

That was fuel for the fire. Most of the faculty were
willing to drop everything and go to workshops, probably
moreso than any other faculty that I had worked with before.
You get caught up in it. You almost don't dare say, "No, I
don't want to work at a workshop." Somebody says that
there's a workshop Saturday, and we'll say, " Yes! Where is
it? How much does it cost? We're going." It's not

questioned as to who's going or do you want to go. You're just kind of caught up in the movement. So we went to a lot of workshops.

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This year the week after school got out on Thursday and Friday, we had a two-day workshop. This was entirely on our own. The six of us sat with the consultant from the State Department for two days. Nobody had to do it, but we wanted to do it.

We started off on the premise that we were going to go through--we had set some outcomes working with parent groups and student groups and teacher groups and community groups, and we were going to kind of talk about where we were going to go from there. We got into a lot of other things that were good. It felt good being together for two days. One day we had it at one person's house and the next day we had it here. It was kind of fun just being relaxed and being able to discuss a lot of things that we don't always have time to discuss--educational things.

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Going to workshops was one of the starting points. We all sat back and realized, whew, there's a different way to go. Then, of course, came the grant, and I think the grant was the big thing. When you have monetary help, that's power, and I think having the principal that we have helped

too. He sat back and let us talk and let us become empowered. We weren't given free rein. I think that's good, too, because when I think of the things that we might have done had we had free rein....

At the time you're trying to grow and change, you grumble at administration, and you grumble at others because "We want to do this and they won't let us." But, they're sitting back, and they're watching, and they're probably being more practical than we are. Although we have had a lot of power and a lot of chances to change things, we didn't have full rein. Now I see that as a positive thing rather than a negative thing. But when we were going through it, I thought it was negative--they were holding us back.

When you jump on a bandwagon, you're gung ho, and you think, "Oh, yes, this is going to change the world; this is going to change education," so you jump on--you really believe in what you're doing and what you're doing is good. There are a lot of good, positive things, and at that point you expect that there would be no obstacles in the way. We wanted to change the reporting system, and we wanted to do this, and we wanted to do that. Of course, the district always maintained that we were going to do things as a district and not as individual schools, and we got enough rebuttal from other places saying, "Well, North Park School--who do they think they are?"

I think the administration was protecting us in a way

because there are things that we did that we've changed already, not that we did them wrong, but we learned that there were still better ways of doing things. We're still learning. I think if we had been given free rein, we might have made a lot more mistakes and gone down the wrong road. Looking back, I think maybe those things weren't negative although they seemed negative at the time.

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Money Talks

I wasn't in on the actual writing of the grant. We all offered information. We all offered input, but not in the actual writing. I was giving them [Joyce and Marilyn] encouragement to go on. I would bring them the snacks. I'd give them a pat on the back, that type of thing, but I didn't want to be involved in the writing specifically because I think Marilyn and Joyce do that extremely well together. They can put down ideas and tear each other's ideas apart and not get angry at each other. It takes special people. If I wrote something and somebody tore it apart, I'd probably tear them apart. So I didn't want any part of writing the grant, but I was there to be supportive. So anyway, that's the way that it developed. As an outsider, I thought that developing the grant and it being accepted was fairly easy. Now Marilyn and Joyce might tell you something different.

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I didn't actually go through the blood, sweat and tears of it. It was not difficult after the grant was written to get the school board to accept it. The school board meeting happened to be here. I was asked to say a few words to them about whole language (we were using that term) and how it made a difference to us. I did, and the school board accepted it very quickly. I think they did because we were out there trying to get $10,000, and anytime that you get $10,000, you're going to save some money in the district budget.

Maybe we convinced them. There was printed material that they had read before the meeting. But, I don't think school board members know enough about educational policies to make a judgement. They're in the business end of things, and I think that the school board listens to the superintendent, and decisions are made a long time before they come up on the agenda. I'm not faulting them. It's just that they're elected from the mass of people out there, and they're there to save money. They're not too concerned with policy making. I don't think they really knew what was going on. They just thought that it was $10,000.

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The Importance of the Grant

The most important aspect of the grant was the fact that we could hire outside people to come in and work with us. One thing that we've learned is that you do need somebody from the outside to keep a group together. The minute that you don't have an outsider, you begin to question others' abilities. If there's somebody else facilitating the meeting, you don't question your peers because this person knows how to run the group and keep them focused.

During that first grant, we focused on writing and reading with a state facilitator, and that bound us together. We had a lot of outside contact. There were people who were not as quick to jump onto the bandwagon, but they did. They gave it a try, and many of them--I'm not going to say succeeded--but many of them became involved in it.

It drew other outside people. There was a big interest about whole language because, as people say, we were doing "it." There's no doing "it." But because we were doing "it," people were interested, and people came to see what we were doing.

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For me personally, it [the grant] really gave me the freedom that I had wanted all the time but didn't dare do.

It gave me the freedom to put the basals away and the textbooks away and say, "Okay, the children are going to read--they're going to learn to read by reading and they're going to learn to write by writing." It was fun to delve into all these great children's books. Every other day there was somebody bringing in a book that they had picked up at the bookstore, saying, "This is a great book," and then everybody would run down to buy it. There was wonderful, wonderful interest, and I think that interest is still going. We're excited about books. We're a faculty that has become excited about books, and I think that's important.

I tried to make what was going on in the classroom more relevant. The most important thing that I discovered about whole language was the fact that learning can't be broken up into little pieces. I had done that for years and years and years. We had fifteen minutes for phonics and twenty minutes for a penmanship lesson and an hour in the morning for reading and an hour in the afternoon for reading again and writing. It was in response to worksheets and that type of thing. Maybe if something real exciting happened, then we might write about it.

I discovered that to learn to read and write, you have to do those things. The children have a lot more freedom to read what they want to read and write what they want to write. And it was a joy to see what I thought was a big transformation in children in just those first couple of

years.

In my previous years of teaching, I had held children back because they were good pretenders. When we did go to the whole language concept, I discovered quickly, very quickly, that children had a lot more to offer than I thought they did. They were really progressing, and they were being more creative, and they were able to do so much more because I didn't have any reins on them. I was letting them show me what they could do before that thirty-second week of school where it was supposed to be shown.

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A Day in First Grade

We always start the day with sustained silent reading, and sustained silent reading in first grade is anything but silent. It can't be because they're sharing books. They're sharing picture books, they're sharing other things, they're sharing knowledge, and they can't do that silently. So it's a period of time where they explore books in our classroom, and it's supposed to be a fifteen-minute period the first thing in the morning where the whole school does this activity. Many times I can't interrupt that activity at the end of fifteen minutes because they're completely involved.

There are other days where fifteen minutes is too long, and you have to have a feeling for it. If after five minutes you know that it isn't going to go right that day,

then you kind of stop and start something else.

I've seen my silent reading time go into forty-five minutes to an hour, and I won't stop it because of the good things that are happening. You might say, "All children aren't interested during that time," and no they aren't. But those that aren't will look around and see other kids really involved in books and, rather than get into trouble or cause problems, they'll look around. They'll join those two people over there because they are so involved in that book. And you'll see them go and sit with them and become involved, or they'll look around and they'll say, "Gee, everybody else is reading, so maybe I should." They'll go get another book or sometimes the whole class will kind of migrate to a corner where some child has gotten involved in a book or has discovered something in a book and the whole class direction has gone that way, so sometimes I have to pick up from there.

If I get a chance after that, after sustained silent reading, we usually have a period of journal writing. Again journal writing in first grade just consists of them telling some newsy event. I have three children share their journals. We do that by lottery. I'll draw names out of a hat, and if they want to share, they can, and if they don't want to, they don't have to.

When we first started doing this, we were told that the children should ask questions like, "What did you like about my writing?" and, "What do you need to know more about?"

There was another, but I can't even remember what it was. Over the years you realize you're getting pat answers. "What do you like about my writing?"

"I like your printing or I like your drawing, or you did this." There's no meat to it at all. So I've moved away from those three questions. We get into more of a free discussion about the person's writing. If a child just says, "I went to the mall yesterday with my mother," then obviously that can be developed into more writing, and with the passing of time and the more depth that the children get, they are able to say, "Why did you go to the mall? Did you buy anything?"

All these questions show the writer other things he should have included. They're getting more in depth with their questioning, and there is more reason to question rather than those three basic questions.

After that journal writing, we usually do a directed reading lesson where I read a book and there'd be discussion about it. I might have some other activities involved with that book that have skills-oriented things with them. That is the purpose of a directed reading lesson. Then we would probably go into that part of our theme that would involve science and work on science activities. That just about takes care of the morning because we've got other activities like gym during the morning.

In the afternoon we'd have a writers' workshop. Students have a writing folder, and they are working on

their own pieces, anything that they want to write. Through the year, their writing gets lengthier, and they're able to do some editing and some publishing. During that writing time in the beginning of the year, it's very hectic because you have most children coming to you and saying, "I don't know what to write," and others saying, "How do you spell...?" for every other word. They don't think they have that freedom to try and use inventive spelling. They have to get over all those humps in the beginning.

It takes a long, long time for them to realize that they can write; they can use inventive spelling; they can use their peers and read their story to their peers; and their peers will offer suggestions or questions. Then they go back, and they know after a point that they can do some editing themselves by drawing lines under words that they know they've misspelled; and many of the words that they've misspelled they know that they have references in the room that they can go to, so they do a lot of this stuff on their own, independently. Then they publish this on the computer or by hand. But that process takes a long, long time because in the beginning their attention spans are probably ten minutes. Towards the end of the year we can have a writing workshop the whole afternoon, which is an hour and a half.

Sometimes when I say, "Put your writing folders away," they moan and groan. This makes it worthwhile. This is where you see your progress.

★★★★★

Progress

The year before this past year, I started to take samples out of their journals. The faculty had agreed that we would take four samples of their writing during the year and put them into a folder to be filed, to be passed on to the next teacher. We're getting great accumulations of pieces, if you lay them all out from grade one to grade five.

Joyce was saying that she can pick out their progress by laying them all out and seeing what kinds of things they're doing. But, I felt that if I put in four samples of their writing from first grade and passed it on to the second grade teacher, I'm not sure that she would look at them at the beginning of the year. By the time they got to the third grade, I don't think the third grade teacher would begin by looking at eight pieces of each child's writing. There needed to be something a little bit better.

On my own I started to take their first journal entry at the beginning of the year. I reduced it, photocopied it, and put it on a sheet with comments about what they had done in writing. During the year, I may have six-twelve pieces from each child in a folder with comments about how their writing has developed. Then I copy it and send a copy home to the parent at the end of the year, so they also get the

same information.

If the second grade teacher wants to pick it up and look at my comments from the first day to the end of the year, she can see the writing process the child has gone through and the development she has made. It takes a little more work, but it's made me notice more things about their writing, and helped me to be more of a kid watcher through that process.

I would like to start something with reading this year. We tried, at one point, to get into running records. Some of us know how to do running records, but the point was that we didn't know what to do with them after we did them. So, Joyce is learning all about that this summer. She's gone equipped with our questions to her workshops, and she's going to get the answers for us.

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I think there's going to be more done with the reading portfolios, whether it be audio tapes or what this year. We just found a new video camera for the school, so now we have two. Although we used one a lot, there were times we didn't use it because it was being used by someone else. Now we'll have one for each end of the building. I would like to get enough tapes to start an individual tape for each child and have them tape some readings during the year so that you not only get the audio, but you get a visible product--because the way a child reads in the first grade or early primary

grades shows a lot about what they're doing physically as well as on audio.

There are a lot of things that kids do physically that you don't get on the tape; you just don't capture them. I mean just the way that children wiggle while they're reading. On an audio tape you don't see what cues they're getting from the page. They may be reading here, and they're looking over here at the cue from the picture. You don't see that on an audio tape. You get a pause. What is the child doing during that time? But with the video, you can see exactly; they may be going back to investigate the picture; they may be turning the pages back to investigate something else, rechecking; they may be going ahead to see if they can get some help from what's happening further on in the story. I think that's really important.

I'd like to start something like that so that when they go into second grade, they'll have their very own tape, and the second grade teacher can add to it. By the time that they leave fifth grade, they'll have a portfolio in writing and reading and some other things. But you can't do it all at once because then it becomes mind boggling and there just isn't enough time. So you work into it gradually.

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There are doers in life--there are people who do, and there are people who hold back, and there are people who never do. I think I'm probably a doer. I'm not saying

that I always do the right thing, but I do! I really
believed that what we were doing was right, and I still do.
So, I'm going to do it whether anybody else does it or not.
Like I just said with this writing folder, no one else is
doing it. Others know about it. They're not doing it
because maybe they don't see that it's worthwhile. I don't
know, but I'm not going to wait for them because I feel that
it's worthwhile, and I'm going to do it.

If somebody doesn't want to learn how to run the video
camera, well, that's their problem. If they want to come to
me and ask how do I do this, fine. But I'm going to go
ahead and do it, and I'm not going to try to convince them.
I will help anybody, but I'm not going to waste time trying
to convince other people that it's a good thing to do.

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Change is Inevitable

Change is definitely something that you cannot do
without, and that's not only in education; that's in your
whole life. Without change you become very stale. You need
change. Sometimes change is positive and sometimes it's
not. But you do need change. For me, what's been
happening, the change that has been happening in education,
has been following my philosophy. I've enjoyed it. The
onset of whole language was like a booster shot.

I had probably come to a point in my career where I

wondered whether I wanted to do this [teaching] forever. That might have been ten-twelve years ago, and at that point it was a booster shot. It was a good change, and it was a positive change, and I became energized by it. I don't think that you can say that all change is good because sometimes it isn't. Sometimes it develops into something that isn't quite right, and you have to turn it back and that's where the change comes in again. But we can't sit back and say--in education or anywhere else in life--well, this is the way it's been for the last ten years, so we continue to do it that way.

I see a lot of people who graduated with me in college doing the same things that we did our first year of teaching. That's scary. I'm sure that they would tell you that they've been through a lot of changes, but, for example, I think that anybody who still clutches onto the basal at this point in time and can't see the pitfalls of the basals hasn't allowed too much change to happen in their lives. I just read a book this week that I would like all of these people to read: Basal Readers--A Second Look.

It is wonderful. That was another book that belongs to Joyce. Of course she laughed and said, "Here, read this." She just handed it to me. But, it's amazing...they took a first look at basals a few years back before the onset of whole language, and of course they had a lot more to tear basals apart. Now, they've taken a second look at them, and even though the basal companies have made some strides, they

haven't made enough.

In the 1930's there were over 100 companies that were writing basal reading series. Now there are only six major companies that are writing all the basals; and you know the money that they bring in every year? $400,000,000--six companies--$400,000,000.

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Making Strange the Familiar

We were reviewing some new reading textbooks a few years ago, and even though we weren't using the textbooks, we had to review them. They [the other teachers] were saying, "Look at this company; they're beginning to use real children's literature in them." But, I pointed out to them that they were watered down so badly and changed so much that they were terrible. Just so they would fit the criteria of their textbook. It was ridiculous.

In one of the chapters of <u>Basal Readers,</u> Mem Fox says that a company asked her to write a story for their basal. She kind of backed down and said, "No, I don't have the time; I'm busy." She didn't really want to write a story for them. They said, "You must have something that hasn't been published or has been in a drawer that you could dig out." Well, she decided to write something, and she wrote a very short story; she calls it, <u>Yeah, So What?</u> After children read it, they say "Yeah, so what?" She wrote a

"Yeah, so what?" story for them, and she was turned down. The publisher actually turned her down. She was elated that they didn't take it. But anyway, it's a fantastic book! Well, they've made changes, but they're [basal companies] still questioning teachers' intelligence by offering prescribed lessons...and kids' intelligence.

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What Parents Want

We have a group of parents who, as long as we keep them informed, don't give us too much negative feedback. You're always going to have people who are going to say things, but we try to keep parents informed right from the beginning about what we're doing; and that's important, that's really important. We had people from the administration--higher up, not our principal--saying that people [parents] are not going to want that. They're still saying that.

When we talk about changing the reporting system because we don't believe in it, they'll say, "Well, that's not what parents want." They tell us that all the time. I'm sure that Mrs. Smith down the road doesn't call the superintendent's office to tell him what she wants in a reporting system. We're supposed to sit back and take that and say, "Okay, if that's what parents want, then we'll do it."

Again, I stepped out of bounds a little bit. The first

reporting term this year I sent home a survey along with report cards. We had started to write long and involved notes with the report card. That takes a lot of time, but I feel it says a lot more than symbols on a report card. So, I sent a survey home asking the parents what part of the report card they liked the most. On the left hand side of the report card are the academics--math, writing, reading-- and on the right hand side are the social skills--behavior-- and then we added on the narratives.

I asked the parents which they liked better. More than half of the parents responded. Most of them liked the narrative much better because they said it helped them to understand. One parent even said, "I like it a lot better than the alphabet soup that we have to wade through in the regular report card." That's exactly what it looks like because you've got S's and VG's and VS's and NI's and all these other symbols, and what reading level they're on. It ends up looking like alphabet soup; that was a wonderful, wonderful statement for her to make.

Letter grades don't tell them a thing about what their child can do either. A parent looks at a grade, and yes, the parents goal is to see all VG's on their child's report card so that they can tell their neighbor over coffee that "My child got all very goods."

They're not saying things like, "The teacher said that Johnny is an emergent reader, and he's picking up books on his own; he's beginning to read, and he's doing this or that

in his writing; Johnny used periods last week and formed complete sentences." Those aren't the things that parents are talking about. They're talking about how many VG's their child got in comparison to yours, and that's not what we would like to have parents talking about. With a narrative you can change people's thought processes, using terms like "emergent readers" and "emergent writers." Maybe years down the road, then, parents will take a different look at it.

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When we took the whole language workshop here, there was also a parent workshop. Our parent's organization bought the packet, and Joyce and I presented it to the parents. We ran it for about six weeks, and we had an average of fifteen to twenty-five parents there each night, once a week for six weeks. That was very good, and through that process, I think that we were able to show a lot of parents that reading is not taught the same way as it was when they were taught--that this is a more practical way or a far better way to teach reading and that how children learn is the important facet.

I think we haven't had too much flak because we've gotten parents involved and keep them tuned in to what is going on; I think that's an important role. We have parents walking in and out of that building all the time, and volunteers coming in and out. Often parents will walk in,

and it's a while before we even realize that they're there.
As a parent that's the way that I'd like to visit the
school--just to drop in whenever I wanted to. I think if
you give parents that freedom, they will feel comfortable
about what we do.

<center>★★★★★</center>

On Whole Language

It doesn't bother me to be called a whole language
teacher. The name has gotten a bad reputation. When it
first started being used, everybody was using it, and then
various groups attacked it, and so the word itself got to be
a "no-no" word. So you changed it to a literature-based
classroom, and, you know, it just had a lot of other names.
I don't care what they call it. They can call it Winnie's
philosophy if they want, if they want to come into my
classroom because I think it's pretty well set in place, and
I'm not going to change my philosophy. So I don't care what
they call it. They can call me a whole language teacher. I
just hope they don't call me a non-teacher.

As far as the word "whole language" goes, that doesn't
bother me because I think the people who are attacking it
are going to attack it no matter what it's called. If they
wanted to say, "Alright, we're going to change the name of
it to traditional classroom," they can--they can if they
want to, but it's not going to change my philosophy.

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Whole language is not a method. It's a philosophy.
When whole language came around, it probably matched my
philosophy closer than anything that had come along before.
That's why I really liked it, and it was easy for me to kind
of swing into. Although there are a lot of things that I'm
still not sure of that I haven't been educated in, I'm kind
of feeling my way. But, it was what I thought teaching
should be, what learning should be, and the relationship
between the teacher and the student should be.

It's a philosophy that lets children be more
themselves. And it allows me to be aware of where the
child was, and where the child is going, and to help her
along the way, not for me to think that I was the authority
or the person who knew it all in the classroom and had to
fill this little empty receptacle with knowledge. I've
learned a lot from the children themselves, and this is
probably something that I, as a teacher in the years past,
probably didn't take the time to do because I had an agenda
to follow, and I didn't take time to listen to the children
as well as I should have. I think this affords me that
opportunity to be a kid watcher, and that's very important.

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Even though in the past I'd deviate from my plan, I
don't think I felt like I had complete freedom because I had

to get through those three pre-primaries, and I had to get through the 1-1 book, and I had to get through the 1-2 book. Heaven forbid if they went into second grade, and they hadn't been introduced to the 1-2 book and [weren't] at least half-way through. That was grounds for retaining a child, if they hadn't finished the 1-1 book, and then went on half-way through, at least, the 1-2 book. We could retain a child, and that was really playing God. If I didn't give them the chance to be exposed to that because we had run off on a side road, then it was my fault that these children were going to be retained.

I spent a lot of time pondering if I was doing the right thing, and probably there were times when I didn't. It was just something that I thought was right, and it probably wasn't. But you spend a lot of time thinking about it, and so if I had any guilt feelings about maybe not pushing those children enough, or maybe we just didn't put our noses to the grindstone enough and they still didn't make the grade, it was my fault. I guess I felt that more.

I don't feel that now because I feel like I'm doing the best I can with the children. We believe more in letting a child develop at their own level, and since we don't retain anymore, then nobody has to take that blame. And I see the children progressing much further.

If the child becomes interested in something, or wants to expand on something we're studying, I can give them that time to do it. It gives children a chance to be curious

about things. Before, your day was cut up in little boxes,
and you had to move from one time limit to another. You
just didn't have that time. We'll say, "Well maybe someday
we'll look into that." Well, maybe someday--that's an idle
promise just to pacify the child at that particular moment.
But it wasn't really honest.

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Change Again

It [change] has to be honest right from the top down,
meaning the administrators, the parents, and then right down
to the child because the child is the one that's going to be
most affected by that change.

I have been changing. Change is going to happen in
spite of you. I don't care if you dig in your heels, change
is going to happen, and I don't feel that I have to go along
with every bit of change that happens because every time you
turn around, there's something new out there that you can
jump on--even "Hooked on Phonics." You can jump on that.

I'd like to think that I would still be able to weigh
out and take from something that they're calling "change":
the things that I feel comfortable with, the things that I
agree with, and eliminate that that I don't agree with. You
don't have to take it all. I hope that I can be flexible
enough to admit that something isn't working, even though
you thought it was great, and when you admit that something

isn't working, you need another change.

That's part of what we're trying to instill in children, that if you're using the scientific method of investigation and you try things and they don't work, it doesn't mean that you've done something wrong because you've investigated it. So with some of these things that are happening in change, yes, weed out the good and the bad, and keep the good.

Change seems pretty natural, but I'm afraid of some change. I mean some of the things in technology are a little bit frightening. But I am adaptable to change. Sometimes I get dragged into it by others.

The biggest changes that have occurred have been because of our group readings and workshop attendance. Unless you do those things, if you do not know what is new and inviting out there, then you are certainly not going to change. We need to concentrate in this age more on staff development; school districts need to offer more good staff development; they need to give us release time to learn, not just expect us to do it on Saturdays, after school or on vacations. They need to realize its value. Without staff development there isn't much change.

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The larger administration actually discourages change. They want control. Change is okay for them if they instigate it, if it's the kind of change that they want.

They have to be the one that disperses that authority. They don't want it to come from the bottom up. Because then they can't take credit for it. That's the way it's been forever and ever and ever.

They're still running it [the school system] the way that factories were run many years ago. There was a person who was in charge--the head of the factory--and he delegated everything that was done in that factory, and even now that's changing in the workplace. But education is not moving along with that. They're still on the factory model. As you go down further and further, we're the peons, and we're expected to do what they say.

I don't think that they're purposely doing it. And there are times that there need to be constraints and there needs to be somebody who's really in charge and says, "No, you can't go any further right now." I think there has to be a cap somewhere. But the administration has to start changing too.

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We have a reflective practice group once every other week. Through some manipulation we've gotten some time during the school day to share. Previously we met every other Tuesday. Tuesdays are faculty meeting days, so everybody kind of leaves Tuesday free after school. So we figured it would be a good time to have a reflective practice group. And this last year we have started doing

some things with the principal.

Every Monday he has a "Meeting with the Principal" for a half an hour with grades one, two, and three. Working with that one half hour and then allowing our children to go out for a half hour recess, and his having the second group for a half hour and allowing them to go out, we were able to have an hour during the day once a month. It involved the whole faculty. Then we've snuck in a few more during the year, and we've even had some parents come in to do some substituting in the classroom and taking over the recess period, so that we can do this.

But we have to be careful as to how many times we do it because the higher-up administration frowns on it. They think we're wasting our time. They think that because we're not in the classroom with the children, the children are not being educated, and that's so sad. Here we are doing more work, actually. If I do have somebody come into the classroom during that period, I have to organize the activity before they get there. The children are still working; they're still learning, and we're learning in the process too. Just because we're out of the room doesn't mean that the children aren't learning something. But the administration thinks that we need to be right in our classroom with those children for them to learn.

When I say administration, I don't include our principal. I'm including the higher-ups. I don't look at our principal as being an administrator, although yes,

that's his job description because he's been on our side, so to speak, and he's been a friend, so I don't place him under that umbrella.

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I think there's a difference between a pragmatic teacher and a theorist. You have to have some common sense when you're working with children. You can't just take something you've read and say, "Well, it's got to work because it says so in the book." It doesn't.

But, I'm like other people. I do a lot of reading, but I don't have the vocabulary; I don't carry it on, and I don't know if that's teaching first grade for thirty years, you know, but you think about a lot of the vocabulary now that is in books. Part of the theory is the same as it was twenty years ago, but they've got a new word for it. If you look at the amount of writing that is done now in comparison to twenty years ago with a different vocabulary, I can't stay ahead of it; and so I think, "Well, what is it they mean?" So, I forget the word and carry the meaning instead--the practical things that I gain from it: so therefore, I don't carry the vocabulary to throw around because I'll never use it in my first grade anyway.

It took me awhile to figure out, for instance, when people started using the term "reflective practice groups." What the heck is that? I thought, "Hey, that's still in." In my vocabulary it used to be called a "rap session." But

they seem to have to tack other names onto it. So you try
to stay ahead of all this lingo. That's part of the change-
-the power, authority--they're there.

And I think on my tombstone I'd rather see, "She was a
good, practical teacher" rather than "She could sling the
lingo around." You know, there are people who can sling the
lingo but can't do very much else.

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Tell Me A Story

We have Olympic Day at the end of the year, and all the
children in the school compete at various activities, and
they win ribbons, and they win trophies, etc., at each grade
level. Of course not everybody wins a ribbon; not everybody
wins a trophy, and that's a fact of life. At our final
assembly, which we call our fifth grade graduation, the
ribbons and trophies are handed out.

I was sitting with my class, and there was a little
first grader from Marilyn's room behind me. Marilyn was on
the other side of the auditorium; two rows behind him was
Sheila who, because of the multi-age classroom, is
responsible for this child too. They passed out the ribbons
for first grade, and six children in the two rooms won
ribbons, and this poor little fella didn't. He kinda slunk
down in his chair, and he had big, thick glasses.

I looked back and there were big tears running down his

cheek. So I said, "What's the matter Michael?"

He said, "I didn't win a ribbon."

I said, "Well, Mike, we can't all win ribbons."

I reached over as far as I could and patted him. Then they passed out trophies, and he didn't win a trophy of course. If you didn't win a ribbon, you didn't win a trophy. So I looked back again, and he was really, really upset, and I said, "Mike it's OK, we don't all win trophies."

I indicated to Sheila that he was upset, and she said, "Yeah," she knew. I looked, and she was all red-eyed because she was feeling what Michael was feeling. So a few more minutes passed, and I looked back again and he was really upset. Poor little fella! I felt so bad--he had me crying!

I'm looking at him and I'm saying, "It's OK Mike, we don't all win trophies," and big tears were coming down. Then he saw the tears in my eyes, and he stopped crying because I think he realized that other people had experienced what he had experienced--that we're not all winners of trophies in life. And I think for Michael this is something he's going to remember--the day the teacher cried with him because he didn't win a ribbon and a trophy--and that's what teaching is!

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Part III:

SUBTEXTS

Chapter Thirteen

WORLD MAKING

"Stories are our tools for world making. When teaching and learning focus on world making, narrative may hold limitless possibilities. Narrative is more than a way of knowing; it is a way of knowing that we know something and that we have a right to know. It is not necessarily knowing that is filled with certainty, but it is, at the very least, knowing that we have the right to puzzle over situations in a quest for understanding. It is a way of bringing to the surface what was once inarticulatable.... Locating our own stories is the key" (Brunner 187).

As I read the stories that Joyce, Marilyn and Winnie have told, my initial response is not analytical nor critical, but reflective. I make connections to my own story(ies). The response is powerful, emotional and personal, so I am uncertain about analyzing them in a critical sense because I know I cannot do justice to them.[28] I am certain, however, that what is their story will become part of mine as I make connections from my own learning and life.[29]

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[28]I also know that I run the risk of creating a world that will pigeonhole them, categorize them.

[29]Rosenblatt, in The Reader, the Text, the Poem (46-47), assumes that the reader's role is active not passive. There is a transaction between the reader and the text as the reader brings prior knowledge and experience to the text and the text offers the reader new insights, ideas and experiences. Both change as a result of the transaction, and a poem (a new text) is created. These primary or personal responses to texts lead the way for more critical analyses or evaluations.

I am concerned that to preserve their stories is akin to preserving Marilyn, Joyce and Winnie's teaching lives.[30] But by sharing them, by interpreting them, by making the private public, I can give voice to the power their lives and stories tell since stories are a way to discover the truth(s) of things. As I reflect on their stories and write down some of my reflections, I create space for more contemplation by others who would read them differently. Together we create another version of a world that has yet to be explored; we open up possibilities for change stories; we raise questions about what some consider to be the real world of teaching, a world often defined by society as narrow, sterile, invisible and powerless. Therefore I make their stories yours and mine by suggesting possibilities and other world versions in a quest for understanding. I will highlight key features in each teacher's story and make connections between them to especially look at the features of change as a complexly collaborative whole as it must be in the institution of American education as it stands today.

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[30]As Coles states, "When we interpret a story, we are interpreting a life" (7).

The Teaching Identity

> Self is a construction, a result of action and
> symbolization.... Self is a text about how one is situated
> with respect to others and toward the world--a canonical
> text about powers and skills and dispositions that change as
> one's situation changes from young to old, from one kind of
> setting to another. This interpretation of text *in situ* by
> an individual *is* his sense of self in that situation. It is
> composed of expectations, feelings of esteem and power, and
> so on (Bruner 130).

It seems so natural for most of us to share our

experiences through narratives that we often do not even

notice them as we organize our experiences to make sense of

our world. Stories about school, about family, about work

and social lives produce common and unique meanings to us

all. In fact Bruner (1986) suggests that a common core of

stories is what defines a family, a community, a culture and

even the teaching self.[31] The teaching selves of Winnie,

Joyce and Marilyn have developed from their earliest

experiences as children, as students, and as teachers.

★★★★★★

Joyce

For Joyce the world of school and teaching were no

different from home. Literature and learning were highly

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[31]If as Fullan suggests that "educational change
depends on what teachers do and think," and that no
significant change can occur unless it reflects what
teachers believe about teaching and learning, then to
understand change one must discover where beliefs about
education and learning come from.

valued by her family. Learning was often experiential. She had strong teaching role models in her mother, her aunts and her grandmother. Her mother was well known for being an excellent and innovative teacher. Her family was looked up to because they were formally educated. Her father modeled the importance of education for her and led the town in creating a better educational environment for the community. Her mother and father had powerful reputations--reputations based on innovation, independence and leadership--in the community for promoting education.

In her first year of teaching we see these three qualities emerge in the decisions she made. She refused to follow the assigned text because she knew it wasn't right for her students. She instinctively knew that to allow her students the freedom to explore a problem that really bothered them was somehow more right. She succeeded because people assumed that she knew what she was doing because she was her mother's daughter. She did not know explicitly why she did not use the text the principal gave her; it simply did not seem right.

Her confidence to pursue choices for her students outside the traditions of schooling was patterned after years of experience with her mother and family, a family that gave her confidence and esteem as a learner and reader, and modeled power and leadership roles in education. She was, after all, her mother's daughter.

For her, school is about learning, learning to be a

learner for both teachers and students. The teacher's role is to remove all obstacles to both their abilities to learn. To do this she must understand why certain materials and methods are being used. Why this book instead of that one? Why use this word? What does the student need? What are his purposes as a learner? She is always asking these questions. She used her experience as a learner in her statistics course to test and explore her beliefs about her students' experiences.

She was surprised to learn that these questions were not the reasons behind the choices of other teachers when she began her masters project on read alouds. It bothered her that decisions were made that had little to do with the learner, that they were so shallow. She had naively assumed that all teachers questioned why and made decisions based on the needs of the student.

Another choice she made that diverged from the traditions was using literature in her classroom. Using literature was what she knew best. She had grand memories of the power and importance of reading books and of being read to. When she first learned to read, her grandmother called her mother down from her office to the classroom to hear her read, and her mother came. It was important. Other things could wait. Literature was so important that she marked and still marks time by books. It seems only natural that she would see using literature as a characteristic of good teaching.

One of her earliest memories of school was the pleasure and excitement she felt in the one-room school house which she remarks "was like being home." The sense of a learning community, her confidence as a learner and the possibilities and absolute importance of education to her own life directed her thinking about teaching.

Questioning and reflection are important to Joyce as a teacher and learner. Many of the questions she asked herself were the result of experiences with students that contradicted what she thought she knew about learning. When a new student did poorly on a phonics test that was supposed to identify his reading level, but he was able to read and comprehend anything, she began to question how she was looking at reading. Furthermore an experience with a special student labeled "learning disabled" led her to question who was really learning disabled.

Change for Joyce comes about in little steps. The purpose of change is to better her teaching or to grow, herself. It is continual and hard work. Although she doesn't explicitly say change is good, she equates it with learning and bettering herself. She also recognizes that it is recursive like learning and that there has to be a purpose for it. Change for Joyce seems to be internal change before external change.

For her teaching and learning co-exist. A good teacher is a learner, and a learner can be a teacher. She says she teaches because of the questions, not the answers. She sees

teaching as exploration:

> I like the concept of exploring. I think that's really
> what we are doing in education, and we sure have a lot
> of exploring to do. We looked at...teaching as
> exploration.... Who talks about teachers as explorers?

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Winnie

Unfortunately Winnie, from her earliest memories, was
not allowed to explore because of the many constraints
imposed upon her. She remembers that women had no real
choice in professions. They could be nurses or teachers,
and that was it. But her mother's wisdom in pointing her to
possibilities seems to have had a strong influence. Her
father's strength modeled persistence to do whatever she
wanted to do.

In her early schooling she associated questioning with
disruption and control. She always had questions. She
always wanted to know why, but her teachers did not have
time for her questions and silenced her. She saw herself
always being controlled by someone else's agenda, someone
else's time frame, but she kept searching for a purpose in
learning, and she continually resisted conformity. She also
remembers, however, teachers who respected the child, who
trusted kids, who took time to know the student, and who
were truly compassionate. Her best memories of being a
student center on experiences when she was given
responsibility, independence and leadership positions.

Her first years of teaching reveal this struggle for independence and her fear of not knowing how far she could go. She constantly struggled with a system that had tried to control her as a student and then as a teacher. Since she did not have a clear teaching role model to follow, she took small steps. We see a glimpse of rebelliousness in some of her early teaching stories--her initiation of the field day for first graders; her conspiracy with her students against the peeping principal. In each of her stories, she allies herself with and for her students. She focused on what students felt and needed, and she recognized the hidden agendas of schools that made no sense to kids.

For many years Winnie had been doing "school" for the sake of doing school. One very special student, however, provoked her initial reflection and new understandings about what was going on in her classroom and made her begin to really question her classroom practice and what she thought she was teaching. She was forced to reassess her beliefs about who her students were and what they were doing. But she didn't feel free to learn and to allow students to learn until they got the grant, and she discovered her whole language philosophy.

She says that it gave her a sense of freedom that she had never felt before. It released and gave authority to her beliefs that had been hidden beneath the surface of her life as a student and a teacher that there was nothing more important than the student in the classroom. When Winnie

tells her story about watering down the little boy who had wet his pants, she says that "That's personal contact with a kid and not reacting 'like a teacher.'" Her early experiences had let her feel that to be compassionate with children, to care more about them than the curriculum, was somehow wrong. Intuitively she had known that she was different, and she was right in her difference, but some "authority" had to free her. Whole language freed her.

It is interesting to note that Winnie makes a point of letting us know how fearful she is of taking tests and how her tests results did not always show what she knew. Now it is Winnie who seems to be the leader in seeking out new ways of authentically assessing what students are learning.

Change is inevitable, a part of life, she tells us. And for schools and teachers not to change "is criminal." She doesn't believe that all change is good and exercises her confidence in making decisions about what she should choose and what she should not choose based on her experience. She now has moved beyond following others' ideas and begun making her own choices.

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Marilyn

Similarly, Marilyn like Winnie felt she had no professional choices but teaching or nursing. She would have preferred nursing because she liked the science and the

caring for people, but outside forces brought her into teaching, and, as she says, "Teaching was in the blood." Like Joyce she also had teaching role models--her mother and grandmother were teachers.

Like Winnie's experiences, school often did not value learning and the learner. She doesn't remember it being very exciting. She remembers that good teachers were equated with being strict. Unlike Joyce's beginning to read experience, Marilyn's teacher would not call her mother to the classroom to hear her first attempts at reading. It wasn't in the time frame.

However, reading at home was important. Her father read aloud to her and her brother, and books were often prized gifts. Her mother was always studying and reading, and, as Marilyn notes, her mother believed that reading should have a purpose. Today Marilyn sees herself as a learner because she is a reader.

Marilyn found that when she took control of her own learning, she was happiest. The assignments she remembers she enjoyed the most reflect this. She was always a reader and remembers reading biographies, especially of women who were instruments of change. She says that change seemed to be what she was always striving for. To be learning something new, trying something new, seemed to energize her.

Learning and change for Marilyn are synonymous. She is always learning and thus change is always happening. Knowing why is the key. Knowledge for Marilyn is process,

learning is process, and change is process.

Because her earliest teaching experiences were outside
the school, she was able to explore individual learning
needs and behaviors through tutoring her special students in
their homes. Working outside the school cultivated her
independence and focused her student-centeredness. She
said,

> The way we do school doesn't make sense for kids. There
> is something wrong with what we're doing.... I was
> always trying to find a way that makes sense to kids.

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One would expect or assume that the place to explore
teaching would be in formal education courses at college.
But all three indicate that what they valued in teaching was
not found in their early education courses.

They criticized these courses for being too textbook-
oriented, too teacher-centered and not experiential enough.
Winnie especially recognized that she did not learn about
what was most important to teaching, the student, from her
program. They also all felt that they had not learned to
think or were even expected to think in their education
courses. Frank Smith (1983) concurs with what they
discovered when he said,

> Many teachers are trained to be ignorant, to rely on
> the options of experts or 'superiors,' rather than on
> their own judgment." (5)

Instead, these teachers use their experiences as

students and as teachers to define what they think is important in teaching, to develop their own theories of learning, and they are not afraid to challenge other sources. They have learned to trust themselves. They do not just read about theory and practices written by "experts" or scholars and try to apply the ideas to their classrooms. They sort through ideas and integrate them, throw them out or build upon them and create their own theories and practices for their own particular classrooms and school. There are no maps or signs on the road to change because each is idiosyncratic.

These teachers have embraced whole language because they have been on a personal journey of discovery, through a constant process of self-directed inquiry. They have continued to learn and grow by questioning what they believe and practice. Their questions "why" and "what if" stand out above the "what" and "how" questions of many traditional educators.

Although their backgrounds and early lives are different in many ways, their independence and their willingness to question tradition in seeking their own way seems to be what sets them apart and connects them. Each journey of exploration begins at a different location and requires risk-taking. Each journey is individual; each takes courage to confront the challenges and obstacles on the road.

PERSPECTIVES ON WHOLE LANGUAGE

Frank Smith says that whole language is a way of thinking about teaching, not one particular method. Judith Lindfors says that whole language teachers focus on the learner's processes of coming to know and derive their teaching strategies from these observations. Whole language teachers must first see themselves as learners, and, through the understanding of their own learning, teachers are able to help students become active learners.

For many reasons Joyce, Marilyn and Winnie can be called whole language teachers. They allow their observations of how children learn to direct their teaching and thinking about teaching, not texts, tests nor traditional curricula. Kelly, Winnie's special student, opened her eyes about pretenders; Joyce's special student led her to question what she thought she knew about reading; Marilyn's early experiences with special students helped her to focus on individual learning processes. They make their teaching decisions on "what makes sense to kids."

These teachers involve students in the creating of the curriculum.[32] Marilyn tells about how they develop their unit of study by asking students what it is they know about

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[32]Whole language requires not merely that teachers use new activities or materials, but also that they understand learners and learning in new ways, that they interact with students and develop curriculum in new ways, that they modify their roles as teachers, and that they hold new expectations for students and develop new means of assessment accordingly (Weaver and Henke 5).

the subject, what it is they want to know about the subject, and what it is they want to learn. These teachers' view of curriculum is organic. Marilyn says that it, the curriculum, must be a living document; it can't be static. All of them, teachers and students, take responsibility and ownership of it.

They have integrated curriculum around literature, writing and language. They encourage and model collaboration and risk taking. They have explored new methods of assessment which reflect their beliefs about learning and involve students. They have evolved from not only using writing portfolios, but also reading portfolios and video portfolios. They have changed the ranking cards to reflect more than just letter grades.

Winnie's story about a day in first grade reveals what is important to her and all of these teachers. Winnie is a teacher who recognizes the importance of teachable moments and flexibility and who recognizes that the concerns children bring to her classroom are the curricula of the moment. This awareness and flexibility seem to be at the heart of how Joyce, Marilyn and Winnie are defining their version of whole language.

Interestingly, their political astuteness has carried them beyond the term "whole language." Joyce points out that the term can be considered exclusive--exclusive of textbooks, exclusive of other ways of learning, even exclusive of some teachers--which may be some of the reasons

for it being a political issue. She prefers to call them what they are--child-centered teachers. Marilyn, Winnie and Joyce focus on what the child knows and needs and their model of literacy learning. They will use whatever resources are available, but the way they use them is in response to the learner and the learning situation, not the text nor the curriculum.[33] For them it is the theory and the research and the children which drive their everyday practice.

They realize that they must be very careful not to set up an orthodoxy that suggests that there is only one way to be a whole language teacher. To suggest that one can only be a whole language teacher if he or she does not use basals is dangerous. If whole language companies continue to produce texts and materials with manuals, etc., they are no different than the current basal companies. Materials and methods are not at the center nor are they the enemies of a whole language classroom. They are resources. Being a whole language teacher has little to do with the tools one has at hand, and a great deal to do with the teacher's theory, based on sound research and observations, of how children learn.

Joyce believes that they have gone beyond what many would interpret whole language to be. Since their beliefs affect more than just the way they teach reading and

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[33]Joyce says that she would use the basal if that was all she had to use. But she would use it in response to her students' needs, not the teachers manual.

writing. Their beliefs affect the way that they teach math and science and all the other subjects as well.

SHIFTING THE HIERARCHY
Or Rebels with a Cause

"...nothing blocks change as effectively as the perception
that the reins of power are in the hands of others, others
with whom one has little contact, respect from or for, and
whose decisions are arbitrary, punitive and atheoretical"
(Lester and Onore 34).

The changes that these teachers wanted to put into place required relinquishing traditional beliefs about teaching and learning not only for themselves, but for the system itself. The system in which they function by all outward appearances is a very traditional, hierarchial system clearly based on behavioristic/scientific management principles. To create a school based on Joyce, Marilyn and Winnie's holistic beliefs would require changing the structure of the system itself. It was clear that the system was not going to willingly give its support.

For example, traditionally the teachers' place in the hierarchy of schooling makes them powerless in decisions about curricula, staff development, building management and materials. This is clearly true of the North Park system which marginalizes teachers in many ways. Every change, every deviation in this system, has to be approved by the superintendent. It must/they must fit into his model of schools. All schools are expected to be carbon copies of

each other.[34] State tests are used for teacher/school
accountability, and teacher time is regulated in that they
may not be absent from their classrooms for inservice.[35]
As well, texts and reading curricula are regulated by the
official system publisher.[36]

But at the same time that the teachers are marginalized
in the system, the system promotes their importance in the
classroom as transmitters of knowledge, according to system
guidelines. The regulation of teachers' time suggests that
no learning will occur if they are not in the classroom.
The knowledge they control and are expected to transmit to
students is mandated by standardized tests which reflect a
standardized curriculum dictated by publishers and others
quite distant from the classroom and students.[37] Learners'
intentions and knowledge seem to be of little consequence in
creating this curriculum. What seems to be important is
keeping the system intact.

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[34]In every encounter with district officials, these
teachers at North Park are continually told how important it
is for all the schools to be the same. This was an obstacle
the system saw and so did the teachers.

[35]In fact all professional development must occur when
teachers do not have students, and teachers within the
system may not visit each other's classes.

[36]The system requires all the schools to use the same
basal, and the reading curriculum is defined by the scope
and sequence charts from the publisher, called the Blue
Book.

[37]Even with the changes they eventually made, Marilyn
tells us that they can continue their new program only as
long as their students continue to do well on these
standardized tests.

The purpose of all schooling in this district (as in many others) is the maintenance of a particular static world view.[38] In this case a very hierarchial blue print of the world. Knowledge is divvied out in particular doses for particular people. For example, this system has a strong emphasis on tracking; a child is identified in elementary school according to family connections and his or her ability to regurgitate information on a test to determine what track is appropriate. Teachers are rewarded for their ability to control and to maintain the status quo which continues to be dictated by those outside of the classroom.

The kinds of changes that Joyce, Marilyn and Winnie wanted to make required that they would have to question some of these conditions in the system such as the system's view of learning, view of time, view of the teacher's role, and view that all schools must be the same. The teachers would need to free themselves from some of these constraints and demand more professional autonomy.

Unfortunately, when someone questions authority by suggesting a change not sanctioned by those in authority, he or she is viewed as a rebel, and change which questions institutional hierarchies and power relationships becomes

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[38]Conformity is seen as a method of control. By insisting that all grades and all schools are alike, the district insures control over content and world views and maintains the status quo.

political.[39]

Joyce, Marilyn and Winnie are well aware of the power issues. They are constantly called the "rebels," outsiders. In fact Joyce remarked that they always feel "on the edge," and that they are never in sync with the rest of the system. However, the image of "rebel" does not seem particularly disturbing to them because the images that suggest that they are rebels are also the images they respect. They are professionals who have resisted being defined as simply functionaries of the system, simply doing what they are told to do from above. They continually read, participate in workshops and accept accountability for the choices and changes they make.

They are risk-takers who through the act of resistance are not afraid to try something new. In fact Marilyn says all teachers should be risk-takers.

To be risk takers they recognize the importance and need for community and sharing and support. They reject being isolated and demand spaces to be heard. Consequently, they find ways to meet and share ideas and to grow professionally. They do not rely on the system to do it for them because it is not really a priority for the system.

They refuse to be silenced and resist conformity to a system that tries to silence them. They are rebels because

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[39]Mayher states that "Teachers at all levels...need and must demand higher levels of professional autonomy.... Achieving this change will require political action of a sort which American teachers have traditionally shied away from" (20).

they are resisting and attempting to change many of the accepted conventions of their system.

The fact that they make other teachers in the system uncomfortable seems to be viewed as positive by them. Joyce explains that the tension and the "ya buts" make them continually reexamine themselves. Through persistent critique, reassessment of goals and reflection, the "rebel" image works for them. They are attempting to redefine the definition of teacher, of the teacher's role and position, and of learning in their system.

Finally, they are examples for their students. They know that what they do as learners, thinkers and decision makers is the model they are creating for their students.

KEYS TO CHANGE

From their stories a number of events and actions seem to have been critical in their ability to make changes.

The Vision

Each year at North Park begins with a clear statement of purpose. "At the first faculty meeting of the year, Mr. Holmes always asks or says, 'Our main purpose is to teach kids to read. Does everyone agree?' So we have always had

a focus" (Marilyn 1-1-36).[40] Their focus is and has always

been to teach children to read and to love reading; reading

is at the heart of everything they do in the classroom.[41]

Having a vision seems to be the key to many kinds of

change.[42] It is the driving force which focuses all

activities and decisions. Russ Quaglia (1991) states that

> As change agents, we need to be in front of the change
> process, not trailing behind, hanging on for dear
> life.... We must learn to have a vision. Not just
> into the future, but a vision which allows us to see
> organizational needs, individual needs, and most
> importantly, student needs (6).

But as Connelly suggests, a vision must not be possessed

only by the leader(s) if it is to be successful. A

universal vision, held by both the administrator and the

teachers, is necessary to unite restructuring projects which

promote real educational change and reform. The vision must

be developed and owned by everyone in the organization even

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[40]Marilyn said that she had never been in another
school in her system that seemed to have a clear vision as a
group of what their purpose was. Not that they say that
they do not, but that one is not clearly and succinctly
articulated for and by all the teachers in the school.

[41]Even before they made the major change towards whole
language, Winnie noted, "We were excited about books. We
were a faculty that has become excited about books" (J2-1-
18).

[42]"Without exception, all the schools we've worked with
have lacked a unified sense of purpose and discussion of a
school mission.... Lacking a mission or philosophy of
education, schools are vulnerable to others making
educational decisions for them and to changes in educational
fashion." (Lester and Onore 31)

though a leader facilitates, guides and supports the process.[43]

Miles (1987) summarizes:

The need for a vision of what the school should look like is affected by two preconditions: the principal must exercise leadership in promoting a vision, but the staff must also be cohesive enough to be willing to buy some shared set of goals. Having a vision leads directly to good implementation by creating enthusiasm that increases willingness and initiative, but also by creating an environment in which a long term vision of the future permits program evolution that is always purposive, but reflects growth of activities rather than limiting implementation. Putting it another way: a good vision provides shared criteria for judging movement. Such evolution also leads, characteristically, to organizational change: new structures and procedures that in turn promote institutionalization. (7)

Timing

The time for change is critical if that change is to be successful. Sometimes the opportunity to initiate change is serendipitous, and the agent must be ready and focused. This is what happened to the teachers at North Park.

This vision which was the focus of their teaching was the reason that they initially decided to make changes. And their backgrounds both personal and professional had centered them in their belief that a change was necessary, and they were ready.

They were aware that the district was going to get a

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[43]Connelly also supports the fact that educational restructuring and change is a systems issue, and vision building should be bottom-up for successful educational reform and change.

new basal series. As in many systems, teachers would
eventually be consulted on which series to pick. But
because the North Park teachers had been going together to
workshops and sampling new ideas about the teaching of
language arts and reading, they had decided as a group that
they did not want to get a new reading series. What they
wanted to do was find out more about what was happening "out
there" in the teaching of reading and do something new
that would promote their vision.

At the same time they had read that the state was
offering innovative grants to schools to explore new methods
in teaching. As a group they put together a proposal to
investigate whole language. The change away from basals and
the grant offering were both serendipitous. The school was
focused and ready. Thus the timing was right for change.

The Grants

Although the teachers had been going to workshops and
exploring new ideas, one factor was very critical for them
to make the changes that they wanted--the grants. The
grants gave them the real impetus and power that they needed
for change in this system.

Because of the money the grants provided, they were
able to achieve the political clout they needed with the
superintendent and school board. Marilyn's story suggests
that the superintendent saw only the money, and Winnie's

experience with and comments about the school board meeting supports that view also.

The first grant gave them the money they needed to pay for a facilitator[44] and materials. It also gave them the time that they needed to learn and reflect together so as to develop their own understandings about learning, reading and writing. Because the money and time were written into the first grant, the superintendent could not say no to their release time and substitutes the first year. Even though he said no to them the second year, they had gotten the start they needed. With the help of their principal and some creativity, they were able to continue their reflective practice groups in the following years.

After the second grant and the development of their language arts curriculum, the superintendent could not say that they could not continue. Or in Marilyn's words, "We are 'allowed' to continue as a whole language school."

Marilyn, however, sees that the real power of the grant was in the commitment they all made.

> There's power in a grant. It's not even the money. It's the commitment to it that's more important than the money.... The grant makes you clarify what you're going to do, or define it, and it gives you more commitment to it.

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[44]They all felt that an outside facilitator was very important to help them focus on the issues. Although systems will often bring in experts to promote change, the key for them was that they chose the facilitator.

CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS

The traditional boundaries established in schools with traditional beliefs are not only about education, but also control and power.[45] The kinds of changes these teachers were attempting to make required the blurring of many of the traditional boundaries, thus making the change political.[46] Changing the power relationships between teachers and the system, teachers and administrators, teachers and teachers, teachers and parents, and teachers and students disrupt traditional boundaries, and this is the definition of "political."

Winnie, Marilyn and Joyce saw change as more than just trying out a new method. Rather they saw change as necessity, as well as recursive, as inevitable and as about blurring boundaries. Boundaries that were not immutable, that could be interrupted. Power could be redistributed, and that is what change in education is about and why there is so much fear about real, second order change.

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[45]Michael Apple (1982) suggests that three types of control operate in schools: simple, bureaucratic, and technical. For example, state mandated competency tests exemplify bureaucratic control; they also carry technical control in that curriculum may be adjusted to fit the test; and administrators will demonstrate simple control by insisting teachers make the changes needed.

[46]Joyce remarked that everything in education is political and becomes threatening to those in control when decisions are made by those at the bottom of that hierarchy. Marilyn understands the political correctness of the superintendent's desire to keep all the schools the same but knew that it did not work for learning.

Between Teachers and the System

"Teachers are the only people who have the power, the commitment, the desire, and the capacity to be leaders in the process of change. But to take on such leadership roles we [teachers] must substantially change our conceptions of the nature and processes of schooling" (Mayher 1).

Changing teachers' relationships with a school system was not an easy task. It could not happen overnight. First the teachers needed to understand the relationships. They needed to understand how their dependency had come about and find places to break it or renegotiate their positions and work within the system. They needed to understand that it was not just the system which held them back from changing, but themselves.

The school system that they worked in put many constraints on them which could have become real obstacles to change. However, they were able to remove some of the obstacles through the grants as noted above. Some of the obstacles they were not able to remove, but they found ways to work around them. They were willing to give up some things for others that they felt were more important. They were able to put themselves in a negotiating position with the system whereby they created some autonomy and flexibility for themselves.

For example, in the first grant they were able to get substitutes to come in to cover for them, so they could at least meet in their building for reflection and intellectual

growth. When the superintendent would not allow that to happen in their second grant, they got the help from their principal to continue meeting and also began their retreats at the end of the year.

Although the superintendent said that the reason was that they needed to be in their classrooms for children to learn, one could surmise that his real purpose was control, to not allow too much thinking and real discussion for learning, which is central to change.[47]

A key mechanism for maintaining the status quo of a school system is silence. If issues that might rock the boat are never brought out into the open, then changing or correcting the problem does not appear as a difficulty. Everyone becomes responsible for perpetuating the system.

Their actions and their ingenuity and success, whether officially recognized by the system or not, has gained respect from the system. We see that Joyce has a powerful reputation in the story that she tells about when other teachers in other schools in the district ask to do new things with curriculum or literature: "Our coordinator has told them that I am the only one who can do it.... 'Not everyone's a Joyce Thatcher. Not everyone can do this,' he says."

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[47]This superintendent might agree that "The ideal teacher is one who would control the children and be controlled by her superiors" (Madeleine Grumet qtd in Brunner 132).

Between Teachers and Principal

The most powerful source of help or hinderance to the
teacher who wants to attempt "real" change is the school
principal. Teachers take their cues from their
administrators. These teachers have a great deal of respect
for Mr. Holms, their principal. Mr. Holms works diligently
at allowing his teachers time to take leadership roles and
time to reflect and work together. To do this he himself
will often take the students during the week for an hour to
allow teachers time to meet and discuss what is happening in
their program.

Marilyn says he insulates them often from controversy
at the district level by supporting them without bringing it
back to the school and classroom:

> We know he does battle for us, but he never mentions
> the pressure he's taking. You know it is there, by
> some of the things he says, but he never complains to
> us. He just supports us. (MLP1-1-44)

Mr. Holms seems to define his role in a very different
way from other administrators. His leadership style is one
of sharing power with his teachers and providing time for
them to exercise that power. Instead of controlling what
the teachers do, he directs more power and influence to the
teachers to make decisions about what happens in their
classrooms, what types of materials they use, what methods
they choose. He gives them time to meet together and
develop information and strategies and to develop their
vision of where their school is going.

Between Teachers and Teachers

From their stories we see that these teachers have
developed relationships with each other that go beyond what
most teacher-teacher relationships are. They see themselves
collectively as "go-getters" and "risk takers." They are a
community of learners.

They see each other as learners whose learning, like
their students', is on a continuum. They share their
learning and questions and support each others learning.
They collaborate across disciplines and grade levels. They
are leaders and readers. They share responsibility, ideas,
books and leadership.

They have created for themselves a democratic learning
environment which values critical thinking and literacy. As
Susan Church (1992) suggests, through their exploration of
whole language philosophy and practice they have created
democratic environments for their students, and they have
also come to realize that they, like their students, need
greater control over their own work--what and how they teach
(243).

Between Teachers and Parents

Like in most schools parents are always invited and
encouraged to visit and observe at North Park. But these
teachers have involved parents much more than most schools

do. When they were beginning to make the 'dramatic' changes in materials and curriculum and assessment, they brought parents in to explain and clarify what they were going to do, to make them part of the change process.

They taught a class for parents once a week over an eight-week period on the reading and writing processes and explained to parents what they could do to support their children. They invited parents in to read to students and to help in a variety of ways to individualize their classrooms.

When they changed the report cards, Winnie surveyed the parents' responses to the narratives. Her reasons for doing this were two-fold. First, she wanted to make sure that parents were pleased, as the superintendent had told them that parents only wanted letter grades. Parents overwhelmingly saw this approach as positive because they could understand what their children were doing. Secondly, she saw it as a way to educate parents into the language of learning and teaching, so that they would not only understand terms, but begin to be a more significant part of their child's learning.

Parents' support is central to any kind of change in education. Parents need to not only feel a part of it, they must understand it as well.

Between Teachers and Students

The most powerful stories these teachers tell reflect their changing relationships with their students as they learned to listen to them.[48]

Marilyn said, "You have to stop talking so you can hear. You have to stop being the teacher in front of the class and talking and stand back and listen." They learned to give up control and responsibility of the students' learning to the students.

> How did we make change into it--giving up teacher control and giving students control? ...training for the writing process and allowing students to choose their topic gave us training in giving up control. The next step was letting them choose their reading material. They can do that too. They have taken the ownership of their own learning. They're learning the real world (Marilyn 1-1-51).

These were all critical pieces in their change efforts. As Joyce noted,

> Everybody knows how to teach. That's what is hard about change in education...everybody has gone to school, so they all think they know how to be a teacher.

They had to change not only their own beliefs, but those "familiar and reliable educational constructs" of many

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[48]As Ken Goodman notes, [whole language] is a way of bringing together a view of learning; and a view of people, in particular two special groups of people: kids and teachers (5).

others who felt they knew what teaching and school were
supposed to be like.

Although possibly the norm for most teachers, none of
these three teachers ever really accepted any of the
constraints imposed on them by their school system as
teachers and students. Joyce began teaching with different
beliefs/constructs about what a teacher's role was
altogether; Marilyn continually looked to change as a
natural part of learning and teaching; and even though
Winnie followed many of the constraints, she always had a
sense of discomfort. I do not think that any of them would
have ever argued that the established system was/is the way
schools should be.

At the conclusion of Marilyn's stories in Chapter Nine,
she began to tell about the events which led to changing
their school to a whole language school. Within her story
of these events the philosophy driving the school system
becomes quite clear. The system, led almost exclusively by
the superintendent, functions on the belief that all schools
must be alike. As a corollary to that belief, one would
also assume that teachers and students were and must be
alike. Collaboration among faculty, essential to growth and
learning, is not defined as a professional necessity.
After all, collaboration would not be necessary in a world
where everyone has the same like view.

Control is still central. When the system wanted them
to apply for a grant, it was great; when they wanted to

apply for one, it was not acceptable. When the district teachers organized and met to discuss important issues, the meetings were well attended and valuable. When the system took over the meetings, issues the teachers wanted to discuss were not relevant because, as Marilyn suggests, the coordinator could not control the outcomes.

These institutional practices at work in this system thwart the ability of any individual to fully enact or even develop his/her personal beliefs, especially those that are at odds with the established traditions.

Chapter Fourteen

A CONSCIOUSNESS OF POSSIBILITY

"To recognize limitations as well as possibilities does not take away from the concept [of empowerment], rather it strengthens the argument Maxine Greene makes with respect to teachers having a consciousness of possibility--that is, having the capacity to see obstacles to one's freedom, to name obstacles as problems, and to find a public arena in which to pose alternatives." (Brunner 50)

Marilyn, Joyce and Winnie operate within possibilities and constraints. The system, the language of education, and the entire educational community provide the constraints. They, however, have created the possibilities by their willingness to question power and authority.

In reality the question of change to whole language in this system has more to do with power and control than with learning.[49] The system works to maintain the system supported by scientific management and behaviorist beliefs, which then also function to maintain the status quo. In contrast, these teachers work towards finding out and doing what is best for each individual student.

The system is interested in promoting teaching, and the teachers in promoting learning. The two ideas clash. "Teaching doesn't make language learning happen; it supports

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[49]What Mamchur(1990) says about some teachers that "much of the inflexibility on the part of teachers [systems] in terms of curriculum is not as much an issue of curriculum as an issue of power"(634) also describes many systems.

its development...effective teaching supports and extends learning; it can never control it" (K. Goodman 1986). The dominant curriculum theory treats knowledge as something to be managed and consumed. Whole language practitioners see knowledge as something to be understood and analyzed within forms of experiences that students bring to school.

The North Park teachers' view of learning empowers them just as it empowers their students because it allows them to see many opportunities, ask many questions, and make many choices. Their teaching/learning world is not sterile, narrow, invisible or powerless. Because the system sees the world from a behaviorist point of view, it has few choices: responses are conditioned, fitting into predetermined paths of behavior.

In collaboration with their principal, these teachers have created an environment in which their desire to be in charge of their own teaching and learning flourishes. They push against a system which assumes they will not, cannot, think. They are "transformative intellectuals,"[50] in charge of their own destinies and capable of creating change.

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[50]I use this term as defined by Mayher as one who recognizes that issues affecting teaching and learning are political issues directly concerned with "the struggle for meaning and the struggle over power relations.... Teachers who assume the role of transformative intellectuals treat students as critical agents, question how knowledge is produced and distributed, utilize dialogue, and make knowledge meaningful, critical and ultimately emancipatory" (Giroux and McLaren 1986 215, based on Aronowitz and Giroux 1985, especially Chapter 2, qtd in Mayher 291).

To create change in their school, they had to recognize what the obstacles they faced were. They themselves were one of the obstacles to change. They needed to clearly understand learning theory. They had to recognize that support, time and materials were necessities of change. They had to learn that change is not and cannot always be big. Sometimes it was the little steps that were important. And sometimes change was recursive: they needed to understand change itself. They had to recognize the effects of change and that change affects everyone in the educational system. They had to take charge of the change process. The initiation process of change for these teachers began as a need for them to become more knowledgeable about what was the best way to teach reading. Their initial plan to find out about the theory and research was a move to discover whether their proposed change would meet the need they wanted.

They controlled both the initiation and implementation of the process itself. The strength of their success stems from this fact. When change is initiated from the outside as in state and government mandates, the goals of and procedures for change are not often clearly defined for individual schools. This lack of clarity can result in a school system oversimplifying the process of implementation.

All the participants--teachers, students and the principal--have been learners, risk-takers and decision makers taking significant responsibility for their own

learning and change in their school. Although the system has balked on occasion, the teachers' tenacity and the principal's support have enabled them to do something very remarkable.

Leaders Not Followers

Teachers must become the professional agents of change. No one else can do change for them nor dictate it to them. For too long teachers have been "cogs in the educational factory" (Allen 249), prisoners of systems that see them as just part of the machinery, as empty vessels to be filled with "how-tos." In order for teachers to be other than functionaries in the system, they need to see themselves in charge of their own destinies and capable of creating change and as creators of patterns made up of webs of individuals, each perfectly unique.

Change is a political act when teachers begin questioning institutional hierarchies and all power relationships.[51] Joyce, Marilyn and Winnie refuse to be automatons in the system. They question the schools' view of knowledge as cultural/traditional transmission. They are not led; they lead.

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[51]"Their [teachers'] inattention and lack of [political] action perpetuates the status quo: policymakers and educators with vested interest in current practices and programs accept their silence as tacit endorsement of current practice and use it to argue against change." (Shannon 1992 2)

What do other teachers need to do to be able to accomplish what these teachers have? I can only suggest possibilities from these teachers' stories since all teachers, systems and circumstances differ:

1. Recognize your own potential for change and your limitations.

2. Place students' learning at the center of the school agenda.

3. Reclaim control over the processes of teaching and learning. Take the leadership and responsibility. Don't expect someone else to do it.

4. Have a coherent plan for change.

5. Take a collective initiative towards change. Groups of teachers have more power than the individual.

6. Listen to your students and trust what you find there.

7. Explore the basis of your beliefs. Bring in an outside coordinator--not necessarily an expert--to facilitate your learning and help guide your reflections.

8. Make time to talk and work together. Share your learning with others.

9. Educate parents and community to develop their support and give them ownership in the

change.

10. Understand what change really means.

11. Recognize that real change towards whole
    language requires not only changes in
    beliefs, but in the school structure itself.

12. Find a supportive principal. This is
    essential.

13. See change as a process of self-directed
    inquiry.

Joyce remarked that "Teachers, like everyone else, need models, need heroes, need to know that they can be in power" (Joyce 168). These three teachers are models for others of what teachers are capable of doing.

I give them to you, through their stories.

AFTERWORD

As I reflect upon and relisten to these stories of
change, I am reminded of a conversation that I had with my
colleague Helen Walker about metaphors, especially the
manufacturing metaphor for teaching, which is the dominant
American metaphor for getting things done. It is so
pervasive that I hear the participants make use of it as
they struggle against it. I also have referred to it
earlier as the central structure for most educational
systems.

But what is most apparent in my work for this study is
that these teachers have been living through a different
metaphor--what Parker Palmer calls the 'agricultural'
metaphor. The key features of the agricultural metaphor are
these:

> (a) the farmer must prepare the ground and plant and
> tend the seeds with no guarantee that they will grow,
> no way of forcing the outcomes;

> (b) the process involves both shadow and light; it is
> not neat and clean but, on the contrary, involves decay
> and death;

(c) what happens is highly dependent on factors such as weather that are totally beyond the farmer's control, so "letting go" becomes a virtue;

(d) the health of the entire enterprise depends on finding and honoring one's place in the larger ecology, in a "web of being" upon which all of us and our work are dependent;

(e) the emergent reality is organic, not mechanical; when treated mechanically it dies, but when respected as a life-form, it gives nourishment;

(f) the farmer's work does not proceed onward and upward in a linear fashion, but continually recycles in a seasonal pattern; it is a work of "eternal return." (Palmer 2)

My purpose in this text has been to uncover these teachers' stories, not to cover them nor to force the outcomes, but to help prepare the ground and plant the seeds for change. I hoped to reveal possibilities, to raise questions, to pose problems.

The seeds of change were planted very early on for these teachers, but not truly cultivated until they all came together that first year and began turning over the earth of their ideas. The year of the grant allowed them to

establish a nourishing atmosphere of trust and openness to inquire into who they were and what they were doing, to then come into touch with their true selves--real teachers and learners.

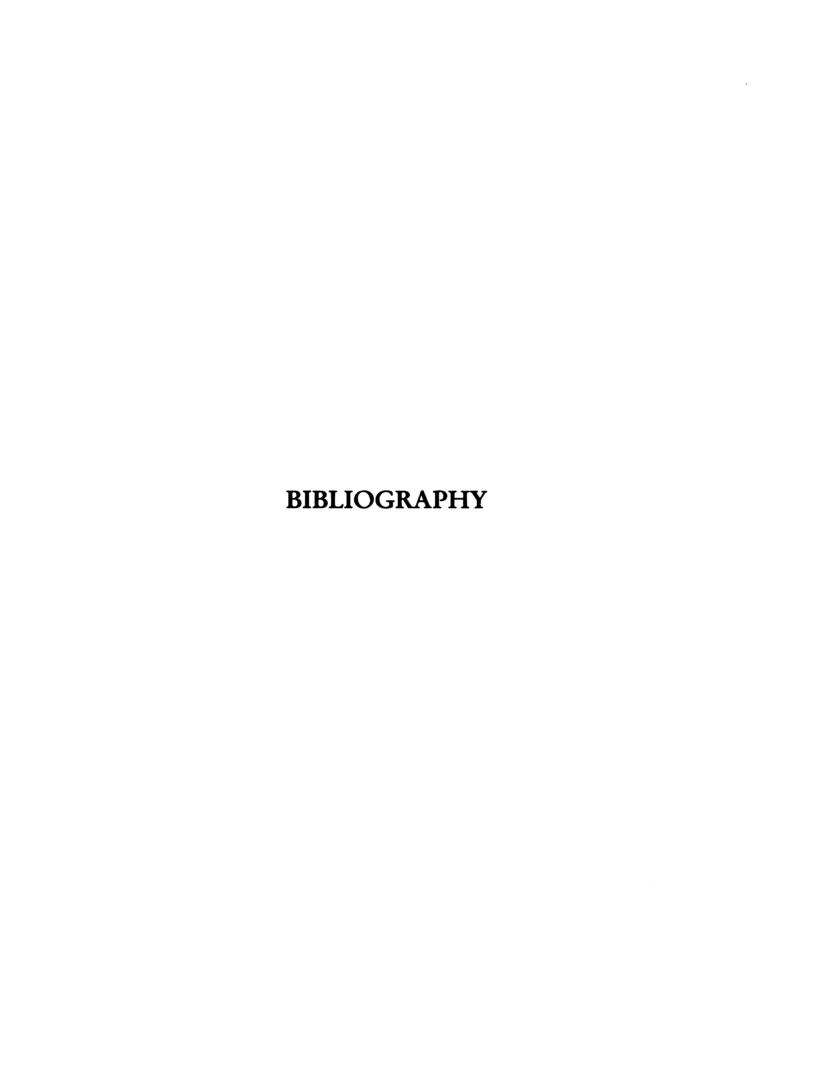## Implications for Further Research

It seems to me that what these teachers' stories suggest is that we need to look at successful teachers in a very different way than we have in the past. Learning change is very complex. There are no real recipes, real certainties like traditional quantitative approaches might suggest. Each teacher comes to new beliefs through their own individual experiences--as students and as teachers. To learn change we must look at and listen to individual stories to unearth possibilities.[52]

We need to begin to ask different questions. How strongly does a teacher's experience as a student reflect her decisions in the classroom? How strongly does her experiences at home affect her actions in the classroom? Can we realistically expect an entire system to change towards current holistic approaches to learning and teaching? Is it realistic to think that education could be changed because the traditions of education are almost a

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[52]"When examining stories of schooling, we need to look at the schooling that goes on outside of the classroom also if we are to begin to understand teachers as well as students"(Brunner 219).

cultural phenomena? Who really needs to be in control?

We need to look at teacher stories through a different kind of research lens, a qualitative lens. Teacher stories humanize the process of educational change; through them change and specifically change to whole language becomes more realistic by dealing with the challenges faced daily by classroom teachers. "Stories are the most powerful ways we have to envision human potential and to value each stage of life as a time of worth" (Mayher 101). For teachers, future teachers, and administrators listening to teacher stories can open possibilities for exploration. After all education is an exploration, not a destination.

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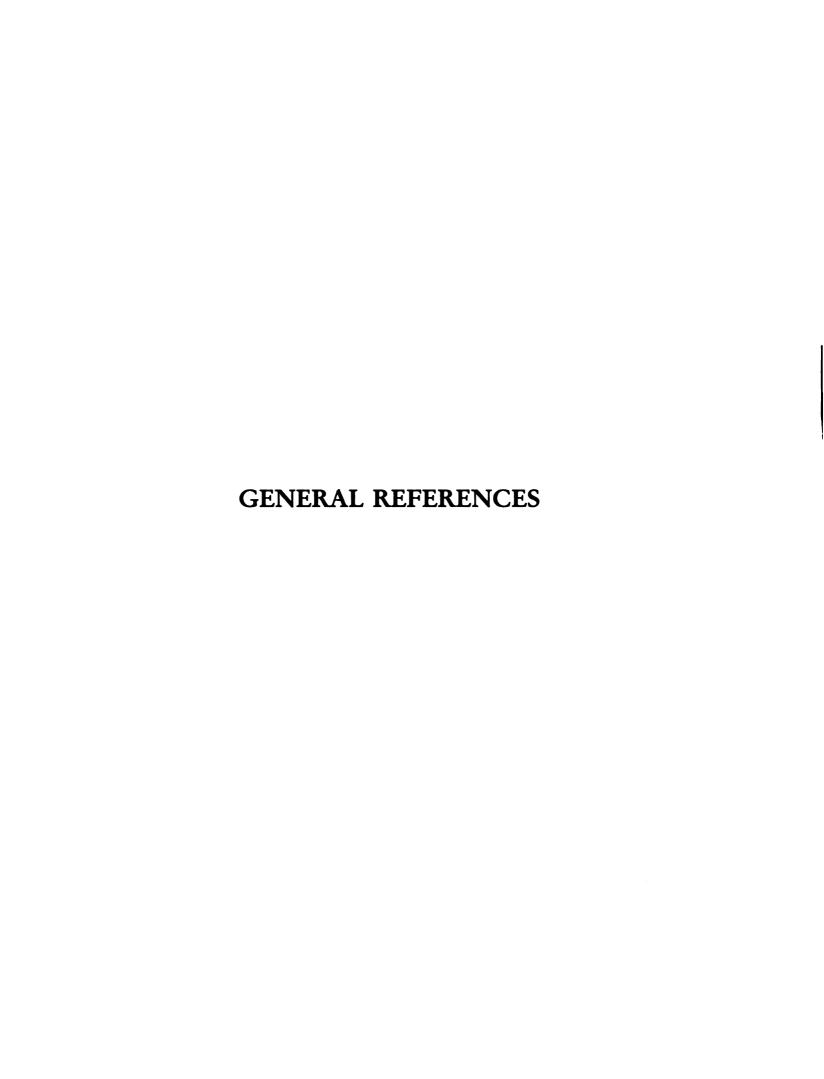What Works and Why. New York: Teachers College Press,
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