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PRACTICAL REASONING AND OBSERVATION: A SECOND-GRADE TEACHER REFERS CHILDREN FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

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ABSTRACT

PRACTICAL REASONING AND OBSERVATION: A SECOND-GRADE TEACHER REFERS CHILDREN FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

By

Brenda Belson Lazarus

The purpose of this study was to examine the way an experienced second-grade teacher made decisions about children in her class with regard to special education referral. My goal was to discern the fine details of a teacher's ways of looking at children who are not meeting with success. Why are some children referred for special education while others with seemingly similar problems are not?

Data were gathered over the course of a school year using interpretive participant observational techniques: participant observation, fieldnotes, videotaping of classroom interaction, interviews and viewing sessions with the teacher, and document collection. Careful analysis of all data sources provided the key linkages of the study.

Having an understanding of behavioral characteristics indicating a handicapping condition did not provide enough specific, contextually embedded information for the teacher to refer a child for special education. The teacher used a phenomenological approach to guide her decision making. Her general expectations for the class provided a framework from which she referred children. The identification of

mildly handicapped children began with practical, teacher-created categories for the children. Case studies of two children who were referred are presented, as well as a contrast case of a nonreferral child.

Three major factors influenced the teacher when she referred children. These three factors were: (a) the child's classroom interactional performance, (b) the teacher's observations and practical reasoning about them, and (c) the institutional procedures and practices involved in referral.

The study has implications for preservice and inservice education and for educational policy. Using interpretive participant observational research is explored. The findings of the study point to (a) the importance of teacher education in giving preservice and inservice educators preparation programs that emphasize individual differences among children and suggest what to do about them, (b) a need to examine the pervasiveness and ramifications of the practice of making referrals based on the classroom teacher's perception of available district services, and (c) the need to find a better way of looking at children in classrooms, one that takes into account ways in which getting a special education identity is socially constructed.

The capacity to reflect critically on one's own practice, and to articulate that reflection to one's self and to others, can be thought of as an essential mastery that should be possessed by a master teacher.

Erickson, 1985, p. 175

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The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the guidance, care, and concern of many individuals. My considerable debt to my committee and to my family can only be hinted at here.

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The other members of my guidance committee were responsible for helping fill out the ideas in the thesis when I was too close to them to keep my perspective. Ron Wolthuis, my advisor, has been a friend and colleague in special education for many years. I thank him for not discouraging me when I chose to do a nontraditional dissertation. Walt Hapkiewicz, who initially encouraged me to pursue doctoral study at Michigan State and introduced me to the work of the Institute for Research on Teaching, asked questions that forced me to fully develop my key points and to remove superfluous material. Jim Buschman initially guided me into the role of fieldworker and has continued to give detailed editorial assistance as well as theoretical guidance.

My parents, Gordon and Jo Belson, have helped with financial support and babysitting throughout the thesis writing and have always encouraged me to pursue an education. My son, Nicholas, added the word "dissertation" to his vocabulary at two years of age and made do without me on many occasions. My husband, Donald, has been understanding, has encouraged me, and has ungrudgingly helped with household responsibilities and with Nicholas.

Finally, I thank "Mrs. Meijer" for allowing the study to happen and for being so honest about her feelings and her teaching. She allowed an outsider to enter her classroom and be a part of her life with the children for ten months. She has continued to cooperate and give assistance whenever I have called upon her, even after four years. I will never be able to repay her generosity. She is truly a master teacher.

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A NOTE ON STYLISTIC CONVENTIONS USED IN THE TEXT

In this thesis, interpretive participant observational research was used to study one teacher and her class in a close and personal way. Because of this, care has been taken to protect the anonymity of those involved. Accordingly, I would like to preface the study with some remarks about subject and setting confidentiality and some explanation of the conventions used in reporting my results. The names of the teacher, the children, and the school district have been changed to protect their privacy. I have used pseudonyms throughout the paper to enhance the readability.

In the body of the paper I have used quotation marks (" ") to indicate the exact words of the speakers and have followed the quote with a notation such as FN's 9-9-81, p. 3. This means that the source of the quote was the fieldnotes (FN's) of September 9, 1981, page 3. Long quotations and vignettes are indented and single-spaced. They are followed by the data source, date, and page references. In addition to the use of FN for fieldnotes, I have occasionally used VT for videotape notes, AT for audiotape notes, and TN for theoretical notes. Theoretical notes are notes written to oneself while in the field setting as a point of interest arises.

There are a few instances in the study where I used paraphrases of what someone said. In these cases I was not sure that I had the exact

words, or I could not hear something in its entirety on the videotapes or audiotapes. In these cases I have used single quotes (' ') as a notation system. This means that the words are very close to being an actual quote, but they are not exact.

Throughout the study there are two different ways I have dealt with the issue of gender. In the chapters that are predominantly data reporting and discussion (Chapters IV and V), I have used the feminine forms of personal pronouns for the teacher because the teacher I studied was female. I have used masculine pronouns for the child who was placed in special education because a boy was placed in the classroom I studied. In the other chapters (Chapters I, II, III, and the implications section of Chapter V), I have used both masculine and feminine pronouns for teachers and children.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Study

Elementary teachers routinely engage in setting children apart within their classrooms. There are programs for gifted children, for remedial readers, for children who are artistically or musically inclined, for student leaders, for student helpers, and for children in need of special education. Throughout the course of a normal school year, a teacher may be called upon to make decisions about all or most of the above. This places the teacher in the position of being the one who decides who gets in to programs and who does not. In this sense a teacher is a "gatekeeper" (Erickson & Shultz, 1982), as well as an instructor.

The purpose of this study was to examine the way an experienced second-grade teacher made decisions about children in her class with regard to any special needs that they might have in the areas of learning or behavior. These special needs were of a persistent, long-term nature that extended beyond the transient, temporary problems that bother many children during a school year but do not continue to hamper their academic or social growth. These special needs may result in a teacher making the decision to refer a particular child for special education services. The teacher sees these special needs as requiring

intervention above and beyond the assistance she can provide within the regular classroom.

What is there about a child that sets him or her apart in such a way that the child's teacher considers a special education referral as an alternative (or an additional) setting to her class? The teacher in this study had daily contact with 24 children. At the beginning of the year, none of the children were in special education programs, excluding speech therapy. By the end of the year, the teacher had made two referrals for special education services and had considered doing so for two other children. How does a teacher decide whom to refer and whom not to refer? Did the two children who were referred have characteristics that were not present in the other children in the room? What did the teacher learn about the other two targeted children that led to her not pursuing possible special education placement for them? What about other children who were troubling to the teacher but were never even mentioned for referral? These are some of the questions upon which this study was predicated.

In cases of mild to moderate learning or behavioral problems, early identification is critical (Reynolds & Birch, 1977; Cantrell & Cantrell, 1976). Early identification of children with learning disorders is problematic. Children with severe physical, mental, or emotional problems are usually detected before school entry by parents and physicians, but mild to moderate problems due to learning disabilities or emotional impairment (see Appendix A for definitions of these terms) may not be obvious until a child is placed in a constrained

environment such as a school. The validity of identification techniques, the implications for educational intervention derived from early identification, and the phenomenon of the "self-fulfilling prophecy" are areas of concern among professionals who must make these decisions (Keogh & Becker, 1973). In the public schools in the United States it may take one or two years before these mild problems start to interfere with a child's expected progress in school. Therefore, the first and second grades are crucial years for early detection of such problems. This detection is not an easy task. The primary burden for identification falls on the regular classroom teacher. Teachers must make decisions about children in the early grades that may profoundly affect the children's lives, both in and out of school. Some of the difficult questions needing teacher reflection follow: Is the child a slow learner, or does he or she have a specific learning disability? Is the child immature for her or his age, or does she or he have emotional problems that interfere with her or his school progress? Tough decisions must be made that are not always easy to substantiate with "hard" data.

The term "learning disabilities" has been controversial since its inception as a categorical definition of special education in 1963. Strephosymbolia, congenital word blindness, dyslexia, minimal brain dysfunction, and perceptual handicap were but a few of the many labels given to children who were not succeeding in school, primarily in the decoding of the written symbols of language. The confusion over what constitutes a learning disability among special educators and the

medical professionals still abides (Kavale & Nye, 1981; Thurlow, Ysseldyke, & Casey, 1984). Is it any wonder that there is confusion for regular educators trying to determine if a child might have a mild or moderate learning problem? It might be argued that it is not the responsibility of regular educators to make this determination. Their role should be to identify children who are not succeeding in the regular class and to make referrals to the appropriate professionals. As was found in the study to be reported, however, it is not unusual for a regular classroom teacher, as he or she discovers children with learning or behavior problems, to look ahead to see if the specific child will fit within his or her perception of the school district's options for service.

The way children are set apart for special education by a teacher has not been looked at before at such a microscopic level. The process of how students get into special education has been investigated by Mehan (1984) but not at the same level or with the same set of guiding questions. He studied the issue of special education placement beginning at the special education placement committee meetings. The placement committee meeting is an important step, but only one in a series of gates that lead to special education placement within most school districts. Before a placement committee can enact a routine (Mehan, 1984), a student first has to be brought to the attention of such a committee. The child's regular classroom teacher is often the first to bring a child to the attention of such a group. It is at this point that the teacher's skill in practical reasoning and observation

takes on great significance. The regular class teacher thus opens the first gate into special education (see Figure 1.1).

Once a child's case is brought to the building team's attention, new gatekeepers take over. The principal, school psychologist, teacher consultant, and possibly a reading consultant join the regular class teacher in determining if a child is mildly handicapped to such an extent that testing is warranted. The particular special education placement system used in the school that was studied is discussed in detail in Chapter III.

When a regular education teacher makes a decision to refer a child to special education, there is a great deal more involved than meets the eye. The significance of the interactions that occur within the classroom context cannot be overlooked. This year-long participant observational study of one second-grade classroom made it clear that each and every school year has its own uniqueness. This is true even if the teacher has taught the same grade for a number of years. The interactions that occur between the teacher, the children, the curriculum, and the materials are intricately woven together each school year in a pattern that makes sense to those involved. The experienced teacher looks for signs of reoccurring patterns familiar from previous years. Children of interest are more or less important as objects of the teacher's observations as she looks for telltale signs of problems, but it seems that each class has its own special and unique qualities. What factors enter into teachers' ways of seeing particular children who trouble them? The importance of early intervention with

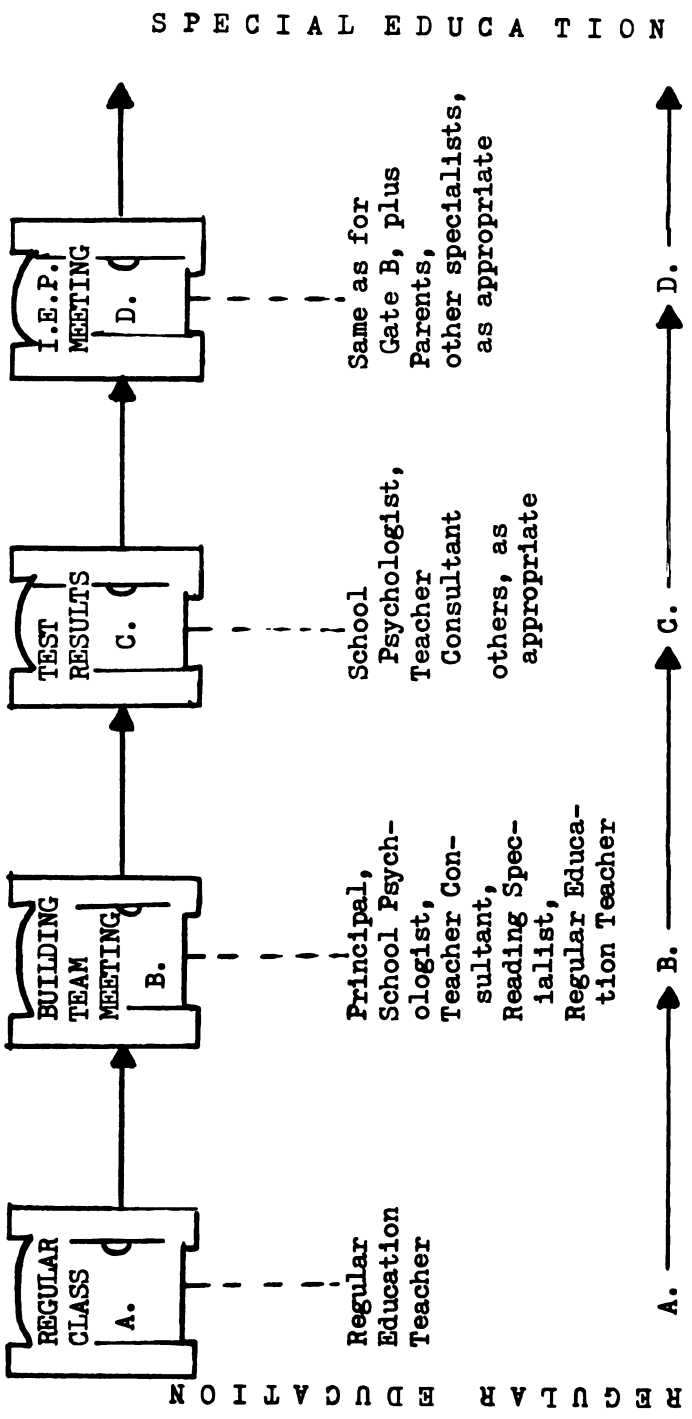


Figure 1.1: Gates and gatekeepers into special education.

handicapped children is well known to educators, but they are still reluctant to label a child as a special education student. Checklists of behavioral characteristics have been developed to aid classroom teachers in their recognition of the early signs of learning and behavior problems, but the observations and practical reasoning of the teacher doing the referral are not reflected in most of these forms. On a typical behavior rating scale (see Appendix B for one example) a teacher is presented with a predetermined array of academic and social behaviors. In such category systems there is no accounting for the "unofficial, informal dimension of role and status in the classroom" (Erickson, 1985, p. 39). For example, hyperactivity has been found to be the highest ranked descriptor of learning disabled children among kindergarten and primary-grade teachers (Keogh, Tchir, & Windeguth-Behn, 1974). What is it that a child does on a day-to-day basis in the classroom that causes the child to be labelled hyperactive or inattentive? Could two children display very different classroom behaviors and both be checked off as inattentive on the referral form?

This study focused on one of the many routine sorting decisions of a classroom teacher. The research question of interest in the study was: What factors are responsible when a second-grade teacher identifies children as being in need of special education? Three sets of questions guided the study. The first set dealt with the observations of the teacher in the first days and weeks of the school year that alerted her to possible special needs in certain children. The second set had to do with what types of teacher observations and practical

reasoning took place once a certain child was targeted by the teacher. The final set of guiding questions was formed after the teacher in the study had referred two children for special education services. This third set was developed in an attempt to understand why the teacher had referred these two children and not other children who had problems as well. The research questions are discussed further in Chapter III of this study.

An Introduction to Participant Observation

"Focus" and "Jelling"

In an interpretive participant observational study the accounting of the actors, the teacher in this case, must be an integral part of the researcher's story. Before the main corpus of data is presented in the chapters to come, it may be helpful for the reader to have an example of the types of data to be reported in this study and the way they will be presented.

One finding to come out of this study had to do with a day-to-day aspect of classroom life that the teacher called "focus and jelling." Students who could not "focus" on the classroom tasks and did not "jell" as part of the classroom microculture became "target" children in the teacher's mind. I decided to ask the teacher what she meant by the term "focus" after hearing her use it repeatedly early in the school year. She used "focus" both to specific children, as in "This is your next focus, Pammy," and about specific children, as in "Neil is unable to focus and complete his work." Following are portions of fieldnotes from an interview held on September 22, 1981. In this

interview the teacher discussed how she was noticing that her brighter students understood the expectations and routines already and that they were beginning to lose focus as she gave directions.

> Focusing means looking at. Focusing their eyes. . . . In fact, I've noticed more often now than I did the first week, that when I give directions . . . [some kids] are on top of the routine that has been established thus far, are tuning out, and are going on, and are maybe pushing a pencil when they should be listening . . . because they already know. . . . The extra bright students, the really withit kids, you know, they're beginning to already tune me out when it comes time for directions. (FN's 9-22-81)

In this instance the loss of focus by a child could be interpreted as being a strength. The teacher used her bright children as bell-wethers to tell her that she could now spend less time on the routine of giving directions.

As September and October passed, the teacher expected something to happen with the class as a whole. This particular year she was puzzled because the class did not seem to be coming together, or "jelling," as she called it. In an attempt to get her to verbalize her intuitive expectations about jelling, I asked her if I could capture the jelling process on videotape. Her response, in an interview on November 4, 1981, shows the depth of understanding of the social ecology of a classroom that an experienced teacher can have. In her eight years of teaching she may never have been asked to verbalize about the types of things she observed in her classroom.

> I see individual students as part of the whole jelling process. . . . [She talked about a new girl who was isolating herself and about another boy who cried in class today.] It's particularly frustrating for me as a highly academic person, wanting to get the academics into these kids because it gets so much harder in [school district] as they go on, and not being able to do it

> because of kids like Craig, Steve. . . . (You can't videotape not jelling) because it's a feeling. It's the feeling you have between you and your students and because that varies from year to year with the personalities you're dealing with, it's never the same. Even though my style of teaching hasn't changed much over the last nine years, I mean, your style depends on your personality and you may have new, new actual techniques for teaching a lesson, but your class style of how you do things, and how you respond to kids doesn't change much. (FN's 11-4-81)

In this portion of the interview the teacher said that teaching is not the same each year. She said that it is not the teacher alone or her techniques, but the feeling between teacher and students that determines what type of year it will be. It is the interaction of teacher, children, and curriculum that causes a class to jell at a certain point.

In mid-March I asked the teacher again about the issue of focusing because she was still using the term as she spoke about different children. As I was trying to interpret all of the data accumulated to that time, it seemed to me that she was now using the word "focus" in a different sense. By this time of the year, her big "academic push" was nearing its end with the approach of spring vacation (second week in April that year). She did not refer any more children for special education that year. In an interview held on March 11, 1982, the teacher stated her belief about what "focus" had now become to her.

> Focus doesn't merely mean looking at the teacher. It also means processing what's expected of you. And that's where kids like Craig are having the most trouble. When I say, "Focus on task," Craig can look at you and be so sincere and not be processing one auditory thing you're saying to him, and that'd probably be the main difference in my use of the word, um. Focus means getting rid of outside distractions. Getting your thoughts on only the thing you're doing and, uh, processing what's being said. . . . [Neil can be] just tumbling over himself [trying to think what to say]. He can't narrow it down enough and focus enough on what he

> wants to say to spit it out in less than [laughing] 50 words. (FN's 3-11-82)

The children used as examples in this interview were both target children. Craig was referred for special education, but Neil was not. At this point in the year (March), it was no longer enough for a child to look at the teacher or to look like he or she was doing the work. The student must demonstrate more in the way of understanding. How a student demonstrated this understanding to the teacher was one of the things I was looking for.

The preceding quotations taken from actual field interviews are meant to give the reader an idea of how a participant observational researcher goes about verifying his or her assumptions and interpretations about daily life in the classroom being studied. This type of interactional verification between fieldworker and teacher-actor is part of what gives "particularizability" (Erickson, 1985, p. 50) to the data being reported. The data are particular in the sense that the events they document occur at a particular time and among a specific group of people. In addition, the examples of "focus" and "jelling" were chosen to illustrate the importance of the teacher's observation and practical reasoning in special education referrals and the significance of the interactional nature of the classroom. They also show the teacher in her role of gatekeeper as she makes decisions about who is and who is not processing, or understanding fully, what is happening in the classroom over the course of one school year. As will be seen later, not being able to process was a critical factor in one child's getting a special education identity.

Thesis Overview

Previous research exploring similar issues is presented in Chapter II. An overview of the setting and subjects of the study, a description of the research method, and a discussion of the research questions are addressed in Chapter III. The data gathered over this year-long participant observational study are presented in Chapter IV. Conclusions, implications, and suggestions for further research and for practice are presented in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

OBSERVING, REASONING, AND INTERACTING AS A BASIS FOR IDENTIFICATION OF MILDLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

In the process of trying to understand how a second-grade teacher went about setting children apart for special education referral, I drew on the theoretical and research perspectives of psychology, sociology, education, and anthropology. This chapter is arranged in three sections: the identification of children with mild handicapping conditions, teacher observation and practical reasoning, and the classroom as an interactional context.

Identification of Children with Mild Handicapping Conditions

Before children can receive special education services in the American public schools they must first be identified as having a handicapping condition that prevents them from taking full part in the existing general education programs. This safeguard has been both a boon and a bane for children. Since the passage of P.L. 94-142, the Education of Handicapped Children Act, in 1975 the identification criteria for the special education categories have been strengthened, if not standardized, across the country. This mandate, overall, has been a great benefit to handicapped children and their parents. It has

forced school districts to examine their identification procedures and policies.

It has been pointed out recently that while special education is technically a subsystem of general education, in reality the two operate in school systems as separate, or dual, systems (Martin, 1978; Stainback & Stainback, 1984). It is becoming more obvious, as teachers try to sort out children with mild to moderate learning or behavioral problems, that all students have their own unique individual characteristics that differ along a continuum. If special education students are seen as being deviant by teachers and others in society, then to study deviance is to study all of mankind. This is true because of the universality of individual differences (Telford & Sawrey, 1981). Each of us is "special" in this sense. The emotional pain involved in the labeling of children as handicapped is in part a result of the dual service delivery system of education in the United States. The system necessitates the labeling of a child as a special education student if the child is to receive special education services.

The process of labeling handicapped learners has been reviewed elsewhere (MacMillan & Meyers, 1979) and is not the central issue of this study. Checklists are commonly used by school districts as referral forms before special education consideration. The use of checklist data for identification is suspect. Checklists force the evaluator to make judgments about behaviors rather than to observe the behavior itself. Preconceptions and expectations on the part of the person doing the rating have been found in many studies (MacMillan &

Myers, 1979). The classification and labeling of exceptional children must be understood in light of the larger social context. Categorization has often been done, consciously or unconsciously, to maintain a degree of social control (Hobbs, 1975). People react negatively to those who are different. This reaction seems to be almost instinctive according to Hobbs. Labels have been used for "obscure, covert, or hurtful purposes: to degrade people, to deny them access to opportunity, to exclude 'undesirables' whose presence in some way offends, disturbs familiar custom, or demands extraordinary effort" (Hobbs, 1975, p. 11). The process of decision making about special education in the schools is influenced by stereotypes such as sex, race, socioeconomic status, physical appearance, behavior, and perceived intelligence on the part of the decision makers (Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Richey, 1982).

The issue of the identification and placement of mildly handicapped students into special education programs has been a controversial topic since Dunn's (1968) admonition to the field nearly 20 years ago. His article gave much impetus to the mainstreaming movement that resulted in the enactment of P.L. 94-142. At the time of Dunn's article, most special education students were receiving services in self-contained classrooms. That is, the children received all their instruction in one room and were rarely integrated with regular education students. There were very few public school classes for children with learning disabilities or emotional impairments. Learning disability was not a categorical special education program area at the

federal level until the passage of P.L. 94-142 in 1975. The "learning disabled" children, before their official recognition, were most likely treated as remedial readers if they received services at all. Children with emotional problems may have seen a social worker or were referred to a child guidance center. Disruptive children were usually excluded from public schools. Many of today's learning disabled or emotionally impaired children would have been considered "slow learners" by their teachers before P.L. 94-142. The children were not achieving at normal grade-level expectancy levels, but neither were they considered to be educable mentally impaired. (For State of Michigan definitions of LD, EMI, and EI, current at the time of the study, see Appendix A.)

Self-contained special education services for children with identified special needs have been a recognized part of public education in the United States for a long time. Since 1975, even more attention has been paid to the process of locating and serving all children who qualify for such services. Further, the emphasis of P.L. 94-142 has been upon the early recognition of problems and the treatment of them in the least restrictive environment possible for the child. Children with obvious handicapping conditions, e.g., blindness, deafness, physical impairment, and severe retardation, are more easily recognized and placed into early intervention programs. Early intervention is defined here as school-district financed, school-based programs that begin in the years before the start of formal schooling. For children with milder handicaps, those problems that have been called the "hidden handicaps," such as learning disabilities, mild emotional and mental

impairment, identification does not take place until schooling begins. The earlier children with hidden handicaps can be diagnosed and receive special education services, the better the prognosis will be for their remediation and success in school (Cantrell & Cantrell, 1976; Reynolds & Birch, 1977).

Since 1973 investigators at UCLA have been studying early identification of educationally "high-risk" and "high-potential" pupils (Hall & Keogh, 1978). Variables such as teachers' perceptions of pupil risk characteristics, predictive accuracy of classroom observational techniques, teachers' ratings of pupils' classroom activities and achievements, and selected measures of pupil learning styles were examined. Quantitative analyses of data gathered over a four-year period were analyzed. Researchers also spent a great deal of time in classrooms and as a result concluded that it was the qualitative distinctions that seemed to be the major influences on the designation of pupils as "risk" or "nonrisk." These "qualitative distinctions" were what I hoped to capture in the study to be reported in the following chapters. Hall and Keogh used structured interviews with teachers to obtain much of their data. Their general finding was that "risk" had to be defined in terms of the interaction between the child's characteristics and the situational and educational influences and constraints.

The results of other studies in the UCLA series: (a) called into question the validity of screening and identification techniques (Keogh & Becker, 1973), (b) recommended that teachers' observations take on a

more prominent place in the identification process (Keogh, Tchir, & Windeguth-Behn, 1974), and (c) recommended looking at the classroom behavior of identified "high-risk" children with the goal being to design an early intervention program for kindergarten teachers to use (Becker, 1976). These studies pointed to the need for the regular class teacher to do more than fill out a checklist when referring a child for special education.

Before a child is considered for special education by the building team, it has been recommended that an observation/assessment of the child's learning environment be carried out (Heller, Holtzman, & Messick, 1982). This observation should be a systematic look at what the child's classroom environment is like and at the quality of the regular education instruction the child receives (Messick, 1984). It is only after any "deficiencies in the learning environment have been ruled out" (Messick, 1984, p. 5) and a comprehensive assessment battery has been given that a child should be considered for special education, if such referral is still deemed appropriate. The implications of these proposals are discussed in Chapter V.

A study of the placement of children into special education was carried out in its naturally occurring setting (the school) by Mehan and his associates (Mehan, 1984). These researchers found that the

> designation "handicapped student" is as much a function of the school calendar, the demographic characteristics of the student population, and other features of the social organization of the school, as it is a function of some inherent characteristic of the student. (p. 56)

They found that once a child's name was brought to the planning team meeting, there was a predictable pattern to the meeting's structure and also to the decision-making phase. Mehan concluded that what really happened in these placement meetings was that routines were enacted. This type of institutionalized activity is not decision making because the steps of rational decision making were not followed (Mehan, 1984). Steps had been eliminated and replaced by such institutionalized practices as reduction of the range of possible alternatives for a given child, placement of a child by available category rather than by clinical profile if a certain teacher was at his or her maximum case load, and by the preferential weight given to the school psychologist's opinion despite a diversity of wishes on the part of other team members at the beginning of the team meeting. The school psychologist's position was the final one to be retained in all 40 of the placement meetings that Mehan and his associates studied (Mehan, 1984).

In a study carried out to determine how teachers used the results of psychoeducational evaluation (testing) in determining eligibility for learning disability services, Ysseldyke and his colleagues (Ysseldyke, Algozzine, Richey, & Graden, 1982) videotaped 20 placement meetings. The recorded data were analyzed as to the type of data presented during the meetings. These researchers found that there was a correlation between the amount of information presented and the identification of a child as learning disabled. The more data available, the higher the likelihood of an LD placement. Fourteen of

the 20 meetings taped (70%) resulted in an LD identification. The researchers felt that 83% of the statements made in the placement meetings were irrelevant to the identification of a learning disability. They reached the conclusion that "classification decisions are more a function of naturally occurring pupil characteristics (sex, socioeconomic status, physical appearance, etc.) than of pupil performance data" (p. 42).

Part of the identification process for special education is the actual referral of a child by the classroom teacher. After five years of research on the assessment of learning disabled children and the related decision-making process regarding placement into programs for the learning disabled, researchers have found that once a child is referred for special education by a teacher there is a high probability (92% nationally) that the child will be tested and placed (73% nationally) into a special education program (Algozzine, Christenson, & Ysseldyke, 1982).

Further, this group of researchers found that 85% of a large sample of normal third, fifth, and twelfth graders (N = 248) could be classified as learning disabled under guidelines used in the school districts that were studied (Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Epps, 1983). The classification of learning disabilities has been "an ill-defined, poorly conceptualized, incredibly popular idea" (p. 165) since its beginning according to Ysseldyke et al.

In the 1982-83 school year there were 4.3 million children (11% of the school-age population nationally) identified under one of the ten

categories of handicapping conditions outlined by the federal government (Algozzine & Korinek, 1985). Over 90% of the children in special education programs were in four categories: speech impaired, learning disabled, mentally retarded, and emotionally disturbed. Within the 90% group identified above, Algozzine and Korinek found that the percentage of students labeled learning disabled had risen 3% per year between 1978 and 1982, and that there was wide variability state-to-state in terms of percentages of handicapped served under the various categories: LD varied from 25% to 62%, ED from 1% to 27%, MR from 7% to 45%, and SI from 14% to 46%. Special education classes are "overpopulated havens for the hard-to-teach," concluded Algozzine and Korinek (p. 394).

One hundred forty children were referred for special education in the school district studied by Mehan (1984). Fifty-three (37.7%) of those children were referred to the formal Evaluation and Placement (E&P) meeting stage of the special education referral process. The other 62.8% of the children's cases did not go beyond the initial teacher or parent referral. These children remained in their regular classes or were given some service other than special education, such as counselling or bilingual education.

Over 90% (98.6%) of the 53 cases the E&P team looked at resulted in special education placement (Mehan, 1984). All of the children except two (1.4%) were placed into various special education programs. Seventy-four percent of the group of children that were placed into special education went into "pullout" programs, such as learning

disabilities or speech therapy. In a "pullout" program the child remains in a regular class for the majority of his or her school day and leaves for special education help. The other 23% of the children were placed into self-contained programs, such as severe language disorders, educationally handicapped, and multiply handicapped. No children were placed outside the district for special education services.

Mehan found a 98% referral-to-placement rate in the district he studied in the 1978-79 school year. Ysseldyke found a 73% referral-to-placement rate across the districts and states he studied from 1978 to 1982. The latter research group found that in districts where a teacher held a high regard for the person receiving the referral, students were "usually placed since the teachers recognize those who do qualify when the process is complete." This statement was made by one of the responding teachers in the study (Christenson, Ysseldyke, & Algozzine, 1982, p. 344). Apparently in this district teachers have a clear idea of the type of child who will qualify for special education services. These teachers may have a high regard for the person receiving the referral because their own referral choices have been validated by this person.

Teacher Observation and Practical Reasoning

The importance of a teacher's role as an observer and practical reasoner of life in his or her own classroom has not been given much credence by researchers until recently. Teachers have not been encouraged to talk or write about their observations of life in their

classrooms. With the many demands placed on a teacher's time, there are not many opportunities given for such reflection, nor is such a practice usually rewarded by those in supervisory positions. There is no "institutional audience" nor an "official place" in current educational settings for such critical reflection on one's own practice (Erickson, 1985, p. 176).

For the purposes of this paper, teacher observation can be taken to mean what teachers see in their daily interactions with the children in their classrooms. Practical reasoning can be defined as that reflection done by teachers to make sense of what they are seeing in their class. Practical reasoning may differ from formal reasoning in that teachers rarely are given, or give themselves, the time needed to make decisions that are characteristic of formal decision-making settings because of the nature of being confined to a classroom with 20 to 30 children for a period of six hours a day. The intensity of the interactions that occur within those constraints as the teacher, children, curriculum, and all the extras come together makes the kind of reasoning that would occur, for example, in a scientific laboratory setting impossible. The teacher must make immediate sense out of what is happening in her classroom and take action on it in many cases.

Experienced teachers base many of their classroom decisions on knowledge that is essentially tacit. This is the knowledge they gain from routine decisions made over and over that rarely calls on them to think consciously about what they are doing. To understand their decisions is to uncover the teachers' ways of making these decisions

rational (Hargreaves, 1979). The uncovering can only be done when both the teacher of interest and his or her teaching environment are looked at in relationship to each other. Hargreaves's analysis is a phenomenological one. He looked at decision making as the teacher experiences it. This thinking is in line with research on teaching done in an interpretive mode. This way of looking at the teaching process makes use of the teacher's common-sense knowledge about what he or she is doing. A researcher can obtain this knowledge by collecting and analyzing the comments of teachers in their naturalistic environments.

The decision to refer a child for special education consideration is based on the teacher's observation of the child as he or she interacts in the classroom. Additionally, there are a number of sources of information that teachers use to obtain information to classify children. Teachers are influenced by their perceptions of the child's social environment, his or her previous academic performance, and the subjective information they receive about a child's social behavior from his or her previous teachers (Gomes, 1979). According to Gomes, these classifications come to constitute the "unofficial school biography" of the child and contribute to the child's official school file. These biographies begin in the first year of the child's school life and are very difficult to alter. Gomes found that the interaction between teacher and child in the first few weeks of school is extremely important and has a great deal to do with why some children are successful and some unsuccessful in school. The child's communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) is the most relied-upon criterion used by the

teacher to assess the child's academic ability and potential (Gomes, 1979). By communicative competence Gomes meant a child's ability to ask questions, to make himself or herself understood, and to act like he or she knew what to do in school.

After a teacher has observed the interactions of the children in his or her class for some time, he or she usually begins to classify them according to his or her own practical categories. The categories are then broken down further as more information is obtained. A teacher has to use practical reasoning skills when deciding if any children need to be referred for special education evaluation. This is a naturally occurring classroom event. The teacher forms categories to take advantage of all the rich clusters of particularistic attributes that form around the children as she gets to know them better through her interactions with them. In studies of the way people form categories, it has been found that category formation begins with the principle of family resemblance (Rosch & Mervis, 1975). Rosch and Mervis wanted to test the prevailing viewpoint that categories are "logically bounded entities" (p. 573) against Wittgenstein's (1953) principle of family resemblance as he had applied it to his studies of language categories. Family resemblance can be defined as a set wherein each member of a group has at least one, and probably several, common elements, but few or no elements are common to all of the members of the set (Rosch & Mervis, 1975). This principle can be used to think about how teachers come up with their own practical categories. In his special education referral study, Mehan (1981) also

found that teachers' theories of perception and categorization follow a family-resemblance theory rather than a critical-features theory. Teachers treat the same behavior produced by different students in different ways.

Teachers are common-sense, or "practical," reasoners as opposed to reasoners of the scientific, theoretical tradition (Hargreaves, 1979; Mehan, 1981). Positive co-occurrences of events and not all of the possible events are what is important to practical reasoners when they make decisions. This means that there are certain events that teachers tend to watch for. These events are used to confirm their interpretation of what is going on in the classroom. Rarely do they look for disconfirming evidence of the events that interest them, and they do not look at every event possible in their classrooms when they are trying to make decisions. Erickson (1985) called the sense making that teachers do "meaning-in-action" (p. 40). This meaning is shared by all the members of any group of individuals who interact on a recurrent basis. This meaning is distinct to the natural group experiencing it, and even in the most mundane of classroom events the pattern of meaning being experienced is never quite the same. Those shared meanings can be thought of as a "delicate interactional balancing act" (Erickson, 1985, p. 44) wherein if one member of the group falters the whole of the group feels the vibrations.

The Classroom as an Interactional Context

Life in classrooms is a "series of face-to-face encounters among students and between teacher and student(s)" (Florio, 1978, p. 7). Teachers get much information from these encounters that is used when they informally assess the children and make decisions about them such as group placements (Dorr-Bremme, 1982). The in-school face-to-face interactions of students and teachers that fuel the decision making of classroom teachers are not simply a matter of how the child responds to the subject matter. Subject matter organization in the classroom is intertwined with social organization in the enactment of a lesson (Erickson, 1985). The social context changes constantly with the interpretations and actions of all of those involved (Dorr-Bremme, 1982). The student who cannot keep up with these social context changes is more likely to have difficulty with the teacher's academic demands, thus causing incongruity between teacher and child (Erickson, 1985). The child now has not only the academic demands of the classroom to contend with but the social demands as well. The student's interactional competence is likely to falter at this point. Interactional competence in school is demonstrated, for example, in the way a child talks, listens, takes turns, and shares (Florio, 1978).

When teachers think about referring a child in their classroom to special education, I believe they do so from an interactional perspective. They look at the child in question for what he or she is: behavior, abilities, family, and so forth. They also look at their own expectations for the child--his or her social history, what has been

heard about the child from other teachers, and from their own experiences with similar children in the past. It is in the interaction of what the child appears to be to the teacher and what the teacher is himself or herself that decisions are made. A child's success or failure in school cannot be viewed solely as stemming from within the child nor as being imposed on the child from outside.

As teachers observe daily events in their classrooms it is natural for them to categorize these events, just as people form categories around everyday occurrences. This type of categorization is very different from the predetermined behavioral categories on a typical special education referral form. Typically, when making category decisions, it had been believed that teachers followed either a realist or a mentalist perspective (Mehan, 1981). The realist looks at students' characteristics or "critical features" to account for their success or failure. There is something inherent within the child that causes him or her to be noticed by the teacher. The mentalist takes the point of view that a child's success or failure is determined by the perceptions of the teacher. Teachers thinking along these lines tend to find in children what they expect to find, regardless of disconfirming evidence seen in the classroom.

Mehan (1981) found that neither position seems to account for what teachers do when they are making decisions about referring children for special education. Instead, Mehan felt that the teachers he studied took an interactional perspective to account for both the student's behavior and the categories that they, themselves, bring to the

interaction. These categories include the teacher's expectations for academic performance as well as for appropriate classroom conduct and are not independent of the student's behavior as was felt to be the case, for example, in Rosenthal and Jacobson's (1968) work. The child is viewed by the teacher in an interactive sense. The child is not perceived as a "sum of isolated lines" but as an "organized Gestalt in the figure" (Gurwitsch, 1966, p. 17). This type of interactional perspective has been discussed by other researchers (Cantor & Mischel, 1979; Rosch & Mervis, 1975). The way a teacher perceives a child is a function of both internal and external conditions. Teachers take into account the total gestalt, the "ensemble of items which mutually support and determine one another" (Gurwitsch, 1966, p. 24) when making sorting decisions about children in their classes.

CHAPTER III

THE STUDY: AN OUTSIDER'S GUIDE TO THE SECOND-GRADE CLASSROOM

This chapter is arranged in four sections plus a summary. The first section contains the research questions of the study. Next is a description of the methodological approach. Third, the method of analysis used in the study and underlying assumptions of the methodological approach are described. Fourth, the sample used in the study is presented in detail. Finally, a summary concludes the chapter.

Research Questions

The identification of children for special education services in elementary schools was the topic of this study. In particular, I was interested in how a teacher identifies children with mild to moderate learning or behavior problems in a second-grade classroom. While children with severe handicapping conditions such as blindness, deafness, marked retardation, or limiting physical handicaps are identified before entering elementary school, children with mild or moderate learning or behavior problems are usually not identified until they enter school. This latter group of problems is known as high-incidence disorders because they occur with greater frequency than the former group, known collectively as low-incidence disorders. The

special education categories of learning disabilities and emotional impairment fall into the high-incidence group. (For definitions of these terms see Appendix A.) In general, the identification of these types of problems begins when the classroom teacher notices something about children that sets them apart educationally or behaviorally from the other children in her class. The teacher categorizes some of them as being in need of additional attention. The teacher then closely observes the children and makes some decisions about whether to make a referral for assistance from sources outside the classroom, such as special education. The major responsibility for the referral rests on the child's regular classroom teacher since it is usually not until a child begins formal education that learning disabilities and emotional impairments become a problem for the child. The regular classroom teacher has a prime role in deciding whether a child obtains a special education identity or not. I am taking the position that it is the regular teacher who acts as the first gatekeeper in the first step of the special education referral process (see Figure 1.1).

The primary questions addressed in this participant observational study concerned the beginning of the identification process. They focused on the classroom teacher's role in choosing the children to be referred. The broad research question guiding the study was: How does one second-grade teacher come to identify children as being in need of special education help? Behind this overall question were three sets of questions that were particularly useful in my getting started in the field and in guiding the study. The first set dealt with the things a

teacher notices in the first days and weeks of a school year that alert her to possible special needs in certain children: Does the teacher see this as more the absence of certain responses than the presence of others? What, specifically, is there about some children's behavior that causes them to be noticed by the teacher while others are not? Is it the context of a child's behavior, as much as the behavior itself, that catches a teacher's attention? Are there certain types of behavior that cause a teacher to refer a child for special services, or is it the total picture of the child?

The second set of questions had to do with what happens once a certain child attracts the teacher's attention: Does the teacher begin to look at the child in a different way than he or she does the other children? Does the teacher see the identified child responding the same as or differently than other children in teacher-child interactions? Does the teacher see the identified child responding the same as or differently than other children in child-child interactions? Will the interactions between children who are referred for special education and the other children change as a result of their being identified?

The third and final set of questions was developed around the popular notion that once a teacher makes an initial judgment about a child it is very difficult to change that impression: How does a teacher's impression of children who have been identified as being in need of extra help in the first weeks of school change over the course of a semester or the school year? Why is it that some children who

appear to the teacher to have problems in the first weeks of school get referred for special services and others do not? Will there be a difference in what the teacher notices about children that gets them referred for special services as the year goes on? For example, are children referred in October for different reasons than they are in January?

After I had been in the school for several months, I realized that my question sets were too reductionist in nature for the phenomenon that I wanted to study. Being a part of the naturalistic environment of the classroom forced me to redefine my questions. The questions began to revolve around how the teacher made sense of the interactions within her classroom and the role that her own observation and practical-reasoning skills played in this crucial, but naturally occurring decision about special education referral. According to Erickson (1985), research questions can be "reconstructed in response to changes in the fieldworker's perceptions and understandings of events and their organization" (p. 9) while in the fieldsetting.

Research Plan

Given the nature of the research questions and the in-depth understanding of the phenomenon that was desired, I felt that a year-long fieldwork study would be the most appropriate and best way to gain these insights. Interpretive participant observation (Erickson, 1985) was used to gather data for this study. It is already known that most referrals for special education in the high-incidence areas such as learning disabilities and emotional impairment are done by the

classroom teacher. What is not known is how the classroom teacher goes about deciding whom to refer and whom not to refer. The research tools of the ethnographic or fieldwork method have been adapted to education from the disciplines of anthropology and sociology. It was felt that these procedures, increasingly more prominent in educational research, would be the most appropriate to use in trying to discover how the classroom teacher sets children apart for special education referral.

Extensive on-site participant observation was carried out. This involved the often difficult task of finding the right blend between observing and participating in the activities of the class. I was present in the classroom almost every day from the first day of the 1981-82 school year through the month of October. After that, the classroom was visited two or three times per week through December. From January through the second week in April (Spring Break), I was present once or twice a week. From mid-April until the close of the school year on June 17, contact was maintained with the teacher by means of the telephone and periodic visits. Care was taken to be present at particularly crucial times during the year as identified by both the teacher, previous researchers, and myself. In all, site visitations were made on 62 different days, 11 of which were full days and the rest half days. This amounted to approximately 312 hours of on-site observation.

Observation was focused on the classroom teacher and the objects of her attention. At first, student interaction was noted primarily as it appeared to have a relationship to what the teacher was seeing.

Later, the interactions of specific children who were identified as potential candidates for special education referral were more closely observed, even if the teacher's attention was elsewhere. During the periods of participant observation, extensive fieldnotes were taken and documents pertinent to what was happening in the classroom were collected. These documents included student assignments, bulletins to go home, district policy booklets, and so forth. Fieldnotes were gathered during the classroom visits (Schatzman & Strauss, 1977; see pages 94-101). Over 460 pages of footnotes comprise the written data base.

Periodic interviews were held with the teacher to gain insight into her ways of interpreting and to confirm or disconfirm the researcher's inferences with supporting evidence reflecting the position of the teacher-informant. For the most part the interviews took place during the teacher's lunchtime. On several occasions interview data were gathered during recess, in the car on the way to lunch at a local restaurant, at the restaurant, and after school. The format that worked best with the teacher in this case was that of an informal interview rather than a structured formal interview. I prepared a few specific questions about observations and ideas of interest to me and interspersed these as they seemed appropriate. It was not difficult to get the teacher to express her feelings about events and specific children in the classroom. Her openness in the interviews provided an excellent source of data. She made it easy for me to check inferences without having to do much probing. Each

interview was audiotaped, and ten interviews were completed that span the course of the school year.

Videotaping of classroom events, the teacher, and specific target children was done in an attempt to capture what she was seeing as she went about her day-to-day teaching, as well as the specific behavior of the target children. On several occasions the teacher specifically asked for certain activities (the opening of the school day) and specific children (Pammy during seatwork) to be filmed. These were viewed and discussed afterwards. I felt that the use of videotape would enhance both the teacher's recall of her cognitive processing at the time of the action, and allow me to study the context of incidents that might become salient at a later date. This method was particularly useful later in the year when the target children had been identified as it allowed me to go back to the early videotapes and watch the behavior of the identified children. At the beginning of the year the camera was placed on a tripod in the front corner of the room, behind the teacher's desk (see Figure 3.1). From this angle it was possible to tape the class from nearly the same perspective the teacher had when she addressed the children from her desk. A wide-angle lens was used to include as many children as possible at one time, but the camera was too close to the children to get all of them in view at once. Later in the year, a zoom lens was used to focus on specific children and events of interest. In all, 19 hours of videotape are included in the data corpus.

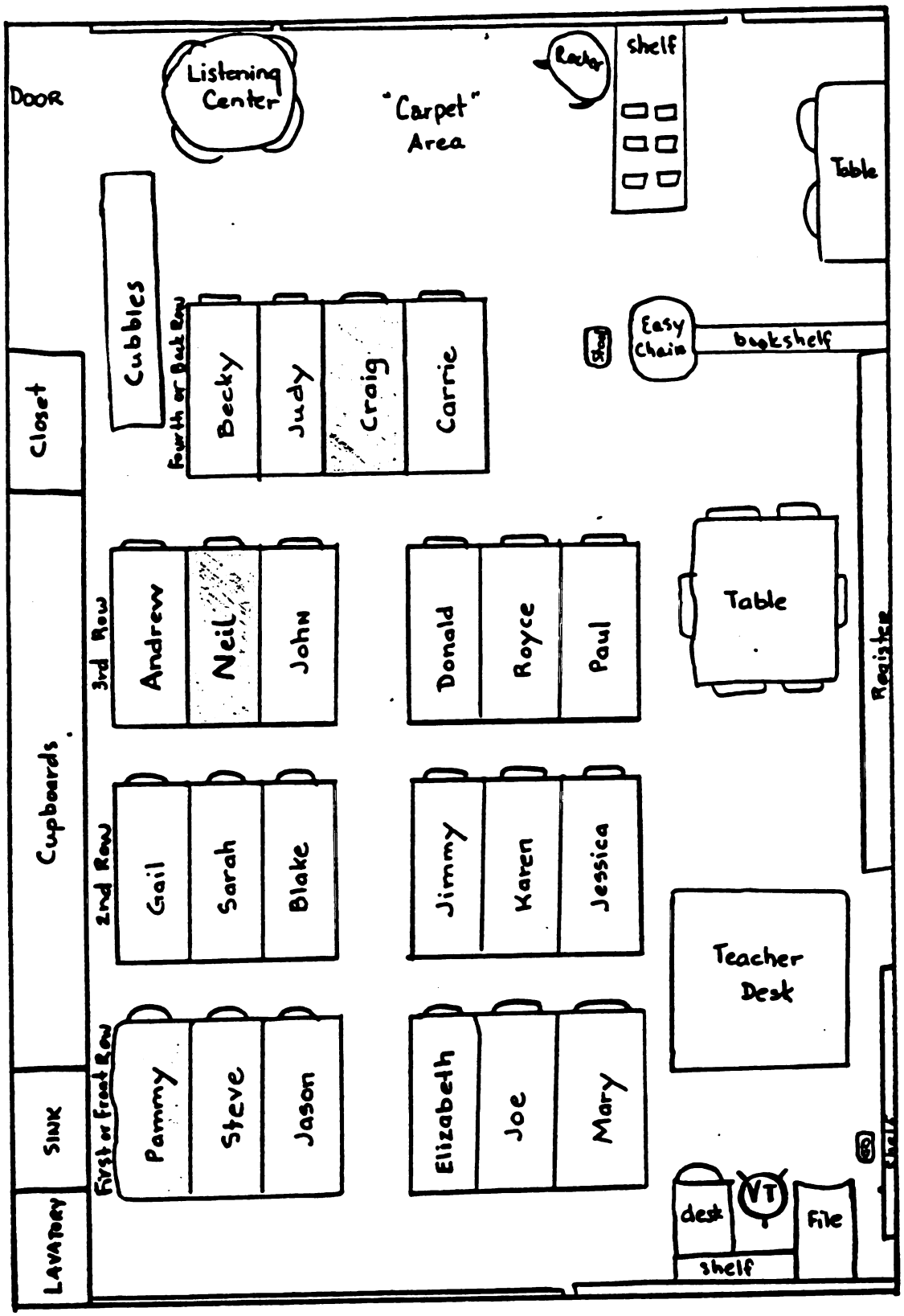


Figure 3.1: Room arrangement--September 1981.

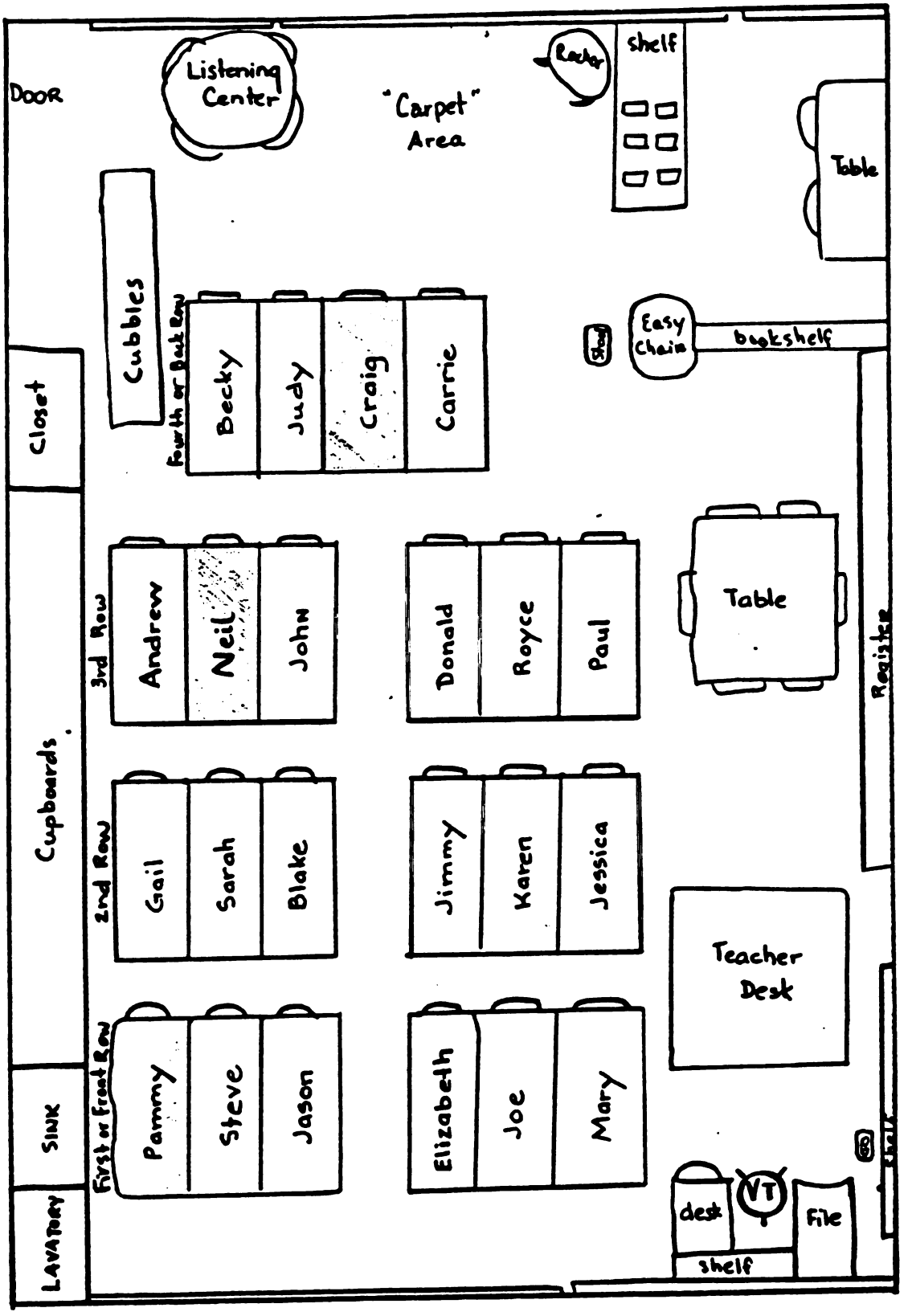


Figure 3.1: Room arrangement--September 1981.

Selected pieces of videotape were used on four occasions in viewing sessions with the teacher (Erickson & Shultz, 1977). The teacher and I watched the tape together. Sometimes I would stop the tape and ask the teacher to recall what she was seeing or thinking about at that particular point in the tape. Sometimes she asked me to stop the tape at places she wanted to elaborate upon or to see again. The viewing sessions were audiotaped and later coded and analyzed.

At the beginning of the study, permission slips for participation were sent home to the parents of each child in the room (see Appendix C). The letter explained that the children might be asked to wear a vest that contained a cordless radio-microphone for a period of time. The purpose of the vest was to capture the words of specific children on the videotape. By the end of the study, each child in the room had an opportunity to wear the vest at least twice. This made it possible to have all the children on tape under the assumption that if one or more were referred for special education I would not have to call undue attention to them. This method also provided videotapes of contrast, or benchmark, sets of children who were later studied in comparison with the target children. To make the vest wearing less obtrusive, two vests were used. One vest contained a "dummy" microphone. The children thought that I was recording both children wearing vests. A pocket was sewn on the back of a blue denim vest and the radio-microphone was placed inside it (see Figure 3.2). The microphone cord was slipped under several flaps of elastic sewn on the vest at strategic points and came over the shoulder where it was clipped to another

piece of elastic close to the wearer's mouth. The antenna cord was taped down at several places on the back of the vest with electrician's tape. The children enjoyed wearing the vests and eagerly requested their turns. There was an expected amount of "testing" of the microphone each time a child wore a vest. The vest wearing sometimes proved disruptive to the class, but for the most part it was quickly forgotten after a few minutes and the children and teacher went on with their regular activities.

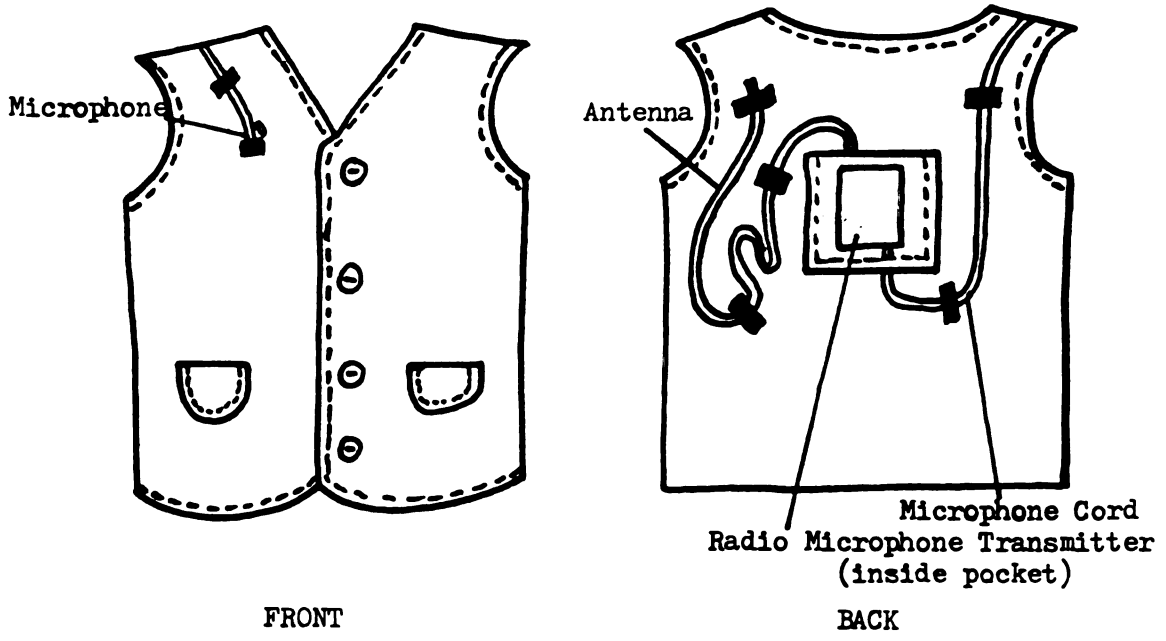


Figure 3.2: Recording vest with radio microphone.

In summary, the interpretive participant observation method was used to gather the data for this study. The techniques used by the researcher were (a) gathering field notes during observations in the classroom, (b) videotaping the teacher and children who were the subjects of the study, (c) audiotaping interviews between the teacher and the researcher, (d) audiotaping viewing sessions between the teacher and the researcher to discuss what appeared on the videotapes, and (e) gathering documents pertinent to classroom happenings.

Analysis

A four-faceted approach was used to obtain and analyze the data from the study. The four strategies used were watching, listening, recording, and analyzing (see Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, Chapters 4-7). In an ethnographic study, the analysis of data begins while the researcher is still gathering data. Analysis is integrated with the other three fieldwork strategies. The data obtained from the different methodological processes were compared and contrasted using a technique known as "triangulation" (Gorden, 1980, p. 12). In this process, what has been learned from one data source is cross-checked for validity with what has been learned from the other sources. An example of this procedure follows: The teacher made a statement in an interview about a certain classroom-management procedure she used. In this specific case it was a behavior-modification technique. I examined the fieldnotes for instances of the procedure being used and viewed the videotapes for further occurrences of the use of the procedure by the teacher. If the teacher was seen using the procedure on videotape

while at other times it had been documented in the fieldnotes that she used the procedure, the evidence would strongly support her interview statement. Instances of disconfirming evidence as well as confirming evidence were sought to help the researcher make a stronger argument for hypotheses that have been made (Erickson, 1979).

The next step was to look for classes of things, persons, and events in an attempt to discover key linkages between the phenomena occurring in the classroom (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). It was within the key links that the overriding model for the research developed and the theoretical constructs emerged. This process is not static. That is, the classes may change and key linkages may shift or lead to new theoretical areas that necessitate further reading of the literature and analyses. All of this was not done in a vacuum. Central to an interpretive participant observational study is cross-checking with the teacher-informant to keep the process constructually valid. Additionally, communication with knowledgeable colleagues regarding the theoretical issues that were shaping the analysis helped me clarify the guiding constructs and focus on the key linkages.

Once the key linkages were set and the theoretical constructs were researched, the next layer of data analysis began. This consisted of the often-tedious process of organizing and sifting through the data bases. Instances from the fieldnotes were color-coded around issues and children. Audiotapes and videotapes were transcribed and color-coded as the fieldnotes had been. A modification of Erickson and Shultz's (1977) procedures for analyzing videotapes was used once the

children and events of interest were defined. I developed catalogs to help me know where to find certain types of information in the fieldnotes.

After two children had been referred for special education, I selected instances of their classroom interactions from the videotapes and made a master videotape of each child. When I made the master tapes I used a Date-Time-Generator to record the actual school date and running time (in minutes, seconds, and tenths of a second) on the videotape copy for each event selected. Vignettes were written after carefully watching the master videotapes and cross-checking my fieldnotes for any off-camera interactions of importance.

Before evaluating the current study, the reader is cautioned that the research methodology chosen has a number of underlying assumptions that will be stated before the results are presented. Of primary importance is the anti-reductionist belief that the whole cannot be understood by examining its parts separately. The approach is also predicated on humans being able to know themselves and being able to express accurately their feelings about what they have done. From this follows the assumption that people have the capacity to pay attention to the meanings of their actions, to organize and simplify events rapidly, and to take on complex social roles. Fourth, it is assumed that most behavior is purposively constructed and cannot be understood without knowing its meanings and purpose. The final assumption of participant observational research has epistemology, the art of knowing, at its core. It is the belief that the subjective view of

reality is both accessible and functional. It is possible to find out what a person meant by viewing his or her actions or listening to his or her words. The participant observational approach to research has understanding as its primary goal, placing understanding above predictability and control, the goals of some other types of research in education.

A complete description of the setting and subjects of the study is presented in the next section. The purpose of this is to help the reader start to understand how the research questions, methodology, analysis, and assumptions all blend together.

Setting

In this section I set out to transport the reader to the actual classroom that was studied. While this, of course, is not physically possible, it may be mentally and emotionally possible to come close to being there through descriptions. First, I describe the school district, the school, and the classroom that was studied. Second, an overview of the major happenings of the school year is presented from the teacher's point of view. The teacher of the classroom is described next. Following this, a "typical" day in the classroom is reviewed. Fifth, the children in the classroom are discussed as a group and finally, the special education referral process used at the school is described. These are the essential pieces of background information that may minimally allow the reader to be a part of the 1981-82 school year in this second-grade classroom.

District, School, and Classroom

The school used in the study is located in a small mid-Michigan community of approximately 30,000 people. The Seneca School District (fictional name) is in close proximity to a major state university, the state capital, and a major division of a large automaker. The community could be described as a "bedroom community." Its residents work primarily in one of the above endeavors. The community is beginning to change because a new shopping center and new businesses have been built in the district. Seneca School District also includes parts of two townships that are more rural in nature.

The district has grown steadily since it was consolidated in 1923. The classroom being studied is at the Pawnee School, one of four elementary schools serving the district. A one-story school, Pawnee was built in 1955 and has since been renovated to include a media center, a multipurpose room, and counseling areas. The district has one middle school for grades six through eight and one high school, noted statewide for its excellence. The residents of the Pawnee School attendance area are very stable. The majority of the children spend their entire elementary school career in this one school. This is not true of all the elementary schools in the district, however.

Pawnee School houses almost 300 children and contains two classes at each grade level from kindergarten through fifth. In addition to the 11 classroom teachers, there are full-time teachers for music, physical education, and remedial reading. There is a half-time special education resource room teacher, a part-time speech therapist, and a

part-time school counselor. The school is served by a school psychologist and school social worker as needed. These specialists meet regularly with the building team to discuss any children of concern to the teachers.

The two second-grade classrooms are located across from each other at the far northern end of the corridor in the original building. On the wall outside the classroom door was a poster of Snoopy (the wise beagle of Charles Shulz's "Peanuts" cartoon strip) lying on top of his doghouse saying, "Relax. Second Grade Is a Breeze." Each child's desk was labelled with his or her name and a picture of Snoopy. Snoopy was the theme for this year's class. The children's art work filled the room bulletin boards and hung from two wires the teacher had strung from the front to the back of her room.

The way the desks were arranged and the children's positions in the desks changed frequently throughout the year. Sometimes the children's desks were in horizontal rows, sometimes they were in groups of four to ten, and sometimes the desks were alone. At the end of the year the desks were all together in a big U shape. The teacher had a desk and a four-drawer file cabinet for some of her materials. Besides the children's individual desks (see Figure 3.1), the room also contained an area for free reading with a small table and two chairs. This area was formed by using a bookshelf and another, wide shelf to set it apart in one corner. On top of the shelf were wire baskets where children filed their completed work. There were a rocking chair and an easy chair with a footstool in the large open area at the back

of the room. This area was used for small group time, story time, show and tell, and other such activities. The listening center was located to the side of the large open area. It consisted of a round table with four chairs. There were a record player, a cassette tape recorder, and several headphones on top of it. There was a basket full of records and tapes that children were allowed to listen to when their work was completed. There was a compartmentalized, double-sided piece of furniture known as the "cubbies" near the door. Each child was assigned a cubby space. The children kept their lunches, paint shirts, gym shoes, and various other items in these spaces. The teacher kept a paper cutter, a box of spelling-group materials, and some clipboards on top of the cubbies. There was also a set of smaller cubbies by the door that was used as mailboxes. Notices to go home, homework, and awards were placed in these boxes by a helper or the teacher, and the children were to take their mail as they left for home at the end of the day. The room contained a sink and lavatory in another corner. There were storage cupboards and a teacher closet along the western wall. Scissors, glue, scrap paper, and rulers were left out on top of the counter for the children to use.

Room 125 was very much a reflection of what the children were working on that particular day and time. It was a room that looked lived-in. Children's work was hung, pinned, and stapled all around. It was also apparent on the first day of school that the majority of these children knew a great deal about how to go to school. They entered the room, took their seats, remembered to raise their hands

without being reminded, and got out their pencils, books, and other needed supplies.

Before beginning the field study in Room 125, Mrs. Meijer told me that there would be frequent changes in the seating arrangement. From September to June, 13 changes were recorded in the fieldnotes. Many of them were major reorganizations. I spent so much time looking at the mundane issue of seating arrangements for several reasons. First, the arrangements were made with a stated rationale on her part. Second, these changes generally tended to set children apart from the main body of activity. Finally, the seating arrangements can be used as visual evidence to show what happened to certain groups of children in terms of their movement in the class as the year progressed.

When I looked at the seating charts for the beginning and end of the school year, several physical factors were noticeable. The opening-of-school seating arrangement (see Figure 3.1) is very ordered. There are six groups of three children and one group of four children, all facing the same direction and lined up in straight rows. To the teacher a row consisted of the two groups of three desks next to each other; thus there were four rows, with Row 4 consisting of only four children in one set. The row closest to the chalkboard where the daily assignments were written was referred to as the front row, or the first row. The rest were called the second, third, and fourth or back row. The back row was the row of four desks closest to the door. The teacher's desk was at the far front corner, facing the children and in a diagonal line with the door.

Looking at the seating chart for the end of the year (see Figure 3.3), it can be seen that the teacher had moved all the children's desks into a U shape. She had moved the front of the class to the chalkboard by the door and had moved her own desk to this end of the room, but in the same position--facing the children and the door. She had reversed the focal-point of the room. The U consisted of six desks next to each other forming each leg of the U. Five desks formed the base of the U. Four children's desks were placed inside the U. These four children were each opposite another child on the U. The U shape reflected the coming together of the class at the end of the year. They had "jelled" enough to be seated in one large block of desks.

When the children arrived on the first day of school, the teacher had already taped laminated name tags to each desk indicating where the children should sit. Four considerations went into her decision about where to place the children: First, she spread out the highest readers. Reading scores from the past May's testing, recorded on a card prepared by last year's teacher for each child, were used for this. Next, the teacher spread out any children new to the school. Third, "trouble kids" (FN's 9-9-81, p. 6), those who were known to have behavior problems, speech problems, or others as noted by their first-grade teacher, were separated on the periphery of the group. The teacher said that her recollections of her observations of the children from last year also influenced her decisions. First and second grades share recess time and the teachers share recess duty. This gives the

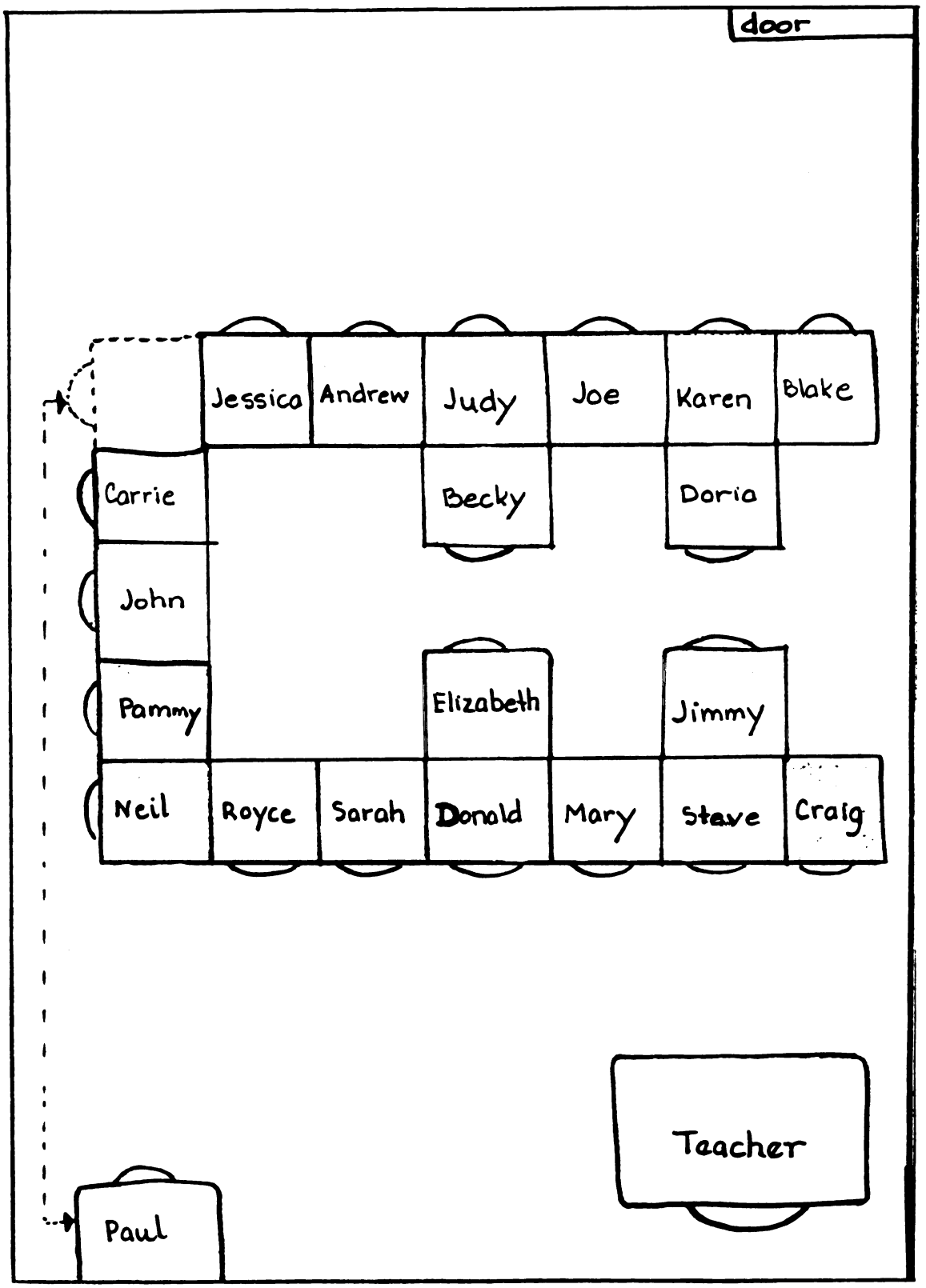


Figure 3.3: Room arrangement--May 1982.

second-grade teachers a year to observe the children before they get them. Finally, the teacher said that she put the shorter children in the front. Presumably she knew their height from observation, as it was not recorded on the child's data card.

Backdrop, A School Year

A physical description of the classroom can give the reader a mental picture of the school environment. The reader's own experience of being a student should give some degree of familiarity to the scene. What is more difficult to recreate for the reader, however, are the particularities of the rhythm of this classroom in this school year. Before I present the findings relative to the research questions of this study, a general feeling of the way the 1981-82 school year went for the teacher will be given. What follows is a highly interpretive context-stripped synoptic look at her calendar year. I have attempted to delineate high and low points of the year. Later, it will be important to contrast the tempo of the year with the times of the year when the teacher made her special education referral decisions. I hope this synoptic view will be helpful in seeing how setting children apart was, to an extent, practically grounded to different points of the school year.

Each school year has a pattern and a rhythm of its own. The experienced teacher is in charge of the class, but it is the children who are in control. As I looked back on the 1981-82 school year in Room 125 through the teacher's interview comments and in our informal conversations, I formed impressions of the high and low points she

experienced during the year. On the overview figure that follows (see Figure 3.4), the tempo of the year is traced via the heavy black line to the right of the page. I have distilled each month down to its major happenings or feelings and have used direct quotations from the fieldnotes. A discussion of the figure follows.

September was a time of beginnings. It was a time of rules and routines. There was an overall focus on classroom climate. The teacher made an attempt to spot potential problems and problem children. She tried to intervene before things could get out of hand. She was very much in charge. She told me that she allowed little time for self-expression or exploration at this point in the year on purpose. The room arrangement at the beginning of the year supported the teacher's contention that she was academically oriented with the children being separated into ordered rows.

October brought on a "getting to know you" mood to Room 125. The teacher increasingly focused on individual children's personalities, needs, and strengths. It was at this point in the year that the first set of children were seriously considered for referral to special education services. By mid-month the work load in the room had picked up significantly. The reminders of rules and routines, common up to this point, were at a minimum. The teacher expected the children to begin to work more independently. She was not going to, as she said, do any more "spoonfeeding." This was the beginning of her feelings of dissatisfaction with the class's progress. The teacher started talking to me about the class "not jelling" (FN's 10-29-81, p. 7). This

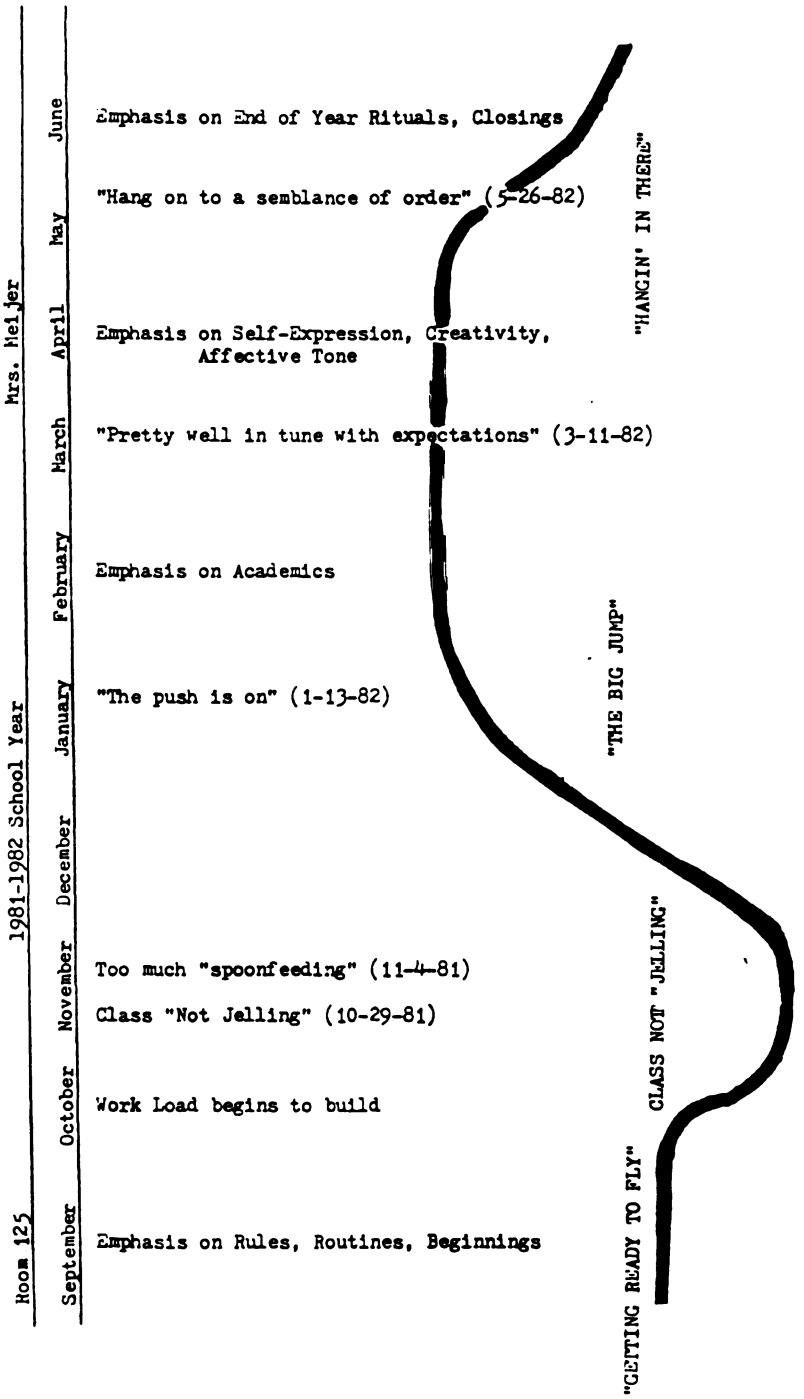


Figure 3.4: Overview tempo of the 1981-82 school year.

feeling carried over into November. At the same time the other second-grade teacher was talking about one of her students getting ready to "fly" in her work. By this she said that she meant the girl was ready to really zoom ahead with the schoolwork. These were indications that both teachers expected some sort of change to be occurring by this point in the school year.

About this time the class began the preparation of artwork for Halloween. There were special projects and activities right on into November and December. The three weeks between Thanksgiving and the Christmas vacation were taken up with holiday rituals: making gifts for parents, doing special art projects, and baking together in the school kitchen. At the same time, the children were expected to be more independent and not to rely on their teacher for as much assistance as earlier in the year. The teacher indicated that she felt like she was "spinning her wheels" (FN's 12-1-81, p. 3).

The New Year, 1982, seemed to signal a new phase for the teacher. She referred to this period as the beginning of the "big jump." "The push is on," she said (FN's 1-13-82, p. 2). It was time for "shooting ahead and teaching kids things" (FN's 2-23-82, p. 3). She increasingly put emphasis on the curriculum. In interviews she talked about where she was going in each academic area. There was less talk about problems or individual children, although these did not cease to be of importance. She was not going to keep the majority of the class waiting for the stragglers any longer.

The "big jump" mood continued from January to March, when the teacher stated that her class was "pretty well in tune with expectations" (FN's 3-11-82), p. 2). At this point in the year she felt she could let down a little and allow the children more time for affective activities. They had more class discussion. The seating arrangements were more group oriented, although the children still faced the chalkboard as cursive writing continued to be introduced, a few letters at a time.

Spring vacation was in early April, and the teacher predicted that it would be all downhill after that point. In 1982 there was an unusually lengthy ten weeks after vacation until school closed. Both second-grade teachers had lamented about what a long spring it was going to be. April and May passed, and some of the children were still finishing up the major project of the year: the wild animal "research report."

For the teacher the end of May and early June were the "hanging in there" time of the year. A "gang of boys" had formed, and the girls were pairing up. Children's feelings were hurt when best friends changed overnight. The teacher spoke to me about trying to "maintain her cool." Reading testing, math testing, and a second-grade play about nature all disrupted the normal daily schedule. The end-of-the-year rituals and special events occupied a great deal of class time until the last day of school, June 17. The day before school closed the children received their teacher assignments for the next year. They all counted down the final 30 seconds on June 17 and they were

"officially" third graders. The children climbed aboard their buses and left for home.

The Teacher of Room 125

Before I move further in the study I would like to introduce the main character of the study. Up to this point she has been described only as "the teacher" or "she." Mrs. Meijer (not her real name, see A Note on Stylistic Conventions for details) was in her early thirties. She had been teaching for seven years, all in the Seneca School District, and was in her second year as a second-grade teacher at Pawnee School. Mrs. Meijer had taught fourth grade at another school in the district previously. She received her bachelor's degree in elementary education and her master's degree in reading from the university located nearby. After college she stayed in the area, obtaining her first teaching job in the Seneca District. Mrs. Meijer is Caucasian, and divorced, and was raising her young daughter alone at the time of the study. She had volunteered to take part in the larger study (Teachers' Practical Ways of Seeing, Frederick Erickson, Principal Investigator, for the Institute for Research on Teaching at Michigan State University). She was very open as to her personal feelings about teaching and what went on in the classroom. Mrs. Meijer could express herself in ways that were easy to understand. It should be remembered that most of her words were being recorded and a great deal of her teaching was being videotaped. Audiovisual recording usually inhibits a person not used to "performing."

A "Typical" Day

My version of the school year as told from the teacher's perspective has previously been described. Next, a "typical" day in Room 125 is outlined to give the reader a fuller sense of what life in this second-grade classroom was like. As anyone who has ever taught can attest, there is rarely a typical day, and what follows reflects this. The description is a composite of several days of fieldnotes rather than an actual day (see Appendix D for exact fieldnotes from a "real" day).

A Day in Room 125

Four yellow school buses started bringing children to Pawnee School at 9:00 a.m. Children filed off the buses, hung up their coats and hats on hooks along the hall wall by their respective classrooms. The children in Mrs. Meijer's room had until 9:10 to get ready to begin the day. The arrival time was for putting lunches away in cubbies, for sharpening pencils, for using the bathroom, for talking to friends, or for just generally easing into the day.

At 9:10 Mrs. Meijer would say, "Boys and girls, it's ten after," or something similar, and the children were expected to take their seats and to stop talking. Usually they responded quickly, but sometimes they had to be reminded to get ready. Her opening tasks included taking attendance for the day, taking hot lunch count, collecting any notes children had brought from home or homework they were returning, and finally, the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance, led by one of the children. These activities usually took less than ten minutes, and then Mrs. Meijer moved on to a discussion of the daily assignments.

Mrs. Meijer would have two or three student helpers return the previous day's papers that she had checked, generally in the evening at home. The children were to file papers that she had initialed in their desk folders, made specifically for this purpose. The papers that still needed correction were to be left out on the child's desk to be finished during any extra time during the day. The daily assignments were written on one side of the front chalkboard every day. Several examples follow.

9-21-81

1. Letters-o, p
2. Girls
3. Mighty Math
4. Fish

11-24-81

1. Math
2. Journal 11-24-81
3. Language
4. Story Problems
5. Spelling-p. 33
6. Stuff Turkey

3-2-82

Cursive
Math-Red-Test
Yellow-189-190
WkBooks-R 25-26
S 25-26
SP 23-24
Make Spring Journal

6-3-82

Spelling--118-119
Math-Y-Unit Test
+241-241
R
Cloze
Reading WkBooks-87-88
Corrections
Diorama
God's Eye

At the beginning of the year Mrs. Meijer spent between 15 and 20 minutes (some days up to 30 minutes) going over the assignments with the children. Each worksheet would be passed out. The children tore out their math and reading workbook pages, and any special equipment (such as construction paper) that they would need was distributed. At the end of the year she spent five or less minutes going over the boardwork. The children were to do the assignments in the order that they were written on the board. They were to stack the pages they had to complete on their desk from first to last, in the order to be completed. As an assignment was finished the child was free to go over to the area of the room where Mrs. Meijer kept five wire baskets, labelled by subject. Papers were to be filed name up, all facing the same direction so they would be all ready for Mrs. Meijer to grade without her having to organize them first.

After she explained the daily seatwork, Mrs. Meijer started meeting with her small groups in reading, math, and spelling. She did not meet with each group every day. The small group instruction continued until 10:20 when it was time for morning recess. The children had a 15-minute break. They went outdoors if the weather permitted, and then came back to the room for their snack.

Usually the two second-grade classes had snack together. They alternated rooms and the teacher whose room it was would show a short film or filmstrip to both classes of children. The other

teacher usually returned to her own classroom to correct papers, and many times the "on duty" teacher sat in the semi-darkness and graded papers as the children watched the film. After snacktime the children would return to their own room and continue with the unfinished work from before recess. Mrs. Meijer usually continued to call up her small groups for their lessons. This went on for the rest of the morning until it was time to clean up for lunch. While the children were getting themselves ready, Mrs. Meijer usually went around checking corrections or helped children who had problems with their work.

Lunch was from 12:10 to 1:00. The teachers walked their classes down to the lunch room, but after that had a duty-free lunch. Lunch hour aides were hired to do playground supervision or room supervision on inclement-weather days. When the children returned to Room 125 they were to take a seat on the carpet by Mrs. Meijer's rocking chair for story time. This seemed to be one of the most relaxing times of the day for both the children and their teacher. Mrs. Meijer enjoyed reading to the children and went to great effort to dramatize each story or--as the year progressed--each chapter of the current book. The children heard about Runaway Ralph, Pippi Longstocking, and Mr. Popper's Penguins, among other favorite children's stories. They often asked her to read more when she stopped.

After story time, afternoon activities varied depending on the day of the week. Tuesday, Mrs. Meijer taught science to her class while on Thursday she taught the same lesson to the other second-grade teacher's class. Meanwhile, the other second-grade teacher was teaching social studies to her class on Tuesdays and to Mrs. Meijer's class on Thursdays. Wednesday afternoons were art project times. Monday and Friday afternoons were usually devoted to more group time: an hour of Monday morning time was taken up with gym and music and there were "specials" on Friday also (see Figure 3.5). The children went to music for a half hour on Wednesday morning and to gym for a half hour on Friday afternoon. The class also went down to the school library every Tuesday from 11:15-11:45, and the reading teacher came in the room on Fridays from 11:20-12:10 to teach a special group lesson.

In the unscheduled afternoon time Mrs. Meijer had the children write in their journals--usually one or two times a week. She had Show and Tell three days a week with the children being divided for presenting. There was also Special Gym for one-third of the class one afternoon a week. Each group of children got this extra gym period once every three weeks. The children needing remedial reading help went to the reading teacher's room for three 25-minute sessions a week. Three children went for speech correction on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:00-2:20.

Every afternoon from 2:20-2:40 there was recess. The time after recess was devoted to finishing up work from the day and to "Upa You Body." This last activity was the time when Mrs. Meijer checked on who had done their seatwork. She went over to the wire baskets of work completed during the day. She picked up a stack of papers. Each time she went to a new basket the children were to stand up. When she called their name they were to sit down. This meant that she had received their paper. Those children left standing were questioned as to the whereabouts of their missing paper. Sometimes Mrs. Meijer was left with one or more "no name" papers, and the children were called up to identify them. Sometimes the child forgot to turn in the paper and would take it to the teacher. In the case where the child had not yet completed the paper, it was assigned as homework due the beginning of the next morning. Later in the year Mrs. Meijer started sending work home on Fridays only. Those who had done little work that week had quite thick stacks of work to complete by Monday.

At about 3:05 Mrs. Meijer began dismissing children by groups to go to the hall to get coats, to get anything from their cubby, or to pick up any notices that were to go home from their "mailbox" (a group of small cubbyholes by the door). Then they were to sit down in their seats to wait for dismissal. At 3:15 the children were dismissed to go to one of the four bus lines. They placed their chair on top of their desk as they left. Mrs. Meijer went to the hall to supervise her bus line and to make sure that all children were out of the building before waving "OK" to the bus driver.

I have just presented a day in Room 125. The schedule varied remarkably little during the entire year with the exception of special assemblies and performances. The following daily schedule (see Figure 3.5) was prepared by Mrs. Meijer, primarily for substitutes, and gives a quick overview of what has just been described.

The Children of Room 125

The next layer that must be added to the description of the setting for this study is to talk about the children in Room 125. For the reader to understand how Mrs. Meijer came to set apart children for

9:05	Kids arrive, sharpen pencils, bathroom breaks, talk, etc.
9:10	Attendance, lunch count, pledge, collect notes
9:15	Monday: GYM
9:20	Paper returners pass out previous day's work. Children file initialed papers in desk folder. Leave out work needing corrections.
	READING SPELLING JOURNAL
	MATH HANDWRITING SEATWORK REVIEW
	OTHER
9:30	Small group lessons and seatwork
9:45	Monday/Wednesday: MUSIC
10:15-10:30	Recess Duty every Friday
10:30	Snack, movie or filmstrip or return to seatwork and small group lessons
11:15-11:45	Tuesday: LIBRARY
11:40-12:10	Friday: READING TEACHER--CLASS LESSON
11:40-12:05	Mon/Tues/Thurs: Jason, Carrie, Becky, Judy, Joe, Craig to Reading Teacher
11:55	Dismiss by groups to use bathroom and wash for lunch. Circulate to initial corrected work.
12:10-1:00	LUNCH
1:00	Monday/Wednesday/Friday: Show 'n' Tell
1:05	Tuesday: Science
	Thursday: Social Studies in Mrs. Field's room
	STORY ART CREATIVE WRITING
1:40-2:10	Special gym (1/3 of class)
2:00-2:20	Tuesday/Thursday: Speech--Joe, Karen, Becky
2:20-2:40	Recess Duty every Monday
2:40-3:00	Tie up loose ends
3:05	Dismissal by groups to hallway hook, mailbox, and cubby. Return to seats.
3:15	Orderly dismissal to bus lines. Supervise Bus 5 line. Wave to driver after all have left building.

Figure 3.5: Daily Schedule, Room 125, Mrs. Meijer.

special education referral, it will help to have a general sense of what the children in this classroom were like.

It has already been noted that these children knew a great deal about how to go to school on the first day. They came from predominantly middle- to upper-middle-class Caucasian families that tended to value education. There was one non-Caucasian child (Chinese-American) in the room. To someone who has taught only in an urban or rural school district, this class of children may not seem familiar, at least on the surface.

From an academic perspective, this was a class that, as a group, had an overall grade equivalent of third grade (3.0) at the beginning of second grade (2.0). They all took the Stanford Achievement Test in October. Their Class Profile shows that on the Complete Battery total, 57% of the children scored in the middle stanines (4, 5, 6) and 43% scored in the upper stanines (7, 8, 9) (Stanford Achievement Test, Primary I, Form A; October 1, 2, & 5, 1981). No children scored in the lower stanines on the Complete Battery, but some individual students' subtests were in the lower stanines. Stanines 7-9 are considered above average, while stanines 4-6 are average and stanines 1-3 are below average. The class composite grade equivalents and stanines for each of the subtests are available in Appendix E. The subtest grade equivalent scores ranged from 2.5 (math concepts) to 3.5 (listening comprehension). There was no evidence to indicate that this Class Profile was dissimilar to those seen in previous years in this school district by Mrs. Meijer.

A class has another reputation, besides an academic one, that it brings with it to a new grade. This reputation, real or perceived, is based on the folklore that develops about the class, for example in the teachers' lounge, in the halls, on recess duty, while monitoring the bus lines, and in teachers' meetings. Before the school year began, both second-grade teachers had been told by the first-grade teachers to expect attention problems. Accordingly, the teachers planned several listening activities for the first weeks of school because they had so many "singers, hummers, and mumblers" (FN's 9-9-81, p. 7) as Mrs. Meijer put it. There were several rambunctious boys in the second grade, and both teachers said that Mrs. Meijer had gotten the greater share of them.

Mrs. Meijer said that there were more children with speech impediments (three) and more children with psychological files (six) than she had ever had before. Psychological files are usually established for children who have been referred for special help or who are in special education. In Viewing Session 2 (11-12-81, pp. 6 & 7), Mrs. Meijer talked about the children having short attention spans and being immature. She also said that she had never had so many children who "needed to sit alone in order to function" (p. 6). Both she and the other second-grade teacher were hesitant to make jokes with the children or to relax much because the children got off task so quickly. She felt that she lacked rapport with this class and that they were a "lazy bunch" (FN's 11-4-81, p. 3).

The above descriptions were meant to give the reader a feeling that, although academically this class of children was average or above average, the teacher felt that she had a challenging class because of the problems referred to above. Both aspects of their reputation, the academic and the social, should be looked at in the analysis of Mrs. Meijer's setting children apart for special education referral.

Special Education Referral Process

The last piece of background information about the setting for this study that is needed before the findings are presented has to do with how children are referred for special education services in the Seneca School District. The process of referring a child for special education services at Pawnee School was a fairly straightforward procedure. A teacher, parent, or the principal could initiate the referral process. The district used a four-page referral form that was completed by the classroom teacher (see Appendix B) and given to the principal. The principal forwarded the referral to the district office. Then the referral child was discussed at a building team meeting with the classroom teacher and the specialists present. At this meeting the specialists would share any previous information about the child that they might have. A decision would be made about requesting the parents' signature on the psychological evaluation form. The team may have decided to have the building resource room teacher observe the child in the child's classroom and do some educational evaluation before having the psychologist test the child. If this was the case, the team generally met again. They may have made further

recommendations to the teacher or have decided not to pursue psychological evaluation.

After the evaluations were completed, the team met again to present their findings to the teacher. The parents were notified by the appropriate specialist. Shortly thereafter the formal Individualized Educational Program (IEP) Meeting was held with the parent(s) in attendance. The IEP Meeting at Pawnee School conforms to state and federal guidelines. Those present at the meetings vary somewhat, depending on the child's suspected disability. In a case of suspected learning disabilities, the principal, the classroom teacher, the school psychologist, the resource room teacher, and the parents are present. The principal would greet the parents and introduce them to the staff. They were informed that the meeting was being held to sign papers to certify the outcome of the testing that had been completed. The parents were given a booklet describing the services for the learning disabled in the state.

Usually the specialists have each already explained the test results to the parents by telephone, but they each go over their findings briefly at the meeting. Complete written psychological and educational evaluations can be read by the classroom teacher at a later date by contacting the principal or the school psychologist. Then the psychologist summarizes for the parents and makes a recommendation regarding placement. This is discussed, and anyone with questions asks them. Then the proper IEP form is signed with the determination to place or not to place in special education entered. If the child is

found eligible for placement, a more detailed discussion is held outlining when and where services are to be delivered. Objectives for the child, and the other legally mandated components of the IEP (P.L. 94-142), are written.

Figure 3.6 summarizes the referral process at Pawnee School. The decision points are marked by diamond shapes. In a school district such as Seneca that uses a discrepancy between achievement and ability to determine eligibility for learning disabilities services, a "not eligible" determination, at the lower elementary grades in particular, does not necessarily signal the end of the referral line for a child. The committee may decide to keep the child "under observation" for a specified amount of time and then look at eligibility again, hence the "No, but" decision on the flow chart. This apparently is done because it may take additional time for a discrepancy to show up for a learning disability.

Summary

Chapter III contained four sections. First, the research questions of the study were presented. Second, a description of interpretive participant observational research, used in the study, was given. Next, the assumptions behind the research approach and the method used to analyze the results of the study were given. Finally, the sample used in the study was described. This included a look at the setting, the teacher, the children, the school year, a typical day, and the special education referral process used at the school.

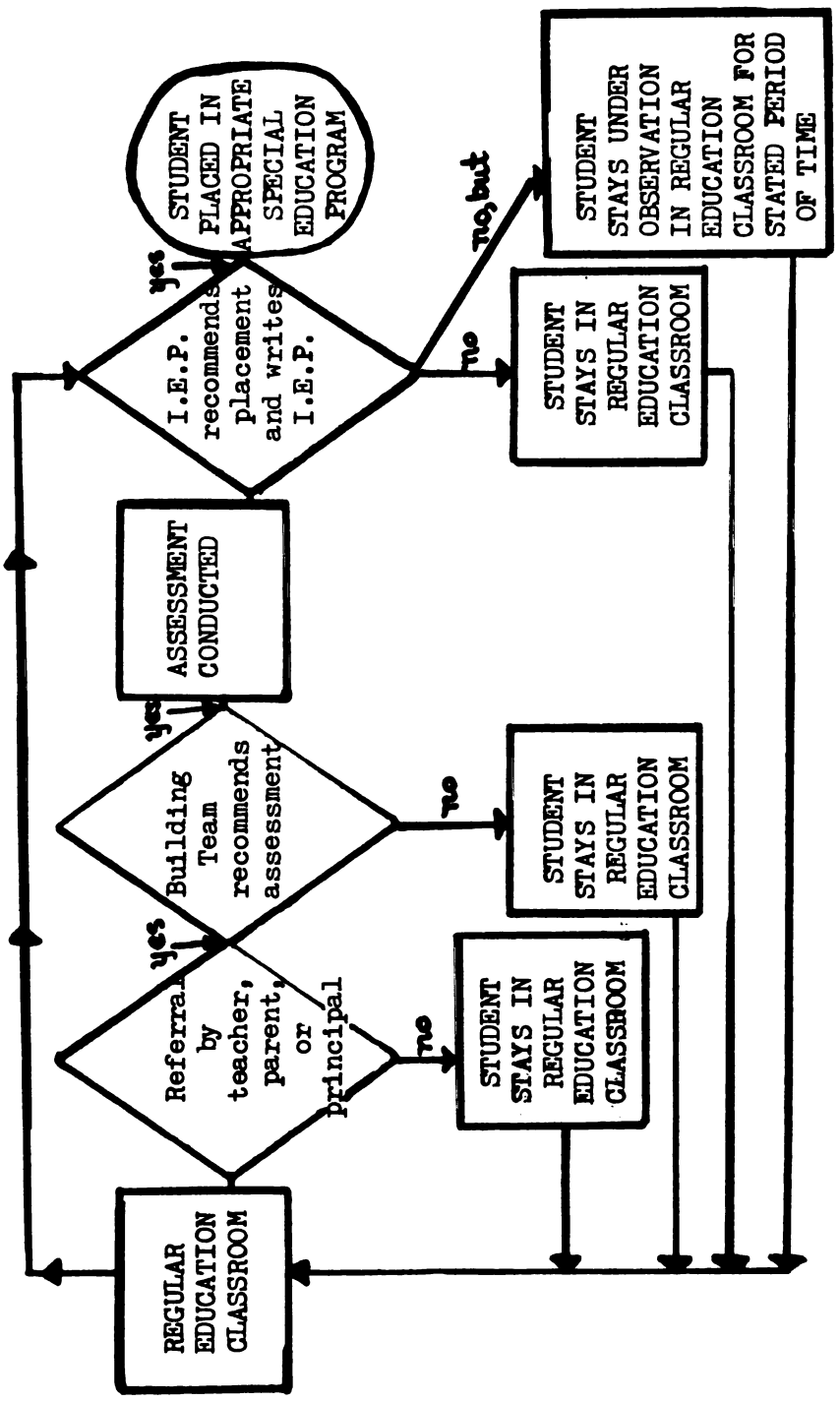


Figure 3.6: Special education referral process at Pawnee School, 1981-82.

The inclusion of this extensive amount of background data is needed because it is all part of the teacher's observations and it gives the richness of life in classrooms upon which she bases her practical reasoning as she makes sorting decisions about children in her class. A teacher cannot choose whether to refer a child to special education or not without considering the interaction of the child and the many factors that make up the classroom microculture. A knowledge of how things worked in Room 125 at Pawnee School will help the reader decide if my interpretation of the events of the 1981-82 school year makes the same sense to him or her, particularly in the way that Mrs. Meijer set children aside for special education referral.

CHAPTER IV

GETTING A SPECIAL EDUCATION IDENTITY IN A SECOND-GRADE CLASS

I will return to the initial issue of the study, children with mild to moderate learning or behavioral problems. Such children are usually not considered for special education services until they enter school. These mild to moderate problems include learning disabilities and emotional impairments (see Appendix A for definitions used). The identification process begins when a classroom teacher notices student behavior that causes her or him to set students apart, or categorize them, as being in need of additional attention. In other words, the teacher feels that something special may have to be done to meet the needs of these students. The primary questions addressed in this study revolved around the beginning of the identification process. The focus was on the regular classroom teacher's role in choosing the children to be referred for special education. The broad research question guiding this study was: How does a teacher come to identify children as being in need of special education services in the early elementary grades?

The decision an early elementary grades teacher makes when determining whether to refer a child for special education services or not is based on a phenomenological perspective of the child. The actual act of referral involves filling out a form by the teacher, but the

factors a teacher considers before filling out the form are much more complicated. These factors and the way the teacher perceives and categorizes each child are the subject of this study. There was something special about the way a child set himself or herself apart, both spatially and temporally, that alerted the teacher to a possible problem. Certainly a child with academic and/or behavior problems could trigger a referral to special education, but in this case there seemed to be something that transcended the physical list of characteristics on the special education referral form and caused the teacher to set some children apart for referral to special education.

The critical nature of the interactions between teachers and children in the first days of any school year has been pointed out by other researchers (Clark & Yinger, 1979; Emmer, Evertson, & Anderson, 1980; Gomes, 1979). These early interactions form a basis for the way a teacher thinks about a child for the rest of the year. Teachers' expectations for the child are set by school records, what they have heard from other teachers, and their own impressions from those early days of the school year (Brophy, 1982). In this study, general expectations for the class as a whole guided the teacher's decision making. Her referral decisions coincided with certain points in the overall rhythm of the school year. The children who were referred for special education received varying amounts of the teacher's attention throughout the year. There were two critical times in the school year when the teacher gathered all of her information about the children together and was more inclined to make a formal referral for special

education. The first came around the last two weeks in October. At this point the academic work started to become more important than the rules and routines. The second major decision point came at the beginning of January and lasted for several weeks. The teacher described this as her time for pushing ahead and teaching kids things, her big academic push. She was looking to see which children could take the push and which could not.

This chapter of findings begins with a discussion of how Mrs. Meijer saw her class, with particular emphasis on two of her terms: focus and jelling. These two terms are related to the research question. Following this discussion there is a detailed description of how Mrs. Meijer started setting children apart into various groups. Vignettes of the two children who were referred for special education by Mrs. Meijer add rich descriptions to the reporting. A summary of the major research findings concludes the chapter.

A Teacher Views Her Class

A photographer must have the ability to focus on his subject accurately. He must also be able to look at the overall composition of his intended photograph and select the correct frame for his subject. A classroom teacher, like the photographer, must also make decisions about focus and frame in the classroom. Mrs. Meijer used the term "focus" many times when talking about the children in her class throughout the course of the 1981-82 school year. Her personal interest in photography may have influenced her extensive use of the term, but it is an apt metaphor for the identification process. Before

a teacher refers a child for special education, he or she spends many hours trying to frame a child's abilities against his or her expectations. The teacher spends hours focusing in on specific children as he or she attempts to locate the child's problems. To even the most casual observer of the classroom scene, it must be clear that it is impossible for a teacher to be aware of all that is occurring at any one time. The aim of a teacher's classroom focus may be to get the overall, or wide-angle, view of her class. This was particularly true of Mrs. Meijer's focus at the beginning of the year. Classroom management was a primary concern as she did not yet know the children well. I observed her as she quickly scanned over the classroom until something caught her eye, and then she would focus on it. Mrs. Meijer also used the term "focus" to apply to an individual child or small group. She would tell a certain child to focus on his or her work, or say, "This is your next focus." Both uses of the term changed as the year progressed.

Mrs. Meijer's framing changed from wide-angle to telescopic once she got to know the children better. She would "zoom" in on individual children in an attempt to get a detailed look at them as the photographer does when a telephoto lens is used. Mrs. Meijer also did this when she worked with small groups of children. For example, when she was teaching a small reading group, that group was her frame of reference. Children doing seatwork were blurred into the background context and only became salient if there was a noise or movement that disturbed the overall picture for Mrs. Meijer. If this occurred she quickly

expanded her frame to the entire class until the disruption ceased, with or without her direct intervention.

At the beginning of the year, Mrs. Meijer used the term "focus" to mean eye contact on the part of the child. The meaning of "focus" when applied to individual children was discussed in Interview 3.

> . . . just means looking at. Focusing their eyes, and most of the time, like with Neil, you can have a visual. You can see something visual in his face, where his behavior is showing you that he's not attending to what you're doing. . . . (FN's 9-22-81, p. 2)

By the spring of the year, "focus" had taken on a deeper meaning. In Interview 8, Mrs. Meijer discussed her ideas about this term again.

> . . . Focus doesn't merely mean looking at the teacher. It also means processing what's expected of you. . . . Focus means getting rid of outside distractions. Getting your thoughts on only the thing you're doing and, uh, processing what's being said. (FN's 3-11-82, p. 4)

Her second definition of focus was one that few children at the beginning of second grade are ready for in a developmental sense. Craig, Neil, Pammy, Steve, Mary, and Joe were the children most often mentioned as being out of focus. They received frequent reminders to focus on their work. It is notable that as the year progressed these children were the ones who came to be identified as the target children for the study. This change in the way Mrs. Meijer used the word "focus" paralleled what was happening with the way she viewed individual children. She went from an almost total focus on the children's behavior at the beginning of the year to a focus on the cognitive aspects of the children's progress. Mrs. Meijer used the word "jelling" when talking about this phenomenon. On October 29 she said that she

felt her class was "not jelling" (FN's 10-29-81, p. 7). What seemed to lie behind the jelling issue was her expectation that at some point in the fall the class should all start working together and start to move ahead. It was also at this point that the workload began to pick up in the class. Mrs. Meijer began to complain about having to "spoonfeed" the children. This meant that she was having to help them too much. She felt that they should know when to sharpen pencils, when to go to the bathroom, what daily seatwork to do, and where to put their completed work.

In Interview 5 (11-4-81, p. 2), Mrs. Meijer said that jelling was not something that an observer could actually see. I asked her if I could film "jelling." She did not think it would be possible.

> It's a feeling. It's a feeling you have between you and your students. And because that feeling varies from year to year with the personalities you're dealing with, it's never the same.

She said that jelling is an "overall kind of thing" (FN's 11-4-81, p. 1) and individual students are seen as "part of the whole jelling process." The actions of individual students are the phenomena that, when viewed from the teacher's perspective, are what give her the knowledge that her class is jelling.

Four months after the above interview, Mrs. Meijer continued to use the jelling metaphor for the phenomenon of her class working together as one fairly harmonious group.

> Can't say my class isn't jelling. Most of my kids are pretty well in tune with expectations. What I'm noticing with kids like Craig, Steve, and Joe is that they can no longer meet the expectations and they're starting to fall behind. (FN's 3-11-82, p. 2)

It is clear that jelling was tied to the class meeting the teacher's expectations in some way. There came a certain point in the year when most of the children could meet the demands, and then she made her academic thrust. January through March were the most important months for cognitive growth according to Mrs. Meijer. Her personal focus at this time of the year was on the curriculum. She was conscious of the fact that these months were usually the most productive for the children.

On March 11, Mrs. Meijer mentioned to me that three children were not able to keep up with her expectations. They were, in addition, among those whom she described as not being able to focus. The children in a classroom who are not "processing" what is expected of them and are not "in tune" with the teacher's expectations are the children most apt to be set apart by the classroom teacher for further consideration. The children who were considered for referral for special education services in the 1981-82 school year came from this group of children who set themselves apart and/or had been set apart by Mrs. Meijer. These children will be discussed after a description of some of the children for whom Mrs. Meijer had high expectations is presented.

Setting Children Apart

A feeling for the way the class ran for the majority of children is needed as contrast for the stories that will come later in this section of the children who were having difficulties. Context is crucial to understanding the research questions and findings in a

participant observational study. Some stories about the children who were succeeding in the class will be told. A discussion of the groups that Mrs. Meijer set apart during the year will follow. Finally, an examination of the groups that became the foci of this study will be presented. Fieldnotes for a full morning early in the 1981-82 school year are reproduced in Appendix D. These notes describe what happened on a "typical" morning (9-25-81). The activities for the half-day included: opening of class activities, a handwriting lesson, boardwork explanation, journal writing, spelling groups, reading groups, film and snack time, and seatwork. These fieldnotes are typical of the kinds of observations noted throughout this year-long study. Sections from the fieldnotes that were interesting to me because of some relationship to a possible handicap were further developed into stories about particular children and events. What follows is a series of five vignettes that I wrote from the fieldnote data. These vignettes present the reader with a "look" at the classroom interactions. Later in this chapter I will separate the children into sets according to the way Mrs. Meijer was beginning to see them in terms of their overall classroom performance. The children who were succeeding in the class according to the teacher's expectations can be considered to be her benchmark children. Mrs. Meijer used these children as her reference points throughout the school year to judge the progress of other children. The stories will feature benchmark and target children together in interactions, as well as the two groups interacting with the other children in the class. Figure 4.1 is a listing of the children most

often cited by Mrs. Meijer in interviews and talks as being members of the two groups.

Benchmark Children		Target Children	
Donald	Paul	Steve	Mary
Elizabeth	Sarah	Joe	Pammy
Jessica	Andrew	Craig	Neil

Figure 4.1: Benchmark and target children.

The following story about the Red Math Group shows the five children in the lower math group interacting with the teacher. Of this group of five children, Craig was the only one referred for special education. Notice how he responded to teacher directions. Notice also how Mrs. Meijer used a concrete approach as she directed her small group lesson.

Subtraction Lesson--Red Math Group

Steve, Sarah, Craig, Karen, and Carrie (Mary was absent) were called back to the group area of the carpet for their math group. Mrs. Meijer wrote on the board:

$$\begin{array}{cccc} 2 & 3 & 5 & 5 \\ \underline{+3} & \underline{+2} & \underline{-2} & \underline{-3} \end{array}$$

All of the children were looking directly at the board except Craig. Mrs. Meijer asked them if they could see how the numbers 2, 3, and 5 could be worked four different ways. She spread out five workbooks on the floor in front of the children. She used them to show how four different problems could be worked. The children could see, visually, how the operations worked. Mrs. Meijer erased the previous example and wrote:

$$\begin{array}{cccc} 2 & 8 & 10 & 10 \\ \underline{+8} & \underline{+2} & \underline{-\quad} & \underline{-\quad} \end{array}$$

She called their attention to the sample box in their math book (p. 25). Craig looked on Karen's page. Mrs. Meijer appeared to be totally focused on her math group, but had to interrupt them at this point to tell the people doing seatwork that there was too much "buzz" this morning and to remind them to do their own work. Paul, Donald, Neil, and Joe were singled out and told to get busy.

The Red Math Group worked individually on the problems on page 25. Mrs. Meijer helped Craig, at least three times that I counted, by giving him explanations of how to do the work. Mrs. Meijer went back to helping the others and then checked their answers. Sarah was the only one who seemed to understand what they were doing as I watched. Steve appeared very confused. He was looking and did not do any writing. He looked around at the other children. Mrs. Meijer asked them all to look at the next sample box on page 26. Mrs. Meijer wrote: 9-5= and 9-4= . This time Craig appeared to be watching her write up the examples. She again used the workbooks to show them how to work the problems.

Math book, page 26

6 +2 8 -2	2 +8
7 +3	9 -5
8 -3	4 +3

> After working for about ten minutes on these problems, Mrs. Meijer checked their progress. Karen and Sarah were excused to their seats because they were finished. Mrs. Meijer still watched Steve, Carrie, and Craig and helped them as needed. Craig was excused next, then Carrie, and finally, Steve. (FN's 10-13-81)

This story represents a typical meeting of the low math group. A concept would be reviewed or explained. Mrs. Meijer would go through some examples on the board. The pages would be assigned and then checked by Mrs. Meijer. She excused children as they finished or demonstrated that they understood the concept sufficiently to work on their own at their desk. She watched over the work as it progressed in front of her, helping on a one-to-one basis if a child had difficulties. The use of concrete materials to explain the problems was common. The high math group (Yellow) was much larger and the children received less individual help, but the procedures were generally the same as for the Red Group. Both groups used the same book, the difference being that in September the children in the Yellow Group had started about two chapters further back in the book than the Red Group. In the low group all the children except Craig had known to look at the board for the teacher's examples. They had also known to look at the examples in their book when a teacher directed them to, while Craig looked at a neighbor's book instead.

In the following description of a large group lesson that occurred in December, notice the difference in the way the benchmark and target children (see Figure 4.1 for a list of names) responded to Mrs. Meijer in the lesson on question words. Members of each group both volunteered and gave correct and incorrect responses. Also notice the

differences in the actions of the two groups when they were actually directed to start working on their daily assignments.

Who-What-Where-When-Why

Mrs. Meijer began the group lesson by asking the children to "generate" a list of question words. Hands shot up immediately from John, Elizabeth, Jessica, and then Pammy. John, the first called upon, came up with "How." The children gave more question words and they were written on the chalkboard by Mrs. Meijer. Karen, Andrew, and Steve put their hands up to volunteer. Steve was called on. He said, "There." Mrs. Meijer asked him if "there" asks a question and told him that "there" usually tells something. Andrew was called upon next, responding, "They." Mrs. Meijer pointed out why they were wrong and moved on. Most of the children appeared to be watching her. Steve volunteered "is" next and was told that he had given a correct answer.

Mrs. Meijer then asked them if they had ever heard of the five w-h words that go together and are asking words. No one had the answer, so she told them that the five words were: where, when, what, why, and who. They were asked to practice saying these and to memorize them. She asked them all to say the five words together. A chorus of "Who, what, where, when, and why" could be heard. Steve said, "Who, what, where, why" twice as they practiced, leaving out "when." Both times Elizabeth turned around in her seat and looked at him. He seemed oblivious to his omission.

Mrs. Meijer started going over the assignments for the next morning. Some children (Elizabeth and Andrew) were sprawled over their desks, and several more were yawning or stretching (Jessica, Karen, and Judy). By this time, Craig and Steve were no longer paying attention to Mrs. Meijer. Craig was wearing the recording vest with the radio-microphone. At this point in the year he was sitting next to Steve. Their desks were the closest ones to Mrs. Meijer's desk, near the front chalkboard, where most of the explanations were given. After Mrs. Meijer finished the discussion and gave directions, she suggested that they take their seatwork pages out of their desks. Jessica was the only one who was already getting out her math book as Mrs. Meijer talked. Soon Elizabeth, Sarah, Judy, Andrew, Karen, Mary, Pammy, and the others began to do as directed, but not Craig and Steve. Finally Steve made a move to start working and Craig called out to the teacher, "What's the top one?" (VTN's 12-4-81). He was referring to the top words in the daily boardwork list that were written on the chalkboard directly to the side of his desk. Mrs. Meijer came over and asked him to sound out the words. He decoded slowly, "Student council

re-port." Mrs. Meijer said nothing further and Craig stood looking at the board for a few seconds, then hummed to himself as he went about getting out his workbook pages, glancing at the board from time to time.

Craig helped Steve find some of his pages. Then, as Craig tried to tear the day's math page out of his workbook, he ripped the page as often happens with perforated pages. "Oopsie," he sheepishly muttered. Steve looked at Craig and mimicked him. Then he said, "Oopsie, oopsie, goody, goody." Steve got his paper out of the book without ripping it and said, "My first time doing it right."

Mrs. Meijer was at the paper cutter across the room explaining something to Judy. With only a glance toward her, Craig, torn paper in hand, headed in her direction. He began to call her name for help before he was even halfway over to the spot where she was standing. He said, "This ripped when I was taking it out." Mrs. Meijer made Craig wait until she was done with Judy and then told him to go get a piece of tape from her desk to fix his paper. Then she made a general announcement to the class that they were wasting too much tape and should be more careful when tearing out their pages.

Craig returned to his seat to make the repairs and went up to Mrs. Meijer's desk to get a piece of tape. He carefully put it on the torn sections and then noticed that there was not enough tape to cover the entire rip, so he had to go back for more. After he had placed the second piece of tape on the page he held the page up to the light and called to Steve, "Hey, lookit. You can see through it!" (FN's 12-4-81)

It took Craig nearly six minutes to get ready to do his daily assignments. With the exception of Steve, who had been kept involved with Craig's torn paper, the rest of the class had quite a head start on him. While Craig's six-minute lag might seem insignificant when set against an entire school day, it was unfortunate for Craig and others like him that these lags tended to occur on a daily basis and in a variety of situations, not just before getting started on their assignments. Both Craig and Steve had partially focused on what Mrs. Meijer expected them to do, but neither appeared to understand the

assignments well enough to stay focused on what they should have been doing during the time of the torn math paper.

In the next vignette, a contrast between Elizabeth's and Craig's comprehension of the teacher's directions is apparent. Craig figured out how to get a piece of drawing paper only after watching another child, but he used his new knowledge to help a third child.

Getting a Piece of Drawing Paper

> On the first day of school, a half day, at about 11:15, Mrs. Meijer told the class that she wanted them to draw a self-portrait before they went home. The children were busy finishing up the rest of the morning's activities and were at different stages of readiness to begin their portraits. Mrs. Meijer gave the directions for the art project and told the children to ask her for a piece of drawing paper when they were ready. Mrs. Meijer continued with writing on the chalkboard, and some of the children began to draw themselves. Donald looked around the room, apparently trying to figure out where the drawing paper was. Craig seemed to have the same question on his mind, and he went over to Mrs. Meijer. He asked her where the paper was. He was told to think about what she had said. Right then, Elizabeth came up and asked Mrs. Meijer for a piece of drawing paper and she was handed a sheet. Craig, looking puzzled, seemed to be trying to figure out what Elizabeth had done that he hadn't. Mrs. Meijer went on about her work, leaving him to stand there thinking.
>
> A few minutes later, Royce went up to Mrs. Meijer and asked her where the drawing paper was. He received the same response as Craig and stood there looking puzzled too. At that point Craig came over to Royce and whispered something to him. Royce went back up to the teacher and said, "May I have some paper?" Mrs. Meijer responded, "Yes, you may," and gave him the desired sheet of drawing paper. (FN's 9-9-81, p. 4)

Even though I did not observe how Craig figured out what Mrs. Meijer's directions had been, this episode seems to demonstrate that he learned the correct response needed to obtain the piece of paper without having to be told again by Mrs. Meijer. It also shows one of the withit children, Elizabeth, following directions correctly on the

first attempt. She may have modeled a correct response for Craig or she may have told him what to say.

From the beginning of the year several students in the class stood out as being more adept in the role of student than others. One of these children was Elizabeth; another was Paul. Elizabeth's ability to obtain needed materials was just described. The following example demonstrates Paul's ability to approach the teacher for help, get it, and return to his assignments. At the same time Pammy attempts the same activity and does not get the teacher's help.

Approaching the Teacher for Help

> It was shortly before lunch and Mrs. Meijer was helping individual children with their seatwork as they came up to her with questions. She was sitting at the small reading table talking to Gail. Pammy went up and waited for her turn. Paul came up next and they both stood around the table waiting. Mrs. Meijer finished with Gail and acknowledged Paul first. Pammy stood there waiting. She seemed to forget why she was there and went back to her seat, never having talked to Mrs. Meijer. (FN's 9-22-81, p. 1)

Paul was able to come up to the teacher, get her attention and help, and go back to his seat to finish his work. Pammy was waiting for the teacher's help, but she never followed through. She used up more time than Paul, and she never received the teacher's help. She may have had the same question as Paul and therefore benefited from Mrs. Meijer's response to him. This is not known.

In December Mrs. Meijer told me that she was not happy about the progress of her class. On a day that had not gone well, the children

were cleaning up and getting ready to go home. Mrs. Meijer said later that she had been at her "sharpest" (FN's 12-9-81, p. 2).

Taking the Rap

> It was a Wednesday and there had been a student council popcorn sale that afternoon. Many of the children had purchased popcorn. Mrs. Meijer had found a wadded-up popcorn bag on the floor just as the children were lined up, coats and hats on, all ready to go to their buses. She asked for the person responsible to claim it. No one did. She waited. Children nervously looked around at each other. Toward the back of the line Paul was quietly trying to talk someone into claiming the bag so they could leave. Suddenly, Elizabeth spoke up and said it was hers and tried to take the bag from Mrs. Meijer. Mrs. Meijer just looked at Elizabeth. The look on her face implied that she did not believe the bag was Elizabeth's, and she did not give it to her. She asked for the <u>real</u> person to claim it. No one did. Mrs. Meijer said that there would be no student council popcorn for anyone next week. The children, looking disappointed and doing some groaning, filed out and got on their buses. (FN's 12-9-81, p. 2)

Paul and Elizabeth were two of the children whom Mrs. Meijer considered among her brightest and most "withit" kids. "Withit" was used in the sense of knowing what to do at the right time and doing it. (I will return to Mrs. Meijer's use of this term.) Paul demonstrated his withitness by trying to talk someone into taking the rap although he apparently was not willing to do it himself. Elizabeth summoned up her courage and decided to risk admitting it was hers. It is not known if Mrs. Meijer heard or saw what Paul was up to or if it really was Elizabeth's bag. The former is more probable than the latter to me, based on my observations. In any case, Elizabeth demonstrated her withitness by feeling able to volunteer to take the rap in order that all the rest of the children might get to their buses on time. The plan did not succeed. These stories conclude the look at the general

interactions of the class and at the beginnings of how this experienced teacher set children apart.

Throughout the course of this year-long study of one second-grade teacher, the focus of the observation revolved around how she determined if any children needed to be referred for special education services. The story became a study of the practical ways a teacher sees the children in her classroom. The story is about how the teacher judged a child's ability to learn effectively from her and what she decided to do about it if she felt the child needed some outside intervention. As the school year progressed, the children were informally sorted into categories. These categories were largely undefined, but they seemed to form sets for the teacher to ponder.

To begin to understand how Mrs. Meijer went about grouping "families" of children together, the fieldnotes and interview audiotapes were carefully examined to identify her specific verbal references to sets of children. It was felt that these natural families might show some resemblances to one another that would prove to be indicative of the patterns involved when she set children apart for a specific purpose, as in referral for special education services. Seventeen sets were thus identified (see Figure 4.2). These sets are by no means mutually exclusive, nor do they include formal groupings made by Mrs. Meijer for instructional purposes, as in her reading, spelling, and math groups. Rather, they reflect the informal day-to-day observations that Mrs. Meijer felt were important to point out in interviews or in discussions of the day's happenings. It is noteworthy

Benchmark(B), Has I.Q.(H); Doesn't Quite(D); Normal(N); Target(T); Not Categorized(NC)

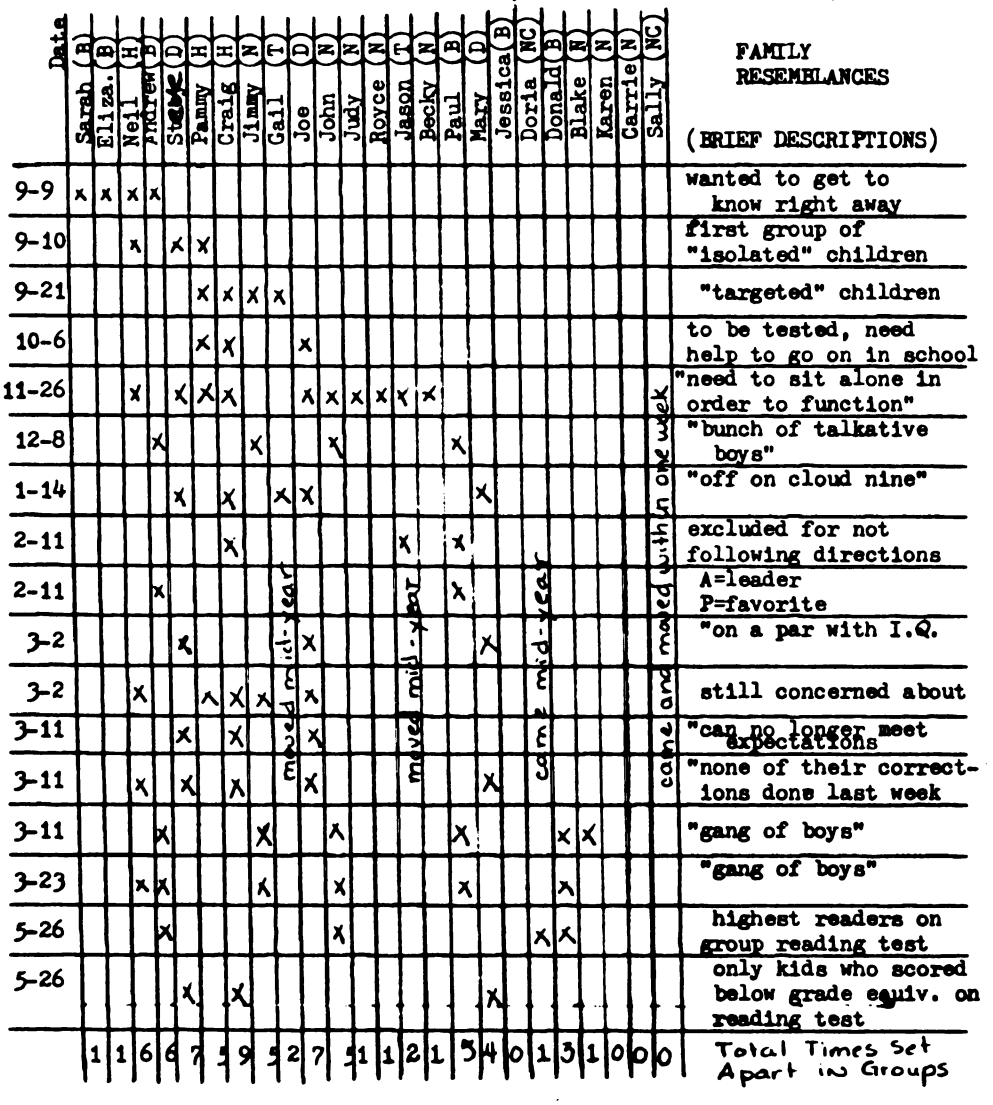


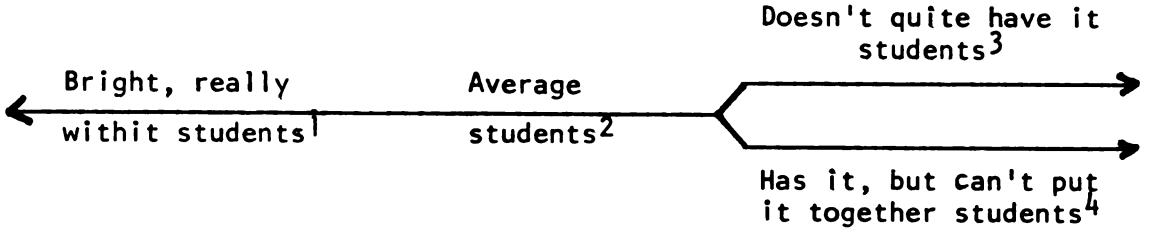
Figure 4.2: Mrs. Meijer's informal groupings.

that 14 of the 17 sets of children were problem groupings. That is, they were groups of children mentioned as having, or causing, specific problems for Mrs. Meijer.

Some of these problem sets were made up of children the teacher considered referring for special education services. These were the children I most closely observed through the fieldwork process. I wanted to discover what it was about these children that had caused the teacher to refer them for special education. She referred to them as her "target" children (FN's 9-21-81, p. 2). Of all the problem sets, why did certain children become "target" children?

Other sets of children identified by the teacher were studied as a means of contrast. The pool of children from which the sets were formed consisted of the members of Mrs. Meijer's second-grade class during the 1981-82 school year. Informal categories created by Mrs. Meijer included the "bright, really withit" children, the "doesn't quite have it" children, and the "has it, but can't put it together" children. The majority of the children in the class were between the upper and lower extremes (see Figure 4.3), in what I have called the average group as they were never given a family name in our discussions by Mrs. Meijer. The informal categories I have described were groups talked about by Mrs. Meijer, but they were not actual groups in the classroom. She had other types of groups that existed in everyday life. There were reading, math, and spelling groups. She had groupings like her "gang of boys" and the children with emotional

problems. Children could be members of several groups. Only the informal groups are reflected in Figure 4.3.



1	2		3	4
Paul	Jimmy	Gail	Mary	Craig
Elizabeth	Carrie	Jason	Joe	Neil
Andrew	Judy	Doria	Steve	Pammy
Donald	John	Blake		
Jessica	Karen	Sue		
Sarah	Becky	Royce		

Figure 4.3: Informal ability groupings of Room 125 children.

Interviews structured around Mrs. Meijer's class list were held at two different points in the year (late September and mid-March). She was asked to say whatever she wanted about each child. (See Appendix F for complete listing of Room 125 children.) Figure 4.4 was developed from listening to these two taped interviews and from transcribing Mrs. Meijer's comments about the four groupings of children previously described in Figure 4.3. Also recorded on the figure are excerpts from Mrs. Meijer's comments from the June report card as they were available for the children of interest. These comments were recorded while I was looking at the report cards alone, and no discussion was held with Mrs. Meijer about them. They are included as an end-of-the-year summary statement of how she felt about each child.

Name	9-22-81 10- 6-81	3-23-82	6-82 (report card)
	Extra Bright, Really Withit Kids		
Paul	active, sports-minded, quick finisher, likes to be entertained		continues to be a leader
Andrew	mother is a teacher	work is fine, behavior problems, but getting better	(not recorded)
Eliza-beth	mother is a teacher, follows expectations, super worker, no problems	nothing unusual	contin. top performance, super example for others
Donald	"brightest student," except. in math, too silly, push from home	has settled down	super student
Sarah	"another Elizabeth," math anxiety, sensitive, hesitant, quiet	"has really bloomed," no tears lately, up two groups in reading	quiet, positive influence
Jessica	fairly adept, feminine when necess., plays devil's advocate	ordering behavior, "mothering" role to older brother, busy-body, losing friends	needs some reminders to stay on task
	Doesn't Quite Have It Kids		
Mary	doesn't like school	works at her ability, misses things	still hesitant
Joe	happy-go-lucky, speech and reading help	immature, silly in hall, bothers others, made progress in spelling and reading	(not recorded)
Steve	disorganized, not keyed to academics, question home support	(mother didn't show up for conference)	difficult student to motivate
	Has It, But Can't Put It Together Kids		
Neil	isolated his desk, turns around and bothers others	low-average ability, could do more if focused, parenting problems	has not internalized appropriate behavior
Pammy	distraction problem, letter formation	parenting problems	has become a much more cheerful student
Craig	immature, listening problems--medical?, one direction at a time, kindergarten repeater, primer reader, adjustment problems every year so far, probable learning disabilities, seems "bright kid," wants to learn, visual learner, wants to help him get tuned in to school	petit mal seizures?	continues to be hesitant--written and oral directions

Figure 4.4: Interview and report card comments.

In an interview on March 2, Mrs. Meijer talked about what she saw as the specific problems of the group of children in her "doesn't quite have it" group. She said that Mary, Joe, and Steve were "on a par with I.Q. and what they have on the ball" (FN's 3-2-82, p. 4). According to Mrs. Meijer, Mary has "no specific disability" and will always be "the C student." Steve is "such a pig pen" that he sticks out anyway, and Joe, although he works hard, is going to have a "long school career." By the end of the time she called the "big push" for academics in March, Mrs. Meijer said that Steve and Joe, as well as Craig, could "no longer meet the expectations" (FN's 3-11-82, p. 2). She further elaborated that most of the class was doing a "pretty good job" except for Mary, Joe, Steve, Neil, and Craig.

Of the five children mentioned above as not doing well, only Craig was referred for special education services. He was referred in October. In Figure 4.5 the "careers" of the eight children judged most troubling to Mrs. Meijer are displayed. The figure is based on her comments from interviews throughout the academic year. Both Steve and Joe were mentioned as being "target" children for referral yet were never referred. Neither Neil nor Mary was mentioned for referral. Pammy, the second child to be referred, was not included by Mrs. Meijer in the group of children not able to meet her expectations in March. In Pammy's case the evidence seems to point toward factors other than academic ones. She was in the highest reading and math groups, but she rarely finished all of her seatwork. Craig, Pammy, and Neil had the family resemblance of "having it, but not being able to put it

together." In other words, there was something about these children that made Mrs. Meijer feel that they had the ability to do the work she was assigning, yet they were unable to organize themselves or their thought processes in such a manner as to allow their abilities to come out in a way that made them successful in school. It can be seen in Figure 4.5 that only two of the eight children who were most troubling to Mrs. Meijer were actually referred for special education services. This indicates that she used referral to special education sparingly.

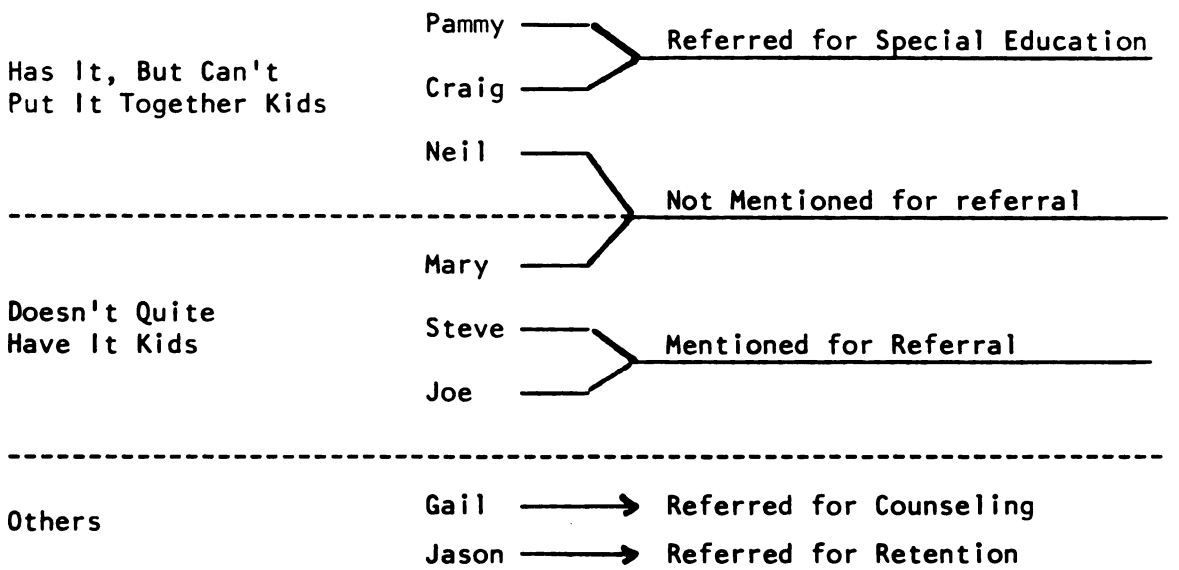


Figure 4.5: Careers of children troubling to Mrs. Meijer.

On the other hand, Mrs. Meijer, as just mentioned, felt that Steve, Joe, and Mary lacked the capability to do much better than "C" work. On the October 1981 Stanford Achievement Tests (see Figure 4.6), Craig's stanine range (3-7) was the lowest of all six children.

However, Joe, Steve, and Mary were not much ahead of him with stanine ranges of 4-7, 4-8, and 5-9, respectively. Mrs. Meijer's bright, withit children, Paul, Andrew, and Elizabeth, all had scores entirely in the high stanine ranges. Donald (5-9), Jessica (5-8), and Sarah (5-7) showed more variability but were all average or above in achievement. Complete Battery Totals for all children in the class can be found in Appendix G.

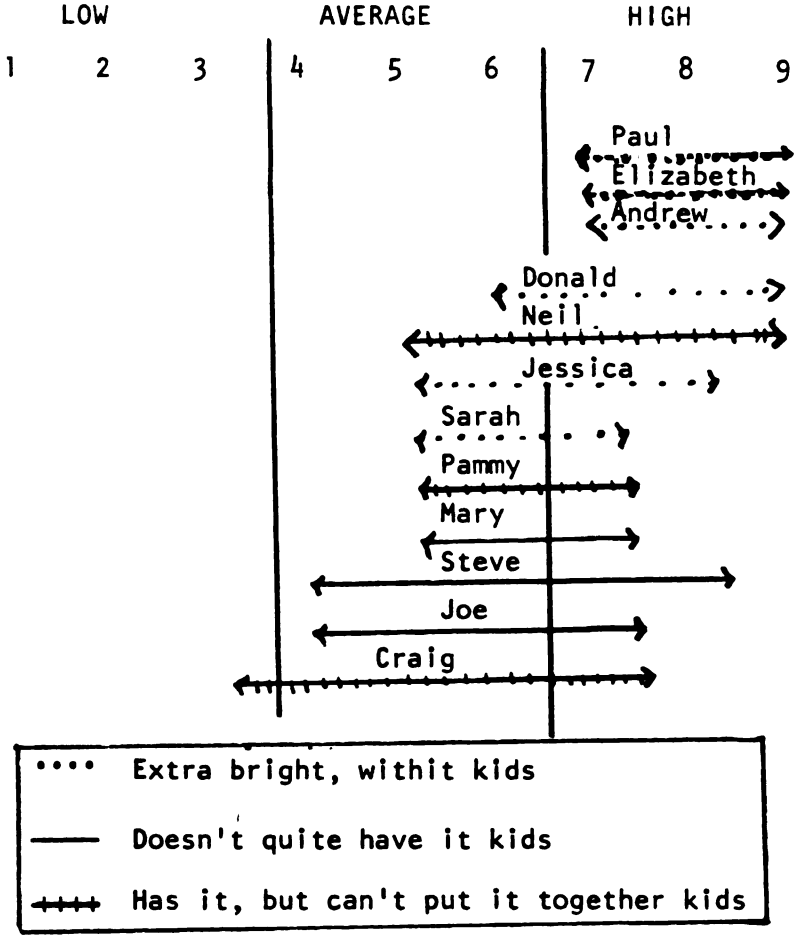


Figure 4.6: Stanford Achievement Test stanines for informal ability groups.

Not all children who pointed themselves out did so in ways that would cause a teacher to suspect that a special education referral was needed. Donald, Paul, and Andrew were far from being "model" students in class in terms of behavior. While not being in trouble with Mrs. Meijer as much as Craig or Neil, they certainly received more teacher reprimands over the course of the year than did such boys as Royce, Blake, or John from the average group.

The major differences between Donald, Paul, and Andrew on one hand, and Craig and Neil on the other, was that the former group were part of Mrs. Meijer's "extra bright and/or really withit" group of children as previously mentioned. On a qualitative level the misbehaviors of Donald, Paul, and Andrew were of a different nature in time and place than those of Craig and, to a lesser extent, Neil. The bright and withit boys may have been regarded differently because they managed, in spite of some silly behaviors at times, to get their work done. They participated appropriately during lesson times for the most part. They tended to get into trouble at unsupervised times, such as lining up, recess, and free time after their assignments were completed. They were also more adept at getting away with talking or sharing answers "behind the teacher's back" (Spencer-Hall, 1981) than the more "out-of-it children" like Craig, Steve, and Joe. They seemed to have both a sense of their own worth in the teacher's eyes and a sense of how far they could go with their inappropriate behavior before causing the teacher to become really angry with them.

An outsider (the researcher in this case) can be misled as to a child's abilities and achievements if she relies solely on the teacher's comments. This was apparent when we discussed the end-of-the-year reading scores in May. One of the boys whom I felt Mrs. Meijer included in her group of average children was John. His scores on the Stanford Achievement Test and the Gates McGinitie Reading Test placed him as one of the brightest children in the class. He had never been grouped with that set of children by Mrs. Meijer in her verbal discussions of the children with me.

I suspect that John's beginning-of-the-year crying outbursts and silliness kept Mrs. Meijer from including him in the withit group at first. He chose Jimmy as his best friend at the beginning of the year. Jimmy was a child who lacked self-control at times. Later in the year, John's best friend was Royce, a new boy to Pawnee School who was somewhat quiet and shy. John was on the fringe of the withit boys but was not really included in all of their activities.

It seemed that Mrs. Meijer had attributed certain social-emotional characteristics to John that overrode his high achievement scores. I expressed surprise at the end of the year when I saw his reading test results. John scored high grade equivalents in both vocabulary (5.6) and comprehension (5.7). I had placed him in the "average" group academically. Mrs. Meijer was surprised that I did not know what a good reader he was. She did not express surprise at seeing his scores but rather seemed to expect them to be high.

In two of the interviews (#5, 11-4-81 and #8, 1-14-82) Mrs. Meijer talked about a number of children who were not part of the process of coming together as a class. When she first talked about the class "not jelling," Gail and John were specifically mentioned as examples of how an individual child, or a few children, can disrupt the whole process. John had been in tears over a math assignment, and Gail continued to isolate herself from the rest of the children. Later, Mrs. Meijer implied that Steve, Craig, and Jimmy were also holding up the class's progress.

When the jelling issue was discussed again in January, Mrs. Meijer said that most of the class had jelled, but again she cited a number of children who were not part of the process. Steve, Joe, Mary, and Craig were lagging far behind in academics. John and Jason were described as having problems with immaturity. Neil and Gail were primarily behavior problems. Figure 4.7 shows the classroom standouts at these two times in the year when the issue of the class jelling was discussed.

It is interesting that neither Neil nor Pammy was included as part of the "not jelled" group in November. By January, Neil was included, but not Pammy. By January 14, Mrs. Meijer had already referred Craig and Pammy for special services and had included them, as well as Neil, in the "has it, but can't put it together" group. It is also interesting that even though more children (eight) were cited by Mrs. Meijer in January was not being part of the group, she made no further referrals of children for special education services that school year. When Figures 4.5 and 4.7 are compared, it can be further noted that

even though John was listed both times in Figure 4.7 he was never one of the children considered for special education referral. Pammy, who was referred, was never listed as not meeting expectations in either November or January, as shown in Figure 4.7. This tends to support the notion that there was something more than failure to meet expectations that caused a student to be referred for special education.

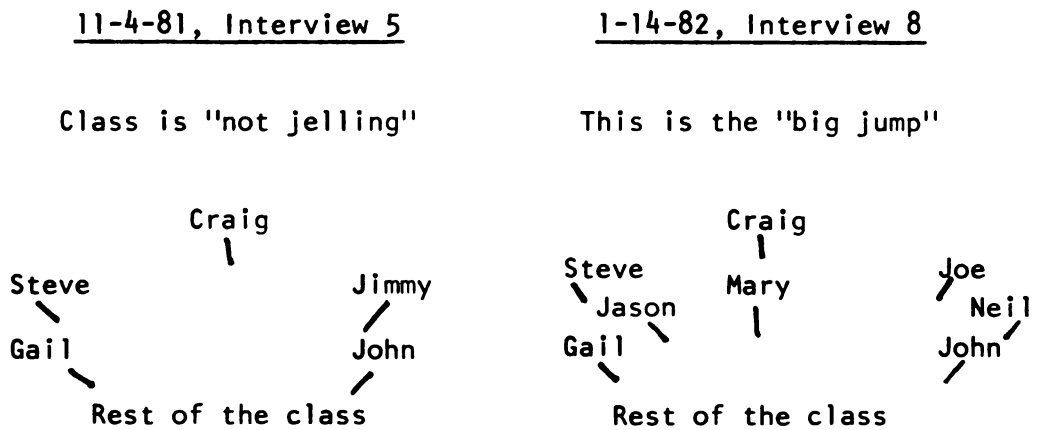


Figure 4.7: Classroom standouts at two critical points in the year.

Setting Children Apart for Special Education Referral

I was particularly interested in the practical ways Mrs. Meijer set children apart for special education referral. I felt that by looking at the children she might refer, I would be able to determine what set these children apart from the others in the classroom. At the beginning of the study there was no way of knowing if the teacher would refer any children. There were several children who seemed to point themselves out to me from the opening day. As it turned out,

Mrs. Meijer verbally targeted four (Craig, Pammy, Joe, Steve) of the 22 children in Room 125 for special education referral. She actually referred two (Craig and Pammy) children. One of them (Craig) was placed into special education classes for the learning disabled for the next school year, 1982-83. The other child (Pammy) was not placed into special education.

Both children whom Mrs. Meijer referred for special education were in the group of children she had labelled her "has it, but can't put it together kids." I decided to look closely at the data on this group of three children--Craig, Pammy, and Neil. Craig and Pammy were the ones who were referred for special education services. Craig, Pammy, and Neil were three very different children, yet Mrs. Meijer saw a commonality in all of them. Craig and Pammy were referred to special education as possibly being learning disabled. Mrs. Meijer's practical definition--"has it, but can't put it together"--perhaps better than any clinical characteristic best describes the puzzling condition that teachers face when they come across a child with learning disabilities.

Thumbnail sketches of the three children's characteristics are presented below. The descriptors are mainly my comments about the children, written as I observed them or as I thought about them later. The few words in quotation marks are Mrs. Meijer's words. Examples of each characteristic were found in the fieldnotes. I will present some of these in stories about each child.

> Craig--questioning; alert, yet out-of-it; dense; in one ear and out the other; smart; wants to be withit--Cub Scout, snowmobile; artistic ability.

Pammy--absent-minded; insect lover, scientifically inclined; lonely; shunned by classmates, but doesn't seem to care; individualistic, not concerned with doing what others do.

Neil--brooding; aggressive; "mousie" at times with teacher; mean, frequently copies others' work; shy about volunteering in class; "emotional things."

After noting the above characteristics of the three children, I went to the fieldnotes for the first weeks of the school year and took out observations written about these three children. These observations were chosen to show how the children were already setting themselves apart from their classmates. At the time I wrote the fieldnote observations that follow, school had been in session for two weeks and the children had settled into a routine. The children in the class were expected to take more responsibility for themselves now as Mrs. Meijer was busy getting her small groups organized for reading, math, and spelling.

9-17-81 Neil: Warned twice before 10 a.m. about his behavior. Mrs. Meijer mentions an "office" (his seat moved away from others) as a possibility for him. Told again about getting his seat changed.

Pammy: Reads to herself in a corner during Rainy Day Recess. No interaction with other children. Has cabbage wedge for snack today. In art builds a "playground for lady bugs" out of craft straws.

9-18-81 Neil: Often stands while doing seatwork. Argues with Joe and is talked to several times in the morning by Mrs. Meijer for his behavior.

Pammy: Gets a teacher-imposed time limit to try to get her to complete her work.

Craig: Stands a lot to work at his seat. Asks to sharpen pencil at wrong time (during class, not before).

9-21-81 Neil: Is told to "focus" several times. Copying Donald's paper.

Craig: Does not pass papers over to the side of his row when directed. Mentioned as a "target" child. Asks for something to be repeated, and he is told to have his eyes and ears open. He seems excited when he notes that there are only 15 minutes left until he gets to go home.

Pammy: Mentioned as a "target" child. Shares excitement with Craig that there are only 15 minutes left until they get to go home.

The above notes show that these three children were already becoming objects of Mrs. Meijer's special attention. These early brief fieldnotes serve as an introduction. I will next go on to discuss the three children in a longitudinal way across the school year. I will look most closely at Craig since he was the one child who became eligible for special education services. This discussion will be followed by a look at Pammy, the other child who was formally referred. Next, a brief look at Neil will be given. Neil is included as an interesting contrast to Craig and Pam since he was in Mrs. Meijer's practical grouping of "has it, but can't put it together kids," yet was never referred for special education.

Earlier in this section I said that Mrs. Meijer verbally targeted four children for special education referral. These were: Craig, Pammy, Steve, and Joe. Since Steve and Joe were never referred, their cases will not be discussed in detail, but the reader may want to note them as they appear in some of the vignettes about other children. These two boys were part of Mrs. Meijer's group of "doesn't quite have it kids" (see Figure 4.8).

"Has It, But Can't Put It Together Kids"		"Doesn't Quite Have It Kids"	
	Neil		Mary
Referred:	Craig Pammy	Targeted for referral, but not referred:	Steve Joe

Figure 4.8: Children most troubling to Mrs. Meijer in the 1981-82 school year.

To study each of the three children in depth, I used the following process. First, I carefully went through the data corpus and examined all specific references to each child's behavior. These notes were then analyzed and categorized into the specific types of problems each was experiencing. Next, available pieces of videotape were studied to get a sense of the antecedents and consequences of behaviors in the context in which they occurred. Then, short vignettes were written to portray actions (rich description) and shorter, supporting pieces of data (thin description) were gathered. Portraits of Craig, Pammy, and Neil emerged that showed a shared "family resemblance" (the "has it, but can't put it together kids") as well as the particularistic attributes of each child. The family resemblances appeared to influence Mrs. Meijer's decision to set them apart as a group. The descriptions of the children to follow must be considered within the context of the entire group of children who were members of Room 125 that school year.

When the teacher went about using her personal skills of observation and practical reasoning, it was necessary to do this from an interactional perspective. She looked at the child individually,

but she also had to think about how the child interacted with the other children in the class, with her as the teacher, and also how the child interacted with the curriculum and its materials. Being a successful second grader in Mrs. Meijer's class involved the ability to interact in several different types of classroom events. These events were: large group activities, where Mrs. Meijer presented a new concept, reviewed material already covered, and gave group directions or assignments; small group activities, such as reading and math groups; independent work times, seatwork and individual time needed to complete a small group assignment; teacher interaction times, when the children received help or when they were just talking with the teacher in face-to-face exchanges; and finally peer interaction times, before, during, and after class, on the playground, and in the lunchroom.

Getting a Special Education Identity: Craig

Craig was the first child referred for special education by Mrs. Meijer and the only child who was placed into special education from Mrs. Meijer's class in the 1981-82 school year. In this extensive description of Craig, stories and comments from all the major events involved in being a second grader in Mrs. Meijer's classroom are represented. This was done because Craig was the one child in the class who was eventually placed into a special education classroom for the mildly handicapped (LD) as a result of Mrs. Meijer's practical observation and reasoning skills. He was a standout from the first day of school. In fact, Mrs. Meijer knew a great deal about Craig before he entered her class. She knew that he had repeated kindergarten and

had not had a very successful year in first grade. She knew that he had received help from the reading consultant in the past and that he would, no doubt, need it again this year. She did not refer him for special education immediately, nor did she indicate that she planned to. Rather, she viewed her task as his teacher to try to decide what his problem areas were and how she could best help him. Her first opportunity to observe Craig's behavior was in the large group context because this was the primary interactional stage at the beginning of the school year. Mrs. Meijer had gathered the children together on the floor by her rocking chair before their dismissal to go home. (Later in the year the children simply lined up, but in early September she made sure each knew what bus to take, had their bookbags or lunchboxes, and she made any announcements that needed to be made to all of them.) Note how Craig set himself apart in this example of his behavior in a large group activity.

Large Group Behavior

Lining Up to Go Home

3:15 p.m. It was time to go home on the first full Monday of the school year. The children were seated on the carpet at the back of the room and Mrs. Meijer was in her rocking chair. She directed everyone who brought their lunch box to line up. Nearly half the children got up and headed for the door. Mrs. Meijer next excused those who bought lunch in the cafeteria. All the rest of the children except one got up from the floor and went over toward the door. Mrs. Meijer had started to stand up when she noticed that Craig was still sitting on the floor, a bewildered look on his face. He appeared to be waiting. Mrs. Meijer asked, "What did you do for lunch today?" He answered that he had an egg sandwich. Mrs. Meijer waited and then said, "But you

> brought a sack, right?" Craig continued to sit until Mrs. Meijer went over and told him to join the other children in line to get on their buses. (VTN, 9-14-81)

At the time, Craig's mix-up did not seem remarkable. Yet looking back, it is a clear example of the types of problems in comprehending the nature of school tasks that surrounded him all year long. Didn't he hear Mrs. Meijer's directions? Was he unable to hear the difference between the sounds of bought and brought? Or was he confused because he brought a sack lunch rather than a lunch box and Mrs. Meijer had said, "lunch box" people line up. Other children who brought sack lunches (not lunch boxes) got up when the teacher said this. He was the only child left sitting on the floor at the conclusion of Mrs. Meijer's directions. Craig stood out from the other children on this fourth day of school. He had problems in taking directions or explanations in one situation and being able to transfer them to a similar situation when he encountered it. The videotape of this activity clearly shows the expectation on his face. Bringing a sack lunch was not the same to him as bringing a lunch box, nor was it the same as buying a cafeteria lunch to him. She gave two categories, but he appeared to be waiting for a third. Most of his classmates did not share this difficulty, at least consistently. The lack of ability to generalize (or transfer what he had learned in one situation) tended to bother Mrs. Meijer as the days and weeks wore on.

Craig's confusion in a large group over the nature of a social task, lining up, was shown in "Lining Up to Go Home." Another example of Craig's behavior during a large group lesson, this one on metrics,

should exemplify the problems he showed above. This lesson came much later in the year. Mrs. Meijer's academic push was in full swing, and Craig's frustration at not being able to keep up was at its highest. For everyday math lessons Mrs. Meijer had two groups, but for metrics they all did the pages together as a group activity. The class was sitting on the floor with their math books and pencils. Mrs. Meijer was in her rocker.

Metric Measuring Lesson

> Mrs. Meijer began the lesson by directing the children to tear pages 139, 140, 142, 143, and 144 out of their books. As they began to tear out the pages, she reminded them to keep the pages in order because they would be stapling them together at the end. Craig had the first page in his hand and stopped. Mrs. Meijer said, "Tear it out Craig and keep right on tearing until you get to page 144." She next gave the class directions on how to show her they were ready to continue. Craig was the only child not ready to go on. They were asked to turn to page 140 as page 139 was "not expected" of them. Craig was on the wrong page, and Mrs. Meijer had to tell him specifically to turn to page 140. She finished explaining what they were to do on each page and then told them to punch out the measuring "sticks" from the back of their books. Craig managed acceptably with this task.
>
> The next eight to ten minutes were spent in measuring the different items called for on the pages. Mrs. Meijer walked around helping where needed. She went over to help Craig and noticed Steve on the wrong page. She told them that they would do page 141 together because it would be too hard to do alone. They were to measure some lines in units and Mrs. Meijer drew a sample on the board. They discussed the directions, and the children began to measure individually as Mrs. Meijer walked around helping. Craig looked on Karen's paper. About an hour after beginning the lesson, the children's workbook pages were stapled together, and the class all checked their answers at the same time. (FN's 3-11-82, p. 1)

In the fieldnotes I made no indication of the number of answers Craig, or any other child, got correct. The notes provide a record of the children who were not functioning appropriately during the lesson

as they were singled out. Craig's problems seemed to be with comprehending the nature of the task rather than with being able to do the problems.

That afternoon after the children had gone, Mrs. Meijer said that Craig's measuring was fine. She explained, "He can do the skill that's required of him if he knows what to do." When I asked her about his performance during the metric lesson she said, "He couldn't follow. Wasn't on the right page. Didn't see where the picture . . . just didn't have those kinds of put it together things. Once Craig tore the page out of his book, he was completely lost" (FN's 3-11-82, p. 3). Mrs. Meijer said that Craig relied heavily on visual cues. She said that he had learned to compensate for his weak auditory skills by relying on his visual abilities and that "without a finger point [to the problem] he was completely lost" (FN's 3-11-92, p. 3). Her comments help develop the picture of a child who is lost without visible structure. Tearing out the three or four pages from their bound, ordered sequence in the book contributed to Craig's confusion in getting started. Once he got going, he apparently was able to complete the task.

According to Mrs. Meijer, one of Craig's biggest problems was not following directions. On his special education referral form (see Appendix H) she stated her concerns as difficulty with "memory tasks" and "understanding directions." She felt that Craig's difficulty with directions came in the understanding of what to do. She suspected that his short-term memory might be the problem. Another example from the

fieldnotes, the first art lesson, may help to explain the manifestations of Craig's problem with directions.

Art is generally an exciting part of school life for most second graders. Mrs. Meijer explained to the eager children that they were going to be given a sheet of construction paper and some straws. They were to use their imaginations to make a design. She suggested that the straws could be stuck flat to the paper or stick up at any angle. Mrs. Meijer was standing in the middle of the rows of children, but to the outside, facing them as she gave directions.

An Eager Artist

> When she was ready for them to get their supplies, she said, "People in my back row, that are not lefties, may go get some scissors and a glue bottle for your row." Paul, Jimmy, and Jessica all got up and headed for the scissors can. Elizabeth stayed in her seat. She is left-handed.
>
> Mrs. Meijer was about to go on when she noticed that Craig was speedily on his way back to the supplies area. He had been sitting in the front row. She said to him, "Craig, are you in my front row?" Craig didn't say anything. He turned around with a sheepish-looking grin on his face. He started to head toward his desk, putting his left hand to his chin and then his right hand to his ear as he walked quickly back to his row. The rest of the children just watched him. Some were smiling. (FN's 9-17-81)

From where Mrs. Meijer was standing and directing her attention, Craig could possibly have thought that he was in the back row as his row was the farthest away from the scissors cans. Two pieces of evidence tend to dispute this, however. First, Mrs. Meijer had consistently referred to Craig's row as the first, or front row and to the other children's row as the fourth, or last row. This incident took place on the seventh day of school. Second, no other children from

Craig's row moved toward the scissors, and all three children from the back row did get up. Three of the four back-row children were "withit, together kids." Did Craig truly think that in this instance he was in the back row, or could it have been the excitement of the first art lesson that caused him to rush forward before his row was called? As the year went on, Craig proved himself to be one of the most talented artists in the classroom. Was he not listening to Mrs. Meijer and tuning out on the "back row" portion of her directions? Again Craig "pointed himself out" in front of the whole class for not following directions.

In addition to having difficulty following directions in large group activities, Craig also had problems in small group activities and when he was working independently, such as during seatwork. Specific examples from the fieldnotes and videotapes will be pointed out. Also, examples of interactions with other children will be given. Several of the stories will point to cognitive-thinking strategies that he appeared to be using. These are included because it was Mrs. Meijer's feeling that Craig had the ability to do better and this was her main distinction between the "has it, but can't put it together kids" and the "doesn't quite have it kids."

Small Group Behavior

An examination of Craig's actions in reading and math group lessons may shed additional light on why he was the first child Mrs. Meijer referred for help.

Craig was in the Rainbows (Houghton-Mifflin, 1974) reading group, the middle of three groups in Room 125. The children took turns reading orally. Sarah was the only child praised for her reading this particular late-September day. Craig was told to use more excitement in his reading. (He usually read in a monotone.) After the oral reading they were directed to do some workbook pages, and they all started to write except Craig. When Mrs. Meijer questioned him about why he was not working he said, "I didn't understand what to do" (FN's 9-30-81, p. 2). She helped him and next explained that they were to underline a certain picture on a page. When Mrs. Meijer reminded Neil to underline, Craig did too. This was one time that he was not caught for his inattention to the task at hand. He seemingly took a cue from a classmate.

Similarly, a couple of weeks later in math group I noted that all the children except Craig were watching Mrs. Meijer do a sample problem at the chalkboard. Later, he looked on Neil's paper to see what to do. At least three times during the lesson Craig had to be told what to do and how to do it. He did watch the next time that Mrs. Meijer demonstrated at the board. He was excused from math group to go to his seat at 9:56 a.m. but was again asking Mrs. Meijer for help at 9:59. She told him that she was not going to "spoonfeed" him anymore (FN's 10-13-81, p. 3).

Three months later Mrs. Meijer was still giving Craig extra help in his math group. She had called the Red Math Group back to the floor. She began to go over page 130 with them but noticed that Craig

was not on the right page. She told him the page number as well as where to look on the page. She went over the general directions of what to do. They were to underline their answers. The problems had to do with the months of the year. Steve was sent back to his seat to get a pencil. Mary was counting from right to left, but wasn't observed by the teacher. Craig looked on Sarah's paper before he even tried to put down an answer. He was so busy figuring out the six months of the year that he forgot he was supposed to be underlining. He asked, "Do you circle it?"

Mrs. Meijer went over the rhyme of the months ("Thirty days has September...") and called the children's attention to the big calendar on the front bulletin board. They were to find out on what day of the week January had started. Steve could not name the day. Carrie could not do it either. Mrs. Meijer told them and went on to explain pages 104 and 105, which dealt with skip counting. She asked Steve to continue from "2-4-6." He did it and answered that he was counting by twos. Mrs. Meijer asked Craig to go on from "4-8-12." He did not get it. First he said, "8." Then, with a prompt, he said he was counting by fours. Carrie was unable to go on from "3-6-9," but Mary could. Mrs. Meijer helped Craig make an apostrophe as they had to write 2's, 4's, 3's on their worksheet to identify the counting patterns. Page 106 was explained, and then Mrs. Meijer gave the children time to complete the four pages on their own at their desks while she called up one of the reading groups.

Clearly, Craig was not the only one having difficulty in his math group this particular day. It is also clear that he had trouble both with remembering directions and grasping the concept of skip counting. These same difficulties in comprehending both the nature of the social task and the academic task involved were apparent when Craig was doing seatwork. One of the seatwork activities that the children had to do was "centers." Mrs. Meijer would set out six to eight self-instructing activities on a table for the children to do during the course of the week. They checked their name off on a master list after the activity was completed. They could do these activities in any order they wished.

Seatwork Behavior

Around Halloween Mrs. Meijer set out a ghost puzzle as one of the center activities. The pieces were in a box, but it was not the original box. There was no guiding picture of what the puzzle was supposed to look like when finished. There were quite a few medium- to small-sized pieces, and it looked to me like the finished puzzle would be about 5" x 7" in size.

The Ghost Puzzle

> It was mid-afternoon when Craig went up to the centers table and selected the puzzle. He took it back to his seat and dumped the pieces out on his desk. He tried to put some pieces together. He was not getting very far. When I asked him, he said that he was trying to start at the center of the puzzle. He seemed to have no strategy for fitting the pieces together. He tried to fit pieces together that had colors that didn't match. He did not try to fit the edge pieces together or to fit pieces that contained obvious parts of words. He soon gave up and put pieces back in the box. (FN's 10-21-81, p. 4)

Craig did not seem frustrated when he could not do the puzzle. When I told him about the strategy of looking for the edge pieces first, he did not seem the least bit interested. He had tried, but did not appear to be bothered by his inability to do the puzzle. The puzzle was like Craig himself. All the pieces were there, but it was difficult to put them together to make a whole. Instead of trying to put the puzzle together, Craig moved on to the next activity.

While Craig was trying to do the puzzle, Pammy was catching up on seatwork. Elizabeth, Karen, and Sarah were cleaning up the painting area after everyone had finished the day's art project. Andrew and Paul were back at the listening center. Mrs. Meijer had told the children to be sure to read the back board and to do what it said after they finished putting their skeleton bones (Halloween project) together. The back board directed them to finish today's boardwork. Several children, Craig and Joe among them, went directly on to centers instead of doing their boardwork. On many occasions throughout the year, Craig went on to free time or another activity when he had not finished his seatwork. Most of the time he was noticed and redirected by Mrs. Meijer. Sometimes he was not.

Is All of His Work Done?

> The listening center was a place reserved for children with all their seatwork completed. On February 3, at 15 minutes before lunch, Craig headed for the area. Was all of his work done? His being finished with seatwork early was out of character with his usual work pattern that had been observed for the past five months. My check of the wire baskets where the children placed their completed pages surprisingly turned up one of Craig's papers in each of the baskets. A close look at the quality of his work shed light on why he was done so quickly. (FN's 2-3-82, p. 2)

Figure 4.9 shows what Craig turned in for each of the five seatwork subjects that day and what the actual assignment had been. At this point in the year the academic "push" was on. Mrs. Meijer had just learned that Craig was not eligible for special education. A few weeks later she commented that Craig was not every trying anymore.

Subject	Assignment	Craig's Paper
Spelling	underline & capitalize	just underlined
Candy Page (worksheet)	alphabetize words & write a poem	no poem candy/candle incorrect
Journal	write about Ground Hog's Day	full of erasures "I wish that ther was no tosh they of the gond hoge"*
Reading Workbook	pp. 101 & 102	skipped one on page 101; others were correct, page 102 looked okay
Math	pp. 117 & 118 (with teacher)	pp. 115 & 116 okay, but these weren't assigned for today

*Likely translation: I wish that there was no such thing as the Ground Hog. (The Ground Hog had seen his shadow, and therefore according to legend there would be another six weeks of winter.) (FN's 2-3-82, p. 3)

Figure 4.9: A look at Craig's seatwork assignments for 2-3-82.

The previous notation of the incorrectness of Craig's work when he turned it in made me want to look for instances where I could actually observe Craig completing his seatwork. I remembered that a few days earlier I had watched Craig doing some math problems on his own, so I went back to the notes and videotape of the math boardwork of January 29. The day's math boardwork had been explained with examples at about 9:45 a.m. An hour later, after recess and snack, Craig began to do his problems. He and Royce and a few other boys were copying the problems from the board. Occasionally they looked as if they were pointing to specific problems and asking each other questions.

Math Boardwork

1.	11 +6	6 +7	8 +4	9 +3
2.	15 +11	12 +7	9 +8	5 +13
3.	24 +30	48 +31	56 +22	47 +21

(FN's 1-29-82, p. 2)

As I waked down the row behind the boys I noticed that Craig was working on the first problem in Row 3: 24 + 30. His method for doing the problem was as follows: First, he added 2 + 3 in the tens column and got 5. Then he added 4 + 0 in the ones column and got 4. His answer of 54 was correct, but his method of achieving it would ultimately lead to error in problems that required carrying (regrouping) in

the ones column. It would have been interesting to see how Craig handled this. Some of the other children may have been using the same method as Craig, but it was not recorded in the fieldnotes.

Each of the settings just mentioned--large group, small group, and seatwork--was part of the interactional context set up by Mrs. Meijer. As has been noted, with each of these settings there were interactional tasks required of the children that caused problems for Craig. In the following pages, Craig's social interactions with the teacher and his peers will be examined. Would Craig's difficulties still be evident when the academic requirements were removed?

Interactions With the Teacher

A Day on the Floor

> The morning Upa-You-Body was over. Craig, Pammy, and Steve had been left standing twice, Judy once, and John three times. (Being left standing meant that a paper had not been turned in to the teacher.) Andrew had just tattled on Neil for looking on Donald's paper. Mrs. Meijer was getting the class ready to go on to handwriting when she noticed Craig rocking in his chair. She told him to move to the floor to work.
>
> While the rest of the class went on with printing, Craig worked on spelling. He was asked to get a clipboard to write on, and by the time he was ready to start the handwriting the class had moved on to their journals. Craig was seated on the floor right in the path of the children who were coming back to the wire baskets to file completed papers. He did not move so they walked around him, or stepped over him, until Mrs. Meijer saw this and told him to move. He moved over to the group area of the carpet, and a few minutes later when Mrs. Meijer started math groups she had to sit by her desk. He was working on the last worksheet of the morning before finishing the others, coloring when he was not supposed to be. The morning went on. Group work was over and Mrs. Meijer moved to her desk. Students started to come up for individual help. Craig was in the way for the third time, and he still had to be told to move. (FN's 10-10-81)

Craig's inability to be perceptive about being in the way, or being in the wrong line, was problematic all year long. He would be told something once, or even twice, and still not be able to generalize, or apply it, to the same situation when it confronted him again. Mrs. Meijer said that usually a day on the floor cured the chair rocking, but "We'll see with Craig" (FN's 10-10-81, p. 3). She seemed to think that once would not be enough for him.

This problem with generalizing was also evident when Mrs. Meijer gave oral directions. One day in mid-October Mrs. Meijer gave the class a pretest on compound words. The test had been passed out, and she had explained what compound words were. When she asked if anyone was having problems, Craig raised his hand. His question was, "What are compound words?" Mrs. Meijer explained again and told them to underline the two parts. Craig said, "Do you circle it?" Mrs. Meijer asked him to repeat what she just said, but he did not at first. Finally he said, "Through it" (FN's 10-21-81, p. 5). Many times I wondered if he was behaving this way deliberately. Later in the day Mrs. Meijer said that she could tell by his face that he really did not remember what she said. "He's not processing," she concluded (FN's 10-21-81, p. 5). The special education resource room teacher was in the room observing Craig the same day. Mrs. Meijer said that the resource teacher could not have picked a better day to see the way he really is.

Another example of Craig's inability to judge a mood came on the first day that Mrs. Meijer turned over several of the children's messy

desks. She had been trying to get them to keep their desks in order for several weeks. The children were out for afternoon recess and she caught sight of Neil's extremely messy desk. She went over and turned his desk down, spilling the contents on the floor. She also "dumped" the desks of Joe, Paul, Karen, Sarah, and Steve. When the class returned from recess they were surprised to see what had happened. There was a hush as the children looked around. Whispers of "she did it" could be heard coming from some of those who had stayed in for recess.

There was a slight air of tension as the children waited for Mrs. Meijer to explain. Before she had a chance, Craig spoke up cheerfully and said, "Mine's all messy too. Do you want me to dump it too?" (FN's 11-3-81, p. 5). Mrs. Meijer told him that if she had wanted his desk dumped she would have done it. He misjudged the seriousness of the situation in the room, or perhaps he was trying to make light of it.

Craig also misjudged the social implications of occurrences on other occasions. Early in the same year, on the second day that videotaping was done in the class, was another example. As was to be expected when an outsider enters a classroom of second graders with a videotape recorder, camera, microphone, and a television monitor, there was much curiosity about the whole business. The teacher and I told the children what was going to happen, and Mrs. Meijer proceeded with the day's activities. The next day, however, Craig brought his own tape recorder to school. He was ready to capture the day's happenings

for himself. He proudly came over and showed it to me. Then he placed it on his desk, running it for the other kids.

A Second-Grade Recorder

> When Mrs. Meijer noticed Craig with his tape recorder set up on his desk in the front row, she asked him to put the recorder inside his desk. It was distracting Craig and the other children around him. She said to Craig, "If that bothers your work today I'll have to put it on my desk till recess." Mrs. Meijer went on with her explanation of the morning's work and the day began. At about 10:50 a.m. Craig took the recorder out of his desk. Mrs. Meijer noticed him showing it to me, and he was asked to put the recorder on her desk, which he did, but he left the machine running.
>
> Periodically during the remainder of the morning Craig would run up to her desk and check the tape. He turned it on and off as they left and returned to the room. Mrs. Meijer did not appear to notice his activities until the children had gone to lunch. She played back some of the tape and was surprised to discover that the machine had recorded from inside the desk. She said that she was not about to let him take the tape home and do "goodness knows what" with it. So she erased the morning's recording during her lunch break.
>
> When Craig returned to class after lunch, he ran up to the teacher's desk, presumably to turn the recorder back on, but found it missing. He ran over to Mrs. Meijer and questioned her as to its whereabouts. She told him that it was in her closet and that he could get it after school. She told him that she had not given him permission to record the class. Her explanation seemed to satisfy him, and no more mention of the tape recorder was made until about five minutes before bus time when Mrs. Meijer got the recorder out of her closet. Craig saw her and ran over and tried to take it from her without asking. He was directed to sit down at his desk. The recorder was handed to him as he walked out the door to get on his bus, and that was the last I heard of the recording venture. (FN's 9-5-81, p. 1)

This example points out what I considered to be one of Craig's strengths that at the same time was one of his weaknesses. He was aware and excited about what was going on, his recording in this case, but he became carried away with what he was doing to the point of

getting himself reprimanded by Mrs. Meijer for continuing to record after she had asked him to put the recorder on her desk.

Before I move on to Craig's relationships with his peers, one further example of his inability to size up the social situation in the classroom will be presented. It happened on a day when there was a slight change in the established routine that had evolved around the use of the computer in the classroom.

Integration Skills

> It was a hectic Tuesday in Room 125. It was the class's day to have the microcomputer in their room. (At the time of the study the school had two machines to share among all the classes.) It was also library day. Usually Mrs. Meijer left the computer in the room and when the class returned to the room the children resumed turns. This particular day, however, she decided to wheel the whole computer cart down to the library. She wanted the children to go right on with their turns when they were not selecting books.
>
> Mrs. Meijer had not made an announcement to the class about her plan, but it seemed obvious what she had in mind when she pushed the heavy cart down the hall and set it up in the library. After it was ready to go she called John over to take his turn. John took his turn at the computer and went over and tapped Craig, who was next on the list. Craig stopped what he was doing. He walked back to the classroom and passed right by the computer. Mrs. Meijer noticed that no one was using the computer and was checking into it when Craig came back from the classroom with a puzzled look on his face. Mrs. Meijer got him started on the program and went on to help other children select books. (FN's 3-2-82)

Mrs. Meijer used this incident later as an example of Craig's "lack of integration skills" (FN's 3-2-82, p. 3). It also seems to point to his difficulty with social perception, as noted previously. One might assume that by second grade, when a child sees his teacher push a cart loaded with a microcomputer down to the library, he would

realize it was to be used there. No other children were observed going back to the room to use the computer. In addition, Craig was not the first child called up to work on the machine. In this instance, he seemed oblivious to the surroundings. On some occasions Craig was able to observe other children's behavior and to imitate it. Not this time.

Interactions With Peers

With his peers Craig remained pretty much on the fringe of the "gang of boys" that existed in Mrs. Meijer's room. The other children accepted him but did not go out of their way to include him. Craig would also join in with the boys' sports at recess. He huddled with them in the halls and at breaks and was not an outcast by any means. The class appeared to accept him for what he was, with tolerance and little malice.

The only observed act of a hostile nature directed toward Craig occurred at the beginning of afternoon activities one day in March. The children were sitting down around Mrs. Meijer for their story. John came in and jumped on Craig's foot. This type of behavior was very unusual for the class, and Mrs. Meijer immediately asked John why he would do such a thing. At first John said nothing. He looked quite upset by Mrs. Meijer's question. He finally said, "See, Craig keeps trying to sit with us and I don't want him to sit by us!" (FN's 3-16-82, p. 1). Mrs. Meijer talked about that not being a good reason to jump on him. Craig looked surprised and a little hurt by the incident but didn't say or do anything, and Mrs. Meijer went on reading the story.

There were several times throughout the year when the class would react to Craig's behavior before Mrs. Meijer did. Once in a science lesson the class was experimenting with what happened to light rays when a flashlight beam was directed in different angles. Mrs. Meijer had to keep telling a few of the children to quit leaning forward to see because they were blocking the beam's path. Finally, she had warned them enough and said that the next time anyone did it that would be the end of the experiment. On the very next trial, Craig started leaning out into the middle. This time it was his classmates who yelled out, "Craigie, Craigie" (FN's 11-10-81, p. 2).

On another occasion when the class was across the hall in the other second-grade teacher's room for social studies, Craig got up twice with the wrong row of children. The second time it happened several children yelled out, "Craigie, you're in Row 1" (FN's 10-1-81, p. 5). There was no other child in the class who invoked this type of reaction from the other children. The principal of the school called him "Craigie" and so did his mother when she was at school helping out with puppet making one day. Craig is not a name that usually gets made into a diminutive like Jim or John. Even though he was one of the oldest boys in the class due to his retention in kindergarten, he was physically small and was treated like he was younger, or less responsible, by almost everyone, including his Cub Scout leader, as will be obvious in the following paragraphs.

Interactions Outside the Classroom

I did not have much evidence in the fieldnotes about Craig's competence outside the classroom, but I had wondered if he was the type of child who would seem more "normal" in nonschool activities and only show his learning disabilities in school (see Cole & Traupmann, 1980, for further discussion of a learning disabled child in nonschool contexts). I had observed Craig trying to help Paul with a Cub Scout activity in the hall one morning before school. Craig told Paul that his mother was supposed to sign the activity after he completed it. Then Paul asked Craig if he knew what to do for the religious activity. Craig said no, but he showed off his three activity beads that were sewn on his Cub Scout jacket. I decided to try to gather some evidence on his behavior in Scouts because I suspected that perhaps this was Craig's area to shine.

Just a little over a month later, while the children were with the other second-grade teacher for a film, an opportunity presented itself. Mrs. Meijer and I were talking in her classroom when the school librarian came down to the class. She brought a message from the Cub Scout leader: Mrs. Meijer was to announce to the boys that there would not be a meeting today. The Scout leader had told the librarian to tell Mrs. Meijer to "look Craig in the eyes" and tell him to go home after school (FN's 2-23-82, p. 2). Mrs. Meijer asked the librarian to repeat it. There was no special message for any of the other boys. It seemed that even the Cub Scout leader believed that Craig was a child who had to be told something directly; she had set him apart from the

other boys too. Craig seemed competent in scouting activities, earning beads, and even trying to help others, but he had trouble following directions outside, as well as inside, the classroom. Admittedly, this one instance is too incomplete a base on which to characterize his entire out-of-classroom interactional performance. Nevertheless, there does seem to be enough evidence to state firmly that the Cub Scout leader had also set Craig apart from the other boys in her troop.

Craig: A Summary

It should be clear that Craig had difficulty across all the interactional-event settings in Mrs. Meijer's room. His case has been fully described here because he was the one child in the room who achieved the status of obtaining a special education identity. The actual procedural data on how this came about will be discussed later in the chapter. At the beginning of the year it was Craig's "family resemblance" to other children with problems whom Mrs. Meijer had known in the past that had earned him a spot in the set of "target children." Switching from her role as a teacher to that of a gatekeeper, it appeared that it was the universal, pervasive difficulties that Craig displayed in all of the classroom events that I identified in Mrs. Meijer's second-grade class that helped her make the decision to refer him for special education services.

Craig was a second grader who wanted to do well but lacked basic skills in reading and math. In addition, he lacked skill in comprehending the nature of tasks asked of him across the classroom contexts. He had difficulty following directions, was slow in getting started,

and was impulsive when responding to the teacher's questions. He seemed alert and smart at times yet out-of-it and dense at other times. This section on Craig concludes with a list of Craig's strengths and weaknesses (see Figure 4.10) as noted throughout the year. The list is taken from the fieldnotes and from interviews with Mrs. Meijer.

Pam: Left to Her Own Devices

The second child referred for special education evaluation by Mrs. Meijer was Pam. Unlike Craig, who seemed to stand out in the activities of the class, Pam blended into the background, almost to the point of seeming to be withdrawn. At times Pam could be working on something in the midst of a crowd of children and not pay any attention to them. It was almost as if she were in her own little world. Often she had to make up her schoolwork during recess or free time when she should have been interacting with classmates. Pam had a particularly difficult time completing her seatwork. Mrs. Meijer explained the four to six daily activities at the beginning of the morning and then she expected the children to do them independently in order as she worked with her various groups. By mid-September it was obvious to Mrs. Meijer that Pammy was one of the children who was having trouble getting the daily work done. When seatwork was checked at the Upa-You-Body time of the day, Pammy was usually left standing at least once every day. In the following story an incident is described where Pammy was isolated from the other children by Mrs. Meijer. Notice that other children are working alone and completing assignments while Pam is still on the first assignment near the end of the afternoon. Notice what

Date	Notation
9-10	can't follow directions, either out to lunch, or tuning out
9-30	questions everything
10-5	inability to follow more than one direction, inability to stay on task, kindergarten repeater, primer reader, doesn't know basic math facts to "10," visual learner
10-6	adjustment problems every year so far, bright kid, wants to see all there is to see, tries, wants to learn, to do well, auditory processing problems
10-21	not processing
12-8	can't organize to begin, not a self-starter, can only concentrate on one thing at a time, meticulous
1-29	does 2-column addition incorrectly
2-2	reversals and inversions in his reading, difficulty in conceptualizing, has learned to compensate, one-to-one he can read, anxiety, habitual problems, questioning, clears throat under stress
2-3	no longer trying, reading not valued at home
2-9	eager to do well, not getting anything from the reading act, can't put the big picture together
3-2	is learning, has basic skills, problem in performing a task with more than one step (these comments from school psychologist), difficulty with writing skills (like journal), difficulty going from "tool" learning to application of "tools," no integration skills, copies other kids' work
3-11	won't try anymore, can do skill if he knows what to do, difficulty following, being on right page, lacks put-it-together skills, relies on visual, depressed at having to sit away from other kids, making negative comments about his schoolwork, not developmentally ready for carrying in math, likes artsy stuff, can't process what's expected of him, particularly the auditory
3-23	wonders about petit mal seizures, fixed stare (above from the reading teacher)
5-26	EEG was normal, needs 1:1 attention to succeed

Figure 4.10: Summary of Craig's strengths and weaknesses.

she does after she is sent to the corner to work on her story by herself.

My Tooth Story

In mid-September Mrs. Meijer had her second graders write a story about teeth for Dental Health Week. After story time she explained what they were to write about. She told them to title their story, "My Tooth Story." Before they could start to write the story they had to make their spelling dictionaries. At 2 p.m. the first children to finish the dictionaries were given paper for "My Tooth Story." This was 35 minutes after Mrs. Meijer had given directions. By 2:10 Donald, Jimmy, Paul, and Jessica were finished with both tasks and off to other activities.

After recess (2:20 to 2:40) Mrs. Meijer demonstrated the day's art project, leaf rubbings. At 2:50 the class was told that the tooth story must be finished before they could go on to the art project. Mrs. Meijer was at the small table helping students with the spelling of difficult words. She called Pam to come back to the table with her spelling dictionary. She saw that Pam was still finishing up on the dictionary and hadn't even started her tooth story. Mrs. Meijer said to Pam, "This [tooth story] is your next focus. Go get your pencil." Mrs. Meijer sent Pam to the free-reading corner table to complete her story.

Pam went to the corner and sat down, but then stood up again and leaned forward as if to take a few steps toward the main part of the room. She stopped, appeared to be deciding if she should go, and then tentatively ran to her desk and came back a few seconds later with her spelling dictionary in her hand. This had taken almost two minutes. She finally sat down, scooted the chair up to the table, looked at the paper in front of her, then looked away to her left at the bulletin board. Next she put her pencil up to her head, then to her hair, shaking her right leg all the while. Another minute had gone by as she flicked her pencil under her chin while looking at the bulletin board. She finally turned to her work again, sighed visibly, scooted her chair up and stopped, scooted back, stood up and turned toward where Mrs. Meijer was standing. Pam talked to herself, pointed her finger sternly as if she was mimicking someone saying, "Sit down here," and then she sat back down, still mumbling.

Four and a half minutes had now passed since Mrs. Meijer sent Pam to the corner, and she still had not begun to write. She looked at her paper again for five seconds, looked at the bulletin board, glanced at what the rest of the class was doing, and then looked back at the bulletin board. Sarah came over to the corner

> to get a book and Pam returned to her story, but still did not write anything.
>
> Almost a minute later Pam went up to get spelling help from the teacher. She asked Mrs. Meijer to spell "once upon a time." Mrs. Meijer told Pam that she would write "once" for her but that she was sure that Pam knew how to spell "up" and "on" and could put them together. Mrs. Meijer walked away carrying Pam's spelling dictionary. Pam and Mary (also waiting for help) followed her. Pam went back to the corner to work. Two minutes later she came back up to Mrs. Meijer to get more help. She had to wait a full minute for the teacher to help two boys who were there before her. At 3:10 Mrs. Meijer told the class to clean up to go home, and Pam headed back for the corner to work on her story. Finally, eight minutes and 40 seconds after being told to go to the corner, Pam gave her tooth story to Mrs. Meijer. She was told to put her name on it and put it with the others. (FN's 9-15-81)

Unfortunately, a copy of Pam's final effort is not available. The fieldnotes make it clear, however, that she finished her tooth story that day. This incident was recorded on videotape and later studied after Pam was referred for special education. Originally, I chose to film Pam because I had observed how hard it was for her to concentrate on her seatwork when the teacher was not directing her in a lesson. In the nearly nine minutes that she was in the reading corner, Pam actually spent less than four minutes on the writing of the story. It was apparent in the videotape that she did not sit and concentrate on this task. Most of the other children finished nearly 45 minutes before she did. She never got to the art project and never finished coloring her spelling dictionary. The specified times in this long vignette are exact times.

I presume that Mrs. Meijer isolated Pam to help her concentrate. She wanted to keep Pam away from the distractions of the other children doing their leaf rubbings and moving about. Pam did not work on her

story even in the corner where she was alone. She looked all around, flicked her hair and face with her pencil, moved her feet and legs, and got up and down several times. This pattern repeated itself many times over the course of the school year and was a contributing factor to Pam's having to stay inside during recess many days to complete her work, even though she was one of the better readers in the class. Only one other top-reading-group child, Gail, consistently missed recess. She had different problems that hindered her completion of the work.

Mrs. Meijer said that she knew Pam had trouble completing tasks the previous year as well because she had talked to her first-grade teacher. Mrs. Meijer wondered if Pam could possibly have a "far-point copying" problem. She meant that Pam was unable to look at something on the chalkboard and to copy it on her own paper correctly. This task involves short-term memory also. Was it the "connection from what she thinks and what she can produce . . . or . . . just hand coordination?" asked Mrs. Meijer (FN's 9-22-81, p. 3). By the third week of school, Mrs. Meijer was trying to diagnose Pam's difficulties and had made careful observations of her difficulties.

During a science lesson in early December, Pam was chosen by Mrs. Meijer to portray the sun in a demonstration. In a viewing session of this lesson held later, Mrs. Meijer noted Pam's quickness in responding to many of her questions and statements. She said that Pam often looks like she is not paying attention when she really is. Several examples of this behavior will follow in the "Things in Space" vignette. Mrs. Meijer commented that Pam is "pretty much on task when we have group

discussion. It's when she's left to her own devices that there's a problem" (FN's 12-8-81, p. 3).

Things in Space

"What do we call the place where the earth and stars are?" asked Mrs. Meijer during an afternoon science lesson. When no one raised a hand to volunteer an answer, she called on Elizabeth, one of the most reliable of the children. Elizabeth tried, but did not come up with the answer Mrs. Meijer wanted. Sitting a few seats away from Elizabeth, Pam mouthed the word "space," but made no attempt to volunteer. Mrs. Meijer appeared to see Pam and called on her. Pam started to raise her hand as she was called on, then said, "Space." Mrs. Meijer said, "Correct," and went on talking about things spinning in space. As she said this Pam spun her hand and went, "Whirr, whirr," under her breath. The lesson continued on and Pam played with the recording vest that she was wearing for the videotaping, talked to Jason, who kept turning around to talk to her, and put her finger in and out of her mouth.

About ten minutes after Mrs. Meijer had asked the question about space, she called for Royce to be a model of the earth and Pam to be a model of the sun. Pam was given a kick ball to hold as the sun. She giggled and seemed pleased to be chosen. Royce was given the globe for his model of the earth. Mrs. Meijer asked the class what was wrong with the model of the sun. When no one responded, she called on Pam. Pam replied, "It's smaller than the earth." Mrs. Meijer said, "What do you know about the sun?" Pammy responded, "It's supposed to be very bigger than the earth." Mrs. Meijer went on to explain to the class that she would have had to have given Pam the big Indian rubber ball from the gym if the model was going to be realistic. As she said this, Pam buckled her knees under her as if the small ball she was holding were now a much larger and heavier ball.

Mrs. Meijer then had the children look in their science books at the picture of the children doing the experiment. They were balancing the balls on their heads. Pammy immediately put her kick ball on her head and then turned to Royce, who was still standing and holding his earth model in front of him. He copied her and put his on his head. Pam giggled as Mrs. Meijer asked them to show the others how the model worked.

The whole experiment lasted four minutes, after which Pam and Royce were sent back to their seats. Pam had a big smile on her face as she sat back down in her desk. The Things in Space science lesson continued. (FN's 12-1-81)

This brief episode illustrates Pam's ability to comprehend cognitive content while at the same time physically appearing as if she was not paying much attention. In the viewing session of the above lesson Mrs. Meijer said, "Sometimes it's funny, because you think she might not be paying attention when she really is. Like she responded with the globe so quickly there" (FN's 12-8-81, p. 3). Mrs. Meijer was speaking of Pam placing the kickball on her head.

The writing of the tooth story, described earlier in this section, is an example of what happened to Pam when she was "left to her own devices." She was distractible, but as Mrs. Meijer put it, it was an "inner distraction." She exhibited an "unattending behavior personality" (FN's 9-30-81, p. 11). Mrs. Meijer said that Pam tended to see details but couldn't put the whole thing together. For Pam, the source of her problems as a learner seemed to come from inside her.

In January Mrs. Meijer began teaching the children cursive writing. Mrs. Meijer would write the day's letters on the chalkboard; she also had a chart that she placed about midway in the class for those in the back row to see. The children had to copy their letters from either the board or the chart. Pam had a very difficult time with cursive writing. Sometimes she tried to do another assignment when the class was practicing the day's letters, or she would try to cover her work if an adult walked by. Her paper was often full of erasures and rips. Mrs. Meijer had suggested to her parents that they work on handwriting at home with her. Another time, Pam was heard whining about a lost paper when it was time for handwriting. This was unusual

behavior for her. She had not previously been seen as a complaining child. When she finally found her paper it was torn and full of erasures even though the children had been told that since these papers were for practice, they did not have to erase mistakes. Her problems with cursive writing continued throughout the school year.

With Pam, more so than with Craig or Neil, Mrs. Meijer was concerned about possible physiological deterrents to learning. In mid-year Pam's pediatrician discovered that she had a severe allergy to peanuts. The doctor had found an excess of some chemical in her body, and he placed her on a special diet for a month at the end of February. Mrs. Meijer was concerned that this strict diet would set Pam even further apart from the other children. Mrs. Meijer saw Pam as being different from the others in other ways, too. She told me that Pam's hair style (short and shaggy), sloppy cowboy boots, and clothes from Sears (never any designer clothes or brands from specialty shops, FN's 2-18-82, p. 2) contributed to her lack of friends. The school counselor told Mrs. Meijer that she was going to suggest a pet to Pam's parents, but the diet made it impossible. She could not go over to her best friend's house because the friend had a new dog. Other kinds of physical indicators of ill health that Mrs. Meijer noted during the year were dark circles under her eyes, asthma attacks (reported from home, not at school), and a general lack of alertness that is usually not seen in a healthy seven year old.

Mrs. Meijer seemed to feel that a great deal of Pam's difficulty was caused by her parents. She felt that Pam's parents were

"well-meaning" but that they didn't know "how to parent" (FN's 2-18-82, p. 2). She cited several examples in support of this statement. In first grade, Pam's parents put the house key on a chain around her neck. She had to let herself in the house after school because they both worked. Mrs. Meijer felt that Pam was too young to have this responsibility. The principal told Mrs. Meijer that Pam's father was surprised at the suggestion that he read stories to Pam. She was an only child and was alone much of the time at home. She had many interests, but they tended to be of a solitary nature and were science oriented, such as collecting insects and stones.

Even though Pam was not placed into special education, a recommendation was made by the building team for her to see the school social worker. The team felt that she needed counseling about her peer relationships. The social worker developed a group that included Pam and three girls of her choosing from the class. By March 11, Pam's counseling group had met twice and Mrs. Meijer reported that it seemed to be going well. Pam had to find out something she did not know about someone else, and Mrs. Meijer overheard her asking another child. They had seen a movie about friends in the group. Pam had started to participate in class discussions again.

The fieldnotes do not contain as much information on Pam as there is on Craig, but she was also clearly a child who Mrs. Meijer felt needed extra attention and encouragement. Pam tended to withdraw into herself rather than interact with peers or her teacher. Craig, on the other hand, was continuously interacting with peers and teachers. Both

of these children were referred for special education services by Mrs. Meijer and both were seen as "having it, but not being able to put it together."

Pam: A Summary

The difference between Pam's problems and Craig's should be apparent to the reader now after reading the stories and comments about both children. The two had been put in the informal group of "has it, but can't put it together" children at the beginning of the year. Whereas Craig seemed to be happy and outgoing, Pam seemed unhappy and withdrawn from classroom interactions. On a one-to-one basis she was very talkative, although the teacher rarely got to see this side of Pam. Although Pam was in the highest reading and math groups, she was not turning in all of her seatwork assignments.

The comments are meant to give the reader an idea of Pam's interactional difficulties. Mrs. Meijer worried about Pam because she felt that Pam was too different from the other girls to be able to make friends with them. Mrs. Meijer mentioned things like Pam's dress, hair style, and her diet as being problem areas.

The two fieldnote stories about Pam contrast her behavior in an independent activity--writing a story for Dental Health Week--and in a group activity--the "Things in Space" lesson. Mrs. Meijer decided, after careful observation, that it was when Pam was "left to her own devices" that there were problems. She reasoned that these problems seemed to come from an "inner distraction" and, as such, Mrs. Meijer

referred Pam to the special education team as a mildly handicapped child. Mrs. Meijer was able to use her observational and practical-reasoning skills to see a child who had high ability but was not achieving school success primarily due to interactional difficulties of a social nature rather than to any lack of academic ability.

Neil: Not Referred, No Discrepancy

The third member of this trio, Neil, was not referred for special education by Mrs. Meijer. His story is being presented as a contrast case to those of the other two children in the "has it, but can't put it together" group. If Pam's distinction was that she was inner-directed and Craig's was that he was outer-directed, what was Neil's distinction? What was his "family resemblance" to Craig and Pam in Mrs. Meijer's mind? Why were Craig and Pam referred for special education and not Neil? Mrs. Meijer was concerned about Neil's lack of academic progress as well as that of Craig and Pam. I looked at Neil's cumulative records for his educational history. He had been referred for special education in first grade (3-23-81) but apparently he was not placed. There was no Individualized Educational Program (IEP) in his school records to indicate special education placement. Mrs. Meijer had never mentioned that Neil had been in special education. The evidence indicates that he had not.

It was noted previously in this report that both Pam and Craig stuck out in the first days of school as being children portraying profiles of inappropriateness. In his own way Neil, the third member of the "has it, but can't put it together" children, also stood out in

those early days. He was one of the children chosen to be a helper by Mrs. Meijer on the first day of school. She said that she had deliberately chosen children for helpers on the first day of school because she wanted to get to know some of them quickly based on what she knew about them from last year. That same day, when the principal came in to the classroom with the superintendent to welcome the children back, he asked a question of Neil specifically. The only other child the principal directly called upon by name was Craig. This seemed to indicate the principal's familiarity with these two boys in particular. Apparently, the principal also set these two boys apart in his mind, although his calling on these two boys may have been a coincidence.

The first task the children were asked to perform independently the first day was to make a name tag for themselves. Mrs. Meijer had laid out index cards and colored marking pens at the small table. Neil was playing with the markers instead of using them to complete his name tag, and Mrs. Meijer had to speak to him about it. Finally she had to ask him to leave the table because he had spent more than enough time there to complete the project and still was not done.

Mrs. Meijer noticed that Neil had gotten out of his seat many times on the first day. The second day of school, she changed Neil's desk from the center of his group of three to the inside, on the aisle. His desk was moved many more times throughout the year in an attempt to find a productive spot for him. Mrs. Meijer told me that Neil was "disruptive." He often turned around in his seat and bothered other

children. Neither Craig nor Pam was ever labeled disruptive in this sense.

Mrs. Meijer planned to discuss some of the "emotional things" about Neil with his parents at the November 18 parent-teacher conferences. She said that his cumulative school file indicated that he frequently hit other children. Neil's parents were scheduled for a double conference (40 minutes), and they ended up staying even longer. His parents seemed to feel that Neil's past teachers had been "out for him," and they were afraid his future teachers would be too. Neil had swim team practice four nights a week and took piano lessons. Both of these activities were private, not part of the school program. Mrs. Meijer felt that he lashed out at school because he did not have any way of getting "rid of some of his hyperness" (sic) at home. His home time was very structured. Mrs. Meijer told Neil's parents that she felt Neil wanted to perform but was unable to. Mrs. Meijer suggested the possibility of Neil's seeing the school counselor to help him work out some of his problems. His parents told Mrs. Meijer that they would think about this and let her know after Thanksgiving break. Apparently they decided not to follow up on Mrs. Meijer's suggestion of counseling for Neil as no further mention was made of it.

Several times in the fall, Mrs. Meijer described Neil as a "nonfocusing" child. According to her early definition of focusing, a child was to look at her and pay attention when she was explaining assignments. Neil was more apt to be turned toward a neighbor or

looking off in the distance than to be looking directly at the teacher. Many times he even appeared to avoid eye contact with her.

By January, Mrs. Meijer felt that Neil had "done some improving" (FN's 1-14-82, p. 4) in the classroom but that his hall and playground behavior had not gotten any better. She had discussed this with Neil's mother. On February 3, Mrs. Meijer said she had to "collar" Neil for spitting on some fifth graders. Neil's behavior often seemed impulsive, as with the spitting. His classroom performance often seemed impulsive, as the story to follow will show.

After the Christmas holidays, Neil began to appear in the fieldnotes more frequently even though Mrs. Meijer felt that he was improving. I often stood behind the cubbies to write when I was in the room. Neil's desk had been moved to the end of this piece of furniture, apart from the other children. As I stood there, I often noted that Neil read directions out loud to himself before he did an assignment. On February 3, all the children had to do a worksheet that Mrs. Meijer called the "Candy Page" (see Appendix I). This worksheet dealt with alphabetical order. The children were to help the candy maker get his Valentine's Day sweets ready.

The Candy Page

> There was a "candy box" with 12 empty spaces at the top with words written on them. The words were : love, face, candy, Valentine, kiss, handle, lace, candle, heart, dandy, mine, and dove. The children were to cut out the candies and paste them in the candy box in alphabetical order. They they were to write a Valentine poem using the rhyming words from the candy box. To do this assignment Neil's strategy was as follows. (1) He cut out all the "candies." (2) He laid them all out on his desk. (3) He read the directions aloud to himself. (4) He started saying the

> alphabet "a," "b," "c," and after each letter he paused and looked for a word beginning with that letter. (5) He found a word that fit, put a huge glob of glue on the back of it, and pressed it down on the space. (6) After sticking down several words, he ran over to the wire basket containing the worksheets that other children had already finished and filed. He looked at some of them, then ran back to his seat. (7) He realized that he had made a mistake with the "c" words by not noticing that there were two of them before he went on to the letter "d." He ripped the misplaced words off the page and started rearranging his "candy" words. About 30 minutes later, Mrs. Meijer saw him looking at some other children's papers again and told him not to do it anymore. (8) Neil took his page back to his desk and started writing his poem on the back of the paper. (FN's 2-3-82, p. 3)

This episode demonstrates Neil's strategy for doing the assignment. Up to a point his strategy was a good one. His problem may have been that he was not used to having more than one word begin with the same letter, or perhaps he simply did not look closely enough at the 12 words before he spotted "candy" and stuck it down. As he quickly went through the alphabet, he glued down the first word he came to with the alphabet letter he was working on instead of checking to see if there were other words that started with the same letter. The episode also seems to demonstrate that Neil cared about completing his work correctly. At least two times as he was working, he ran back to check the papers of those who were already done with the Candy Page. The first time he checked he saw that he had made a mistake by going on to the "d" words, and he was able to return to his seat and correct his own error.

Mrs. Meijer had a lengthy conference with Neil's parents on February 18. They were upset about his report card and had asked for a conference with the principal and Mrs. Meijer. They started the meeting by asking the principal if he had seen Neil's report card. He

told them that he and Mrs. Meijer had written it together so he was well aware of its contents. Neil's parents told him that they had hired a private psychologist to work with Neil. They were again offered the services of the school counselor, and again said that they would consider it. Mrs. Meijer came away from the meeting with the distinct opinion that the parents did not think much of her as a teacher. She said that she learned about Neil's family life from listening to his parents talk. She said that he was under constant parental supervision. His father sat with him every night as he practiced the piano. Mrs. Meijer got the impression that the parents did not agree on child-rearing practices. She said that several times the father deferred a question to the mother, notably about going to see a psychologist. Mrs. Meijer said that Neil's brother was having a hard time, according to his kindergarten teacher.

On February 23, Neil appeared in class wearing glasses. Mrs. Meijer told me that he needed to wear them for reading and other close work. He fingered them, twirled them, and took them on and off. Neil rarely wore his glasses as the school year progressed. Mrs. Meijer had also met with Neil's psychologist and they had set up a behavior modification plan for Neil with four rules. The rules were taped to his desk. They read: (1) Stay in seat. (2) Not bother others. (3) Sit quietly--hands and mouth. (4) Do your own work. Neil could receive up to 16 check marks per day for complying with all four rules during the four times per day that the teacher was supposed to check him. Mrs. Meijer kept a tally of infractions by making marks on her hand when she

caught Neil breaking a rule. Neil was supposed to keep track himself and report to her at the end of each day. At 2:30 on the 23rd, Mrs. Meijer had three tallies for Neil, and she told me that yesterday she had had seven.

About a week later I asked Mrs. Meijer how Neil's plan was coming along. She said that she had not been able to follow through on it last Friday because of the special activities at school. Mrs. Meijer said that if she had time she would sit down and have Neil rate himself on a five-point scale. She said that she reminded him during the day by saying, "'four rules,' but it doesn't stick. There's no guilt . . . even though I've told him 'that's not acceptable school behavior'" (FN's 3-11-82, p. 5). She talked about not understanding how Neil could be so "mousie" (acting quiet and timid) at times and so "totally out of whack" in other instances, like wrestling in the library (FN's 3-2-82, p. 4).

Neil was in trouble for talking while the teacher was talking and for sharing answers with other boys. In the hallways he had been pulling hair, grabbing hats, and tripping other children. Mrs. Meijer said that he had trouble processing information. By March, processing had become part of Mrs. Meijer's definition of focus. She said, "He can't narrow it down enough and focus enough on what he wants to say and spit it out in less than 50 words." She described Neil as "just tumbling over himself" (FN's 3-1-82, p. 4). This was in reference to an incident when Neil was at the computer. Something had not worked

right and he had to go ask Mrs. Meijer about it. He was unable to express to her verbally what was wrong.

The spring parent-teacher conferences were held March 17-19. Neil's parents were late for their conference because they had spent extra time in an earlier session with his brother's teacher. They stayed longer than their allotted time with Mrs. Meijer, too. They brought a letter to her from the psychologist. He wanted to meet with her to go over the behavior modification plan. The psychologist wrote that she was not to lecture Neil, but simply to instruct him. He also suggested that daily removal from the group for disruption would be better for Neil than long-term removal of his desk to another area of the room. Mrs. Meijer was upset about the letter. She felt that the psychologist was trying to tell her how to run her class.

When I asked her why she had not referred Neil for special services in light of all his problems, she said, "I have pegged Neil as a student of low-average ability, and when he performs, he performs at that ability range." She said that she felt he could "probably do more if he could focus on the task and keep his mind on himself instead of others, but as far as seeing a learning disability, or places where our specialists could help, I really haven't seen that Neil needs that kind of thing. In fact, I think the psychologist will probably do more in terms of the boy's behavior, because of getting to the parents, than anything else" (FN's 3-23-82, p. 6). Clearly, Mrs. Meijer felt that Neil's parents were the major cause of Neil's problems. She saw little that she or the school district could do for him at this point.

On April 1, Neil told Mrs. Meijer that Craig had bent his fingers back on the playground. When Mrs. Meijer asked Craig about the incident, he said he did bend Neil's fingers back, but he did it because Neil punched him in the stomach first. Mrs. Meijer reprimanded Neil for hitting Craig. Later in the day, Neil's desk was isolated from the other children for not paying attention. For the most part, Neil appeared to be accepted by the other boys. While not one of the most popular children, he was not shunned by his classmates as were Craig and, at times, Pam.

Mrs. Meijer continued to send home nightly reports to Neil's parents throughout the spring. This meant that she had to check on his behavior 16 times a day. She told me that Neil's psychologist felt that he no longer needed to come to therapy. Mrs. Meijer said that, in class, Neil was "right back to his old behavior. Even though I'm sending these home, I don't think the family's giving him the rewards that they were" (FN's 5-26-82, p. 9). She said that at first Neil "lived in mortal fear" of the daily checklist. She said that she had sent home a bad report the previous day for "library shenanigans." He was too loud, would not settle down when asked, and did not do much seatwork. Mrs. Meijer ended her discussion of Neil that day by repeating her feelings that Neil's parents had an incorrect perception of him.

Mrs. Meijer felt that he had low-average ability and that when he did work, he worked at that level. In other words, there was no discrepancy between his ability and his achievement--one of the

criteria for suspecting a learning disability. On the other hand, although his disruptive behavior continued to bother her all year long, Mrs. Meijer apparently felt that there were no services that the school district could provide to help Neil with his behavior. Neil was not referred for special education services during the 1981-82 school year. If Neil continued to show such a profile of inappropriateness all year long, why was he never referred for special education? If the source of Pam's problems was some type of inner distraction and Craig's was some type of outer distraction, the source of Neil's problems seemed to be from outside the school environment altogether. Mrs. Meijer spent more time with Neil's parents in the school year than with any of the other parents. The lack of a special education referral decision for Neil seemed to have a great deal to do with how Mrs. Meijer saw the child in relationship to his family.

I would like to present several stories about Neil's classroom behavior because I want to explore further his classroom responses to see why Mrs. Meijer had originally grouped Neil with Craig and Pam as "having it, but not being able to put it together." "Getting the Math Test Done" will show Neil's early problems with attention and impulsivity. He got up three times to go to the bathroom and once to go to the hall within a 30-minute time period during a math test.

Getting the Math Test Done

In the first days of the school year Mrs. Meijer gave the children a number of informal achievement tests to help determine her group placements. On September 10, after storytime in the afternoon, she asked the children to get ready to do another page of the math test they had started the previous day. Neil was

> chosen to pass out the papers. Mrs. Meijer told the children that this page would be a little harder than their previous work. They began to work on it at about 1:30. She walked around, looking over shoulders, as the children worked. A few minutes later she told Donald, who was helping Neil, that Neil needed to do his own work. She reminded the children that this was a test to see what they already knew. It would help her to know what to teach them. As she walked past Donald and Neil, Neil took a poke at her with his pencil. Mrs. Meijer, in all likelihood, did not feel it because it had been more of a pretend swipe. Donald, who proved to be the best student in the class in math, finished the test in about ten minutes. At 2:07, everyone else was done except Pam, Steve, and Neil. In the approximately 30 minutes between the time Neil was told to do his own work and the fieldnote observation that he was still working at 2:07, he had taken two bathroom breaks and had been out of his seat at least two other times that I observed. After the first bathroom break, Neil forgot to turn out the light (room procedure) and was reminded to do so by three or four other children. Mrs. Meijer then noticed that he did not have much of the test done and told him where she wanted him to be on the page when she returned. He worked a little and then watched John draw for a while before he took another bathroom break and then went out into the hall. Mrs. Meijer followed him and could be heard telling him to always let her know when he was leaving the room. He came back in with a pencil box and went on with his math work. Meanwhile the majority of the other children had moved on to the next assignment and were getting ready to go outside for recess. (FN's 9-10-81, p. 6)

After the children had left for the day, Mrs. Meijer told me that Neil was a "lazy, nonfocusing child." She said that from what she could see of his math test as she walked around, his answers looked good. She said that he had done better today than yesterday and that he had completed more work. She felt that moving his seat to the aisle helped. When asked if math was particularly hard for Neil, Mrs. Meijer responded, "When he does attend, he can perform, but it's just that he is a nonfocusing child" (FN's 9-10-81, p. 8). In other words, when he attended to his work he could do it. He had the ability.

Earlier in this section Neil's strategy for doing the Candy Page worksheet was discussed. Another example of his use of a learning

strategy for math was observed on October 29. These strategy stories are being included to give the reader an idea of Neil's cognitive abilities. His strategies may not be unique for a seven year old, but because Neil did so much subvocalizing (talking quietly to himself) it was easy for me to record how his thoughts seemed to connect to his actions. On October 27, Neil was at the computer doing the day's math program. Several times he left the computer and ran over to his desk where he seemed to be doing something to his Snoopy name tag that was taped to the top of his desk. Then he would run back to the computer and type in his answer. I was too far away to be able to tell exactly what was going on. On October 29, however, I was standing at the cubbies, right by Neil's desk, and could watch him working without being conspicuous.

Using a Math Strategy

> Neil had a ditto page of 24 subtraction problems sitting in front of him. He was not getting started right away. It was 11:29 and he had done only one problem. I could hear him talking to himself (under his breath) about his math problems being the next thing to do. He sat and rocked in his seat a bit, then stared in space, still not working. Two minutes later, after Mrs. Meijer spoke to some other children about getting to work, he began. He went to his Snoopy name tag again, and this time I could see that he had devised a way of using it to count. He did not have a number line taped to his desk like some of the other children. (Mrs. Meijer did not have enough of them for the whole class and was waiting for more to come.) As I watched, he appeared to be tapping his pencil on the letters of his name and on the picture of the dog. He tapped certain parts of the letters and the dog to count. (Closer observation of the name tag later found many pencil-point marks on it.) I could see that he was getting the problems correct. He quit for a while, watched some interaction between Royce and John, and then went back to the last row of problems. It was now 11:37 and the problem was 12 - 3. He said, "Twelve minus three" aloud and counted on Snoopy and on his

> fingers saying, "1, 2, 3." Then he said, "9," wrote his answer down, and took his paper over to the wire basket for completed math papers. He left his paper and came back to his desk but counted out another problem. Then he went back to the basket, got his paper out, and changed one of his answers. (FN's 10-29-81, p. 3)

Neil seemed to have most of the answers correct as I watched him, so I decided to look at the problem he had changed. I saw an erasure on 14 - 6. He had erased an 8 and written in a 7. I looked at the paper under his, but it was correct, 14 - 6 = 8. I went over and asked Neil why he had changed his answer. He said, "I thought it was a wrong answer" (FN's 10-29-81, p. 3). Although I was unable to detect any further reason why Neil thought his answer was wrong, I had discovered what he was doing with his Snoopy name tag. He had devised his own unique math aid. While this is not a remarkable ability in a child by any means, it does give a clue to Neil's mental abilities and his resourcefulness.

This type of anxious behavior was noted at other points during the school year. One afternoon when the class was with the other second-grade teacher for social studies, they were assigned partners of the opposite sex and had to pantomime an action that she had written on a slip of paper. Neil did not have a partner, so the teacher asked him to be hers. When they got up in front to perform their action, Neil forgot what to do and Mrs. Field had to whisper it to him. Later she told me that "his hands were shaking with nerves" (FN's 10-1-81, p. 6). He seemed particularly reluctant to perform in front of the class. This included the simple volunteering of an answer when Mrs. Meijer asked a question. Unlike Craig, whose hand was generally up whether he

knew the answer or not, and Pam, who would volunteer when she knew the answer, Neil was quite reticent about this aspect of being a student.

Neil's switching between behaviors may have been one factor that caused Mrs. Meijer to be puzzled about him. One day she remarked that sometimes he was "such a mouse" (FN's 3-2-82, p. 4). It did not seem to go with his aggressive behavior at other times, like wrestling in the library, hitting and spitting on the playground, and teasing other children behind the teacher's back. One morning Mrs. Meijer showed the class Neil's paper as an example of a good handwriting assignment. He shyly smiled and looked proud (FN's 1-13-81, p. 1). Another day I observed him making a paper airplane out of a note Mrs. Meijer had given him for having a good paper (FN's 2-2-82, p. 2).

Although Neil did not seem to have one particular best friend in the class, he was usually in the mainstream of activities. On the playground he always took an active part in whatever sport the boys were playing. One day when the reading teacher came in to do a lesson, Neil was chosen to act out a fairy tale. He was allowed to choose any two boys to help him. Donald was his first choice and Jimmy his second. Donald was one of the smartest children in the class. He was mischievous, but only behind the teacher's back. Jimmy was fun-loving and quite often in trouble with Mrs. Meijer but was in the top groups for reading and math.

Neil: A Summary

The stories and comments about Neil were included to give the reader a sense of Neil and a chance to think about why he was not referred for special education by Mrs. Meijer. Initially Neil was grouped with the other two referral children as "having it, but can't put it together." After many months of observing Neil and trying to make sense out of his actions, Mrs. Meijer decided that he was of low-average ability and was achieving to his ability when he wanted to. Therefore, she did not refer him.

The comments show Neil to be a boy who had trouble staying in his seat and concentrating on his work. He bothered other children. He could not stay focused on the tasks at hand, even when his desk was isolated from those of his peers. He seemed afraid to speak out in class and was hesitant to approach the teacher for help, but could be very aggressive on the playground or in the hallways. I had seen him be mean to other children. Mrs. Meijer had seen him hit and spit at other children.

In the fieldnote stories I have tried to describe incidents that would support the above comments. Neil had strategies for learning that he would use instead of always asking Mrs. Meijer for help as Craig did. The stories make it clear that Neil wanted to complete his school tasks successfully, as evidenced by the way he would check his answers against other students' work. They also show Neil in times of inattention and nonfocus.

Neil was more or less salient to Mrs. Meijer as the school year went on. He was not always the focus of her comments. There came a point when she no longer felt there was a gap between what he was capable of achieving and what he actually achieved. It is doubtful that this happened at any one point in time that could be pinpointed. The first opportunity that Mrs. Meijer may have had to put all her observations together might have been the day I asked her why she had not referred Neil for special education (FN's 3-23-82).

Case Studies: Overall Summary

The significance of the teacher's practical reasoning and observation can be seen in the three case studies presented. Throughout the difficult process of diagnosing a child who is not succeeding in school and trying to decide if special education services are an appropriate alternative, the regular education classroom teacher is in the pivotal position. The teacher is receiving a great deal of input from the child, from the other children's reactions to the child, from her or his own reactions to the child, and most important from the way this input is interactionally put together in the context of her or his classroom. The teacher takes all the new input and must make sense of it in the context of her or his own expectations, her or his personal traits, and the constraints and opportunities placed on her or him by the school district, among other factors. This is not an easy task. Teachers are rarely given credit by the public, or even by their own administrators, for the complexity of the decisions they must make about children.

When she decided not to refer Neil, Mrs. Meijer added another piece to the puzzle of how a teacher goes about deciding whom to refer for special education. She had grouped Neil with Craig and Pam in the set of children who she felt had the ability to succeed in school, but somehow could not yet put everything together to be a success. Craig had been referred and labeled learning disabled. Pam had been referred and given school counseling services. Neil was a disturbing child to Mrs. Meijer. This was evident in the fieldnotes and interviews. She talked about his disruptive behavior and indicated that she felt it had an emotional basis, but said that she did not see any of the services they had at Pawnee School being right for Neil. She felt that his outside therapy was the best thing for Neil and his family.

In Interview 8 (3-11-82) I asked Mrs. Meijer what she was seeing or noticing at that point in the year. Her response struck me as curious at first because instead of citing anything having to do with the curriculum or with particular children, she responded by talking about the contacts that she had had with Craig's, Pam's, and Neil's parents that year. She said that "many of the problems of the children are there because of the parental problems" (FN's 3-11-82, p. 5).

To varying extents, Mrs. Meijer appeared to attribute the cause of the problems of all three of her "has it, but can't put it together" children to their parents. I sensed that with Craig she felt he was just like his parents, and she questioned the extent to which education was valued in the home. Craig's mother had helped at school with the Halloween party and the puppet-making project. His parents were

concerned about his lack of progress but seemed as bewildered as Craig as to what to do about it. As will be seen later, Craig was making progress. He just had a lot further to go than some of the other children.

Mrs. Meijer attributed much of Pam's problem to her parents' lack of ability to parent. She described them as bright, highly educated people with an eight-year-old daughter who was being treated more like a miniature adult. While Mrs. Meijer held Pam's parents responsible in part for her problems, she did not view the relationship as destructive to Pam. It simply did not help her self-confidence. Pam's inner distraction played a part in the feeling of joint responsibility between child and parent for her problems.

Mrs. Meijer said that she felt Neil's problems were a result of parental pressures on him. Mrs. Meijer sensed an inharmonious relationship between the parents over child rearing, and she felt that this greatly hampered Neil's chances of success in school. She may not have referred Neil for special education because she felt that his parents were responsible for his behavior. It should also be recalled that Neil was referred, but not placed, for special education in first grade.

When she said that Neil did not fit into existing special education services, Mrs. Meijer added evidence to the argument that a teacher takes a phenomenological approach to making classroom decisions such as determining which children are in need of special education help. She looked at the child's needs in relationship to the total

school picture. She expected her class to "jell," both educationally and behaviorally, at certain times during the school year. Mrs. Meijer had an idea of what was available in the school in terms of special help for children. She did not see the district specialists as being able to help Neil. She seemed to have made this decision on her own as she never referred Neil to the multidisciplinary team. It should also be pointed out that Neil was receiving assistance privately. Mrs. Meijer said that she felt the outside therapy could do more for Neil than a referral to special education.

This concludes the general discussion of the data about the "has it, but can't put it together kids." Next will follow a description of what happened to the two children who were referred for special education and the process each went through in the course of getting a special education identity.

The Special Education Referral Process: Craig's and Pam's Paths

The discussion in this section deals directly with Craig and Pam. In the previous section, examples of their general classroom behavior were given. The specifics of their referrals for special education services by Mrs. Meijer will now be presented. Children like Craig and Pam seem to keep time to a "different drummer" as they progress through school. Both children's idiosyncrasies stood out from the first days of the school year as recorded in fieldnotes, audiotaped interviews, and videotaped recordings of the classroom. What follows is an examination of each child's education career path as they went through

the special education referral process in the 1981-82 school year. The official steps leading to referral will be traced separately (see Figures 4.11 and 4.12) in the coming pages.

Craig's Path

Craig was one of the first children "targeted" by Mrs. Meijer in our conversations held on 9-21 and 9-22. In Figure 4.11 a summarization of the events leading up to Craig's placement into special education is given. The major decision points are discussed next, with pertinent examples from the fieldnotes when appropriate. The first building team meeting (see Chapter III for discussion of term) for Craig was held on October 5, 1981, not quite a month into the school year. Present at this meeting were the principal, Mrs. Meijer, the remedial reading teacher, the resource room teacher, and the district school psychologist. Mrs. Meijer had submitted a four-page referral form that was standard in the elementary schools in the Seneca district (see Appendix A). As a result of this meeting, Craig was observed in the classroom by the resource room teacher on October 21. Craig did not seem to be bothered by his school progress at all. A few frustrating events had happened, but I never really saw an indication of his unhappiness until October 27. That day everything seemed to fall apart for Craig, and real frustration crept into his voice. At the beginning of the morning he had been warned to turn around in his desk. He was told that he would be sitting on the floor again (see FN's 10-8-81) today if he did not. Mrs. Meijer then had the class do Upa-You-Body

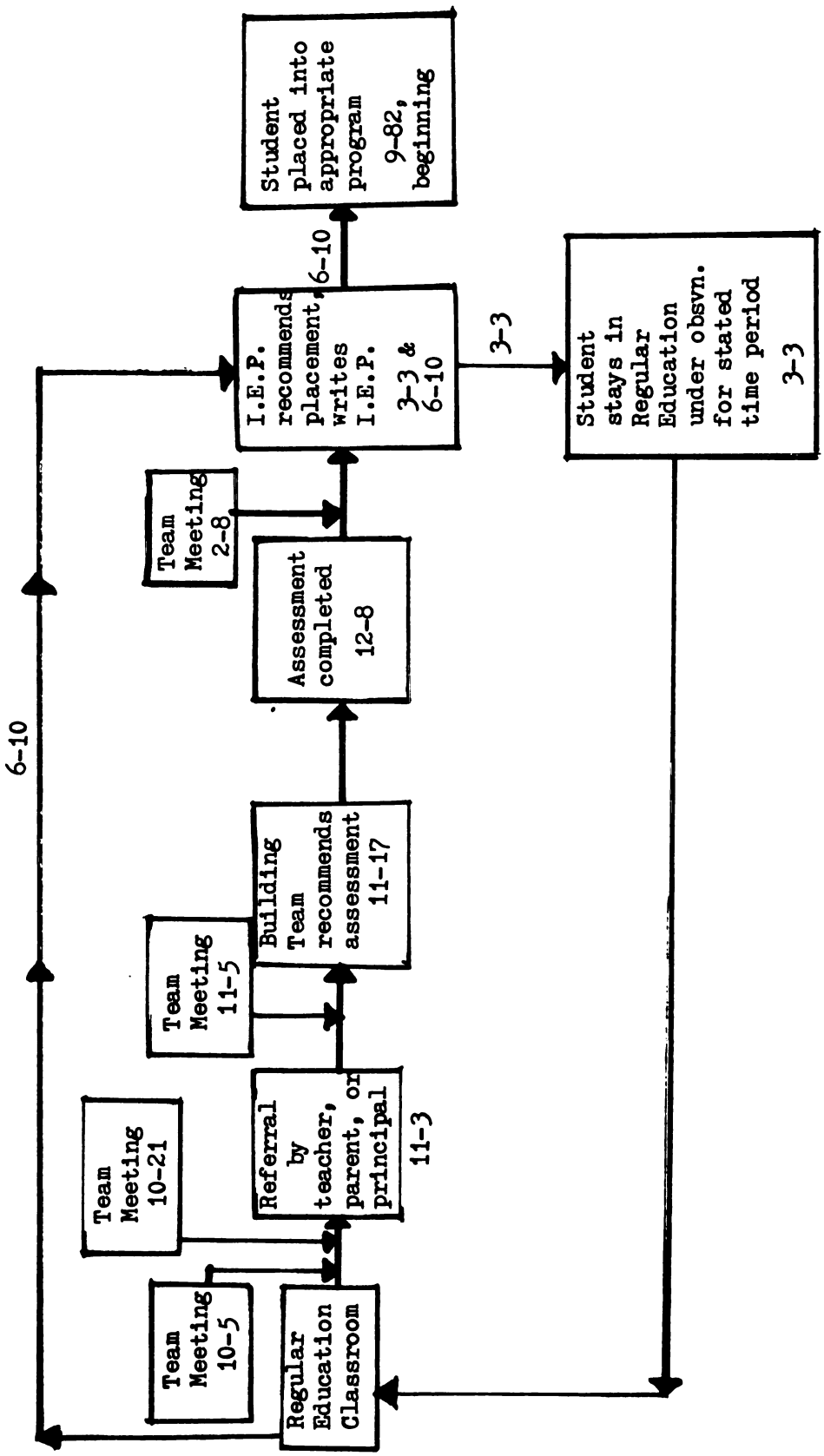


Figure 4.11: Special education referral process events for Craig.

for math. Craig was the only one left standing after she called the names on the papers she had received the day before. She and the class waited while Craig searched around his desk for the paper. She asked him if he had done it, and in a high-pitched voice he responded, "I don't know" (FN's 10-27-81, p. 1). Mrs. Meijer went over to help him look for it. She later said that she found over 20 unfinished papers in his work folder.

A little while later the class started to do spelling. The children were told to open their books and look for something. While the rest of the children took their books out, Craig merely sat and stared. When Mrs. Meijer asked the children to look at something specific, he said, "I can't see it" in that same high-pitched voice. While it was not unusual for Craig to be on the wrong page or to be starting to work after the other children, it was unusual for him to be using such a high-pitched voice to respond to Mrs. Meijer. It was as if the realization that he was floundering in the school work had finally caught up with him. It was now the end of October.

Craig's problems seemed to be carrying over into his physical education class too. That same day when Mrs. Meijer asked the gym teacher how her class's behavior had been, she was told that they were doing much better except for "one little guy" (FN's 10-27-81, p. 3), Craig. For the next three months Mrs. Meijer spent a great deal of her time trying to help Craig by getting special services for him. On November 5, she met with his parents to discuss his difficulties. She reported that his father was pretty quiet. Craig's mother had given

her consent for psychological testing to be done. She said that she had always known there was some type of problem with Craig.

The second building team meeting took place in mid-November. The results of the resource room teacher's observation were discussed, and Mrs. Meijer was told that the tests might not show any learning disability until fourth grade. The team decided to go ahead with psychological assessment, and the required form was sent home for Craig's parents to sign. The school psychologist saw Craig on December 8, two months after the first team meeting was held. The psychologist's report was ready after the holiday break, but the meeting was delayed twice because there were snow days on two successive Mondays. The team could not meet any other day because the district specialists had to be in other buildings on the other days. The third team meeting finally took place on February 8 and was attended by the same people as before, with the addition of the school counselor. At this meeting, Mrs. Meijer was told that Craig did not qualify for special education services in the Seneca School District.

The IEP meeting was held on March 3, 1982, five months after Mrs. Meijer had first referred Craig. Attending this meeting were Craig's father, the school psychologist, the principal, Mrs. Meijer, the resource room teacher, and the school counselor. The recommendation of the team was that no placement be made at that time. Mrs. Meijer was asked to reevaluate Craig in June to see if fall 1982 placement in the resource room might be warranted. Just two weeks later, before the spring parent-teacher conference, Mrs. Meijer told me that she was

ready to recommend to his parents that Craig be allowed by them to go into the resource room then, rather than waiting until June. She did not make the recommendation because the reading teacher asked the parents to take Craig to get an electroencephalogram (tracing of his brain waves) to exclude the possibility of neurological involvement. The reading teacher had worked with a child similar to Craig before, and that child had had neurological problems. Craig's parents asked for services to begin at a meeting they had with Mrs. Meijer in May. On June 10, Craig was formally placed into the special education system as a learning disabled student. He finally had his special education identity.

It took the entire school year to resolve what Mrs. Meijer first deemed to be a serious problem that would stand in the way of Craig's educational success in second grade. I will return to a discussion of what was happening to Craig in the classroom around some of the crucial times in the referral process following the section on Pam's referral steps.

Pam's Path

Early in the year Mrs. Meijer was sufficiently concerned about Pam's difficulties to telephone her mother rather than wait for Open House or conferences to come up. What bothered the teacher most was Pam's inability to complete assignments due to not being able to focus on the task. She was questioning the cause of Pam's distractibility. Mrs. Meijer wondered if it was an auditory, or a visual, or even an internal distractibility (Interview 3, 9-22-81). Mrs. Meijer talked to

the building team about Pam in early October. The school counselor told her that Pam wouldn't qualify for special education because her reading scores were too high. She suggested that Mrs. Meijer use an "office" (a desk separated from the rest of the children's desks to limit distractions) with Pam. This suggestion was never followed during the researcher's presence in the classroom.

On November 12, Mrs. Meijer said that Pam was next for referral now that she had Craig "in the works." She said that she wanted to "go on record" (FN's 11-12-81, p. 5) as having tried regardless of what the counselor had said about Pam's eligibility chances. Around this time she also noticed that Pam was bending her face particularly close to her paper and wondered if she might need her eyes checked or a complete physical exam. There was no Pawnee School Referral Form completed by Mrs. Meijer on Pam, as her mother had been the one who finally asked the principal to have her evaluated. In this case, the team skipped directly to the assessment phase of the referral process (see Figure 4.12). After the Christmas holiday, Pam was tested by the resource room teacher. When the teacher walked Pam back down to the room from the testing, she told Mrs. Meijer that she had not checked all the test answers yet, but she felt that Pam was "very bright" (FN's 1-5-82, p. 3).

Report cards went home on Friday, February 5. Mrs. Meijer told me that Pam's mother had called her at home on Saturday. Pam had burst into tears when her parents found the report card in her school bag on Saturday. According to her mother, Pam had sobbed that the other kids

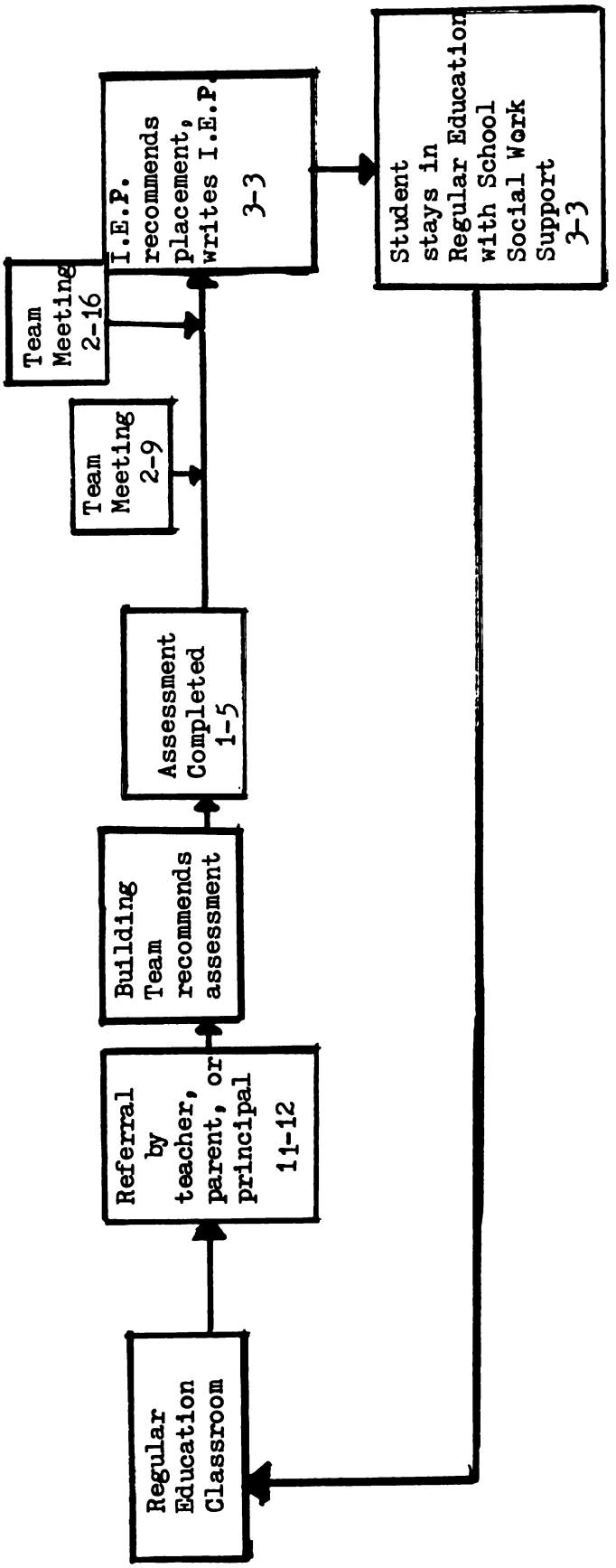


Figure 4.12: Special education referral process events for Pammy.

did not like her. Pam told her parents that they had all hated her since she was in preschool. Apparently this report card was the breaking point for Pam after holding these feelings inside for three years. Unfortunately, I did not get a copy of the report card to see what had upset Pammy.

On February 9, the second team meeting was held to discuss Pam's test results. At this meeting Mrs. Meijer was told that Pam's parents had taken her to a pediatrician. When he noted the dark circles under her eyes, the thinness of her body, and the increase in asthma attacks, he felt that there might be a physical problem. It was reported that the parents were taking the child to an allergy specialist.

Another team meeting was held on February 16, and Mrs. Meijer was told that since Pam did not have any academic problems, she did not qualify for special education. It was decided that the school counselor would meet with her to work on her socialization skills. A few days later Pam was noticed eating a lunch of rice cakes, carob chunks, and fruit juice. She told me that she could not have any eggs, milk, or wheat foods for 30 days.

On February 23, Mrs. Meijer told me that the counselor had asked Pam to choose four girls to be in her socialization group. The group finally got settled on March 2 and included Sarah, Mary, and Carrie in addition to Pam. On February 25 Mrs. Meijer said that Pam's mother had called to ask her if there had been any noticeable changes since the diet began. Mrs. Meijer said that Pam had been more responsive in class and the black circles under her eyes seemed to be gone. She was

still having a great deal of trouble with cursive writing. Pam's IEP meeting was held on March 1. On March 2 (Interview 7), Mrs. Meijer discussed the results. Pam's mother had explained that the allergy tests would be going on all month. Pam's guinea pig had to be taken away. Pam had been having trouble with Judy, a classmate who lived in her neighborhood. Judy had received a new dog and Pam could not go over to her home to see it because of the allergy tests. Pam's mother told Mrs. Meijer that Pam had always had a hard time making friends. Her current best friend was the kindergarten-age son of family friends. Pam talked about marrying him, according to the mother.

The IEP report stated that Pam's reading, math, and spelling were all at grade level or above. The school psychologist said that Pam's problems were "social emotional discomfort" (FN's 3-2-82, p. 3). She recommended that the counselor work with Pam on making friends. She said that Pam had a real feeling of isolation. The psychologist felt that these problems were probably the cause of Pam's poor school performance. She was unhappy with herself for not being able to do the things she saw other second graders do. Mrs. Meijer said that they told the mother that Pam seemed to be "socially naive" in terms of her age group. Pam's mother told the team that she had hoped the "allergy thing" was the reason for the problems, but not anymore. The dark circles under her eyes had come back, and the same reactions reappeared even though she was still on the diet.

On March 23, Mrs. Meijer said that Pam's father had come in alone for the parent-teacher conference. She told me that they discussed the

diet and Pam's failure to increase her academic output. He said that they would try to help her with cursive writing at home. They also talked about how hard it is to be the parent of a child you know is smart yet isn't succeeding in school.

The rest of the spring passed by without any noticeable improvement in Pam's work habits. Mrs. Meijer's comments about Pam in Interview 10 on May 26 can be summed up by the statement that there had been "no significant change." She went on: "The only thing I can say about Pam is that she may be a little more outgoing and a little bit more responsive to me, but as far as producing any more work. . ." (FN's 5-26-82, p. 8). She then said that Pam's reading scores for the end of the year were fine. Her word recognition was 4.7 and her comprehension score was 3.6 (in grade equivalents). "You know the ability is there. It's just the application of skills that doesn't come through or show up on paper" (FN's 5-26-82, p. 8). When asked about the counseling group, Mrs. Meijer said that Pam was going alone now. According to Mrs. Meijer, she "did not have the desire [to put in the work] to change. . . . Even though it bothered her, it must not have bothered her enough to do the things that she was asked to do" (FN's 5-26-82, pp. 8 & 9). She was friendly with Judy again, and one friend seemed to be enough for Pam.

At year's end, despite Mrs. Meijer's efforts, Pam was still floundering, "left to her own devices." Unlike Craig, for whom some hope of help during the following year had been held out, there was no more discussion about what could be done for Pam.

My Reactions to the Referral Process

When I read back over the fieldnotes for the entire year, I noted that in mid-February Craig was no longer figuring in the notes as much as he had previously. In fact, the notes were practically devoid of specific "Craig incidents" for two or three weeks. In looking over his referral path (see Figure 4.11), note that it was on February 8, at the third building team meeting, that Mrs. Meijer had learned that Craig would not qualify for special education services. She was disappointed, as she felt that Craig was a little boy who could greatly benefit from one-to-one help. She said, "He's so eager to do well" (FN's 2-9-82, p. 5) and he could really have "benefited from the extra help." Mrs. Meijer had been sure all along that Craig would qualify for special education. She may have felt his ineligibility was a negation of her ability to identify a child for special education. Perhaps the disappearance of Craig references in the fieldnotes was also a reaction to my own shared disappointment with Mrs. Meijer because I had followed his progress so closely. Possibly, it was because Mrs. Meijer became more focused on other children from then on.

With Pam there was also disappointment, but Mrs. Meijer had never held out much hope for her placement from the beginning (refer to the "just want to go on record" comment). Also, Pam did end up receiving counseling services from the school's guidance counselor. On the other hand, Mrs. Meijer was more disappointed about Craig because he received an "on hold" for three months until his reevaluation in June. By June, with enough discrepancy between Craig's achievement and his ability

finally documented, he was placed into an LD resource room program for the next school year.

Both Craig's and Pam's special education referral paths are retraced in Figure 4.13. The regular education classroom was the starting point in the referral process. The first decision point (or gate, see discussion Chapter I) was when Mrs. Meijer decided whether or not to refer the children to the special services department. If a referral was made, the building team met to discuss the child and to decide if testing and/or observation were needed. If testing was done the next decision point came at the IEP meeting. At this meeting, with the parents present, it was determined if the child qualified for special education or not. Another option, "not placed but keep under observation," was used for Craig. This meant that the teacher was to keep a close watch on the child's progress and alert the team if further action was needed. In this option, another IEP meeting was held after a stated period of time. At the second IEP meeting for Craig it was decided that he should be placed into special education for the following school year. (See Chapter III for a complete discussion of the special education referral process used in the school.)

Chapter IV Summary

The overriding research question of the study was: How does one teacher come to identify children as being in need of special education services in the early elementary grades? The conclusions of the study

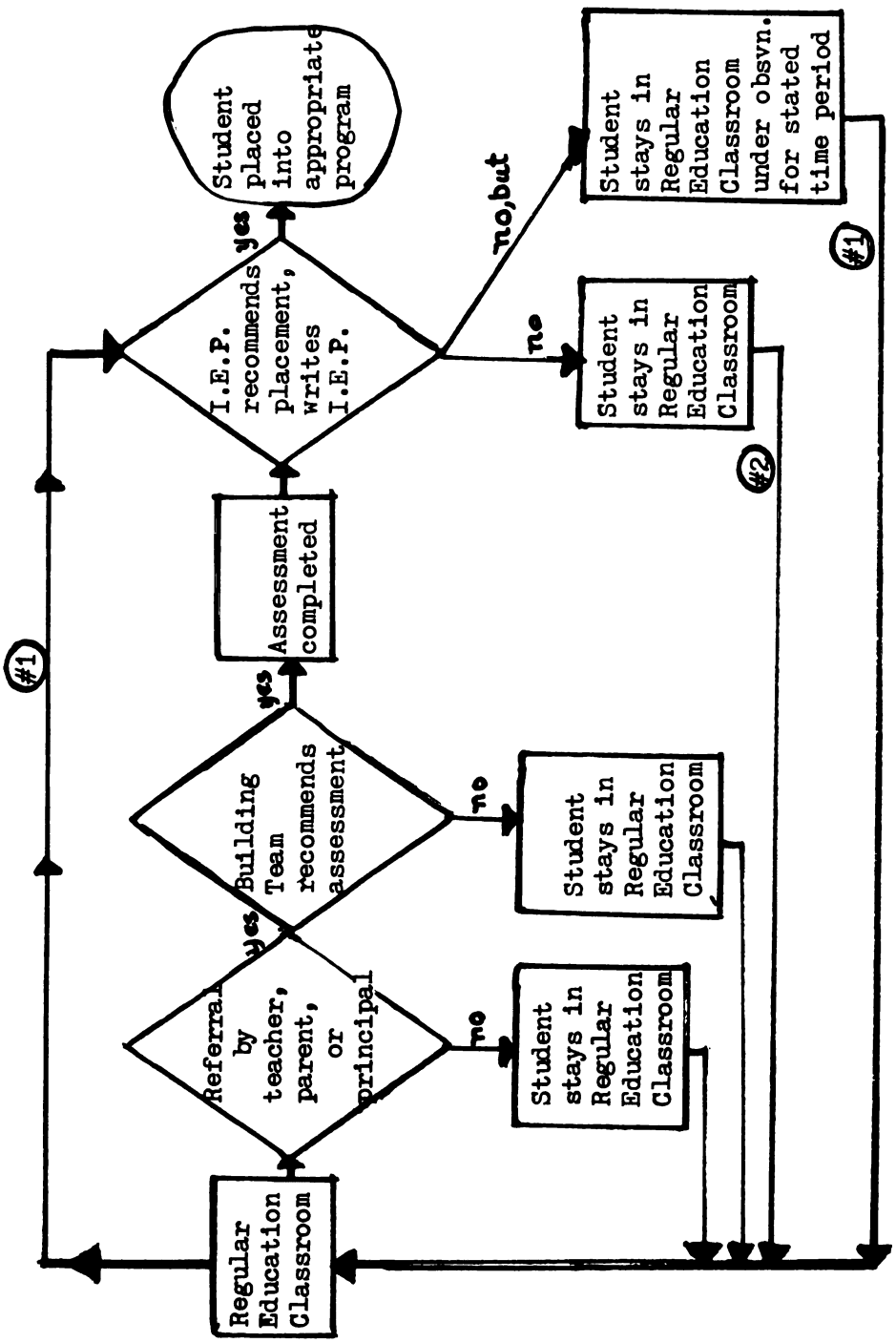


Figure 4.13: Mrs. Meijer's special education referrals in the 1981-82 school year.

were derived from an intensive year-long participant observational study of one experienced teacher in a suburban second-grade classroom.

My intention in this chapter has been to show the importance of the teacher's observation and practical reasoning in the special education referral decisions that she made. The children did not get special education identities based on static behaviors on a classification referral instrument. She did not refer every child in her class who had problems, nor did she even refer all the children whom she targeted for referral early in the year. She used multiple factors that varied in their individual importance with the child being considered. As such she was using polythetic rather than monothetic classification schemata (Levine, 1984). This type of classification helps account for her use of the family resemblance (Wittgenstein, 1953) approach when she made her referral decisions. The children referred for special education resembled each other in many aspects of their classroom responses, but they did not have identical difficulties, as was shown in the case studies presented.

Simply having a general understanding of the typical behavioral characteristics that indicate one or another handicapping condition did not provide enough specific, contextually embedded information for the teacher to make the practical decision to refer a particular child for special education services or not. The teacher's observations of the interaction of the child with the classroom and school system, as well as the teacher's own past experience, were crucial in the actual referral decisions that were made. A teacher's personality, her or his

past experience, and her or his teaching philosophy interact with student characteristics and behavior. These mediate what students do with the teacher in classroom interactions (Mehan, Hertweck, & Meihls, 1983). There was an "ensemble of items" that mutually supported and determined one another (Gurwitsch, 1966, p. 24). This ensemble of items was unique to each child being considered. The issues touched on in this summary are looked at in more depth in the following chapter.

I have tried to provide the reader with a framework from which to consider the findings by first presenting the teacher's overall expectations for the class as a whole and her observations across a school year. This section was followed by a discussion of her practical ways of grouping children in the room. The major emphasis of the chapter was on the three case studies and the vignettes about three of Mrs. Meijer's target children, one of whom attained the "status" of getting a special education identity. A discussion of the findings follows.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Overview

It has been said that teachers and their students accomplish desired (and undesired) ends based upon the way they mutually construct "patterns of action and meaning in a classroom microculture" (Erickson, 1985, p. 91). The patterns differ from year to year both within and across classrooms. This study was carried out with an intention to understand how one teacher made decisions in a classroom. The intention changed to understand how one teacher and her students engaged in the construction of patterns of action and meaning resulting in the teacher's referral of children for special education services. I believe that what Mrs. Meijer was talking about when she referred to her class as not "jelling" (see Chapter IV for discussion of this issue) was the overall pattern of action and meaning that she was expecting to see form from within her class. The class would be "jelled" when the patterns of action and meaning came together. It was in the construction of the patterns that the teacher identified students with problems. The subsequent referral of two children in the class to special education was but one of the elements of incongruity that was preventing a clear pattern of action and meaning from being

formed in the late fall of 1981, but it is the central element of this study.

The topic of this study was the identification of children with mild to moderate learning or behavior problems in a second-grade classroom. The identification process for these children began when the classroom teacher noticed children's behaviors that set them apart, either educationally or behaviorally (or both), from the other children in the class. The observations of the teacher in this study over the course of one school year, leading to her making two special education referrals, form the major findings of the study.

The primary question addressed in this participant observational study had to do with the beginning of the special education referral process. The overall research question I started the study with was: How does a second-grade teacher come to identify children as being in need of special education help? This question remained constant throughout the year, although the more focused questions that I posed at the outset of the research did change as the fieldwork and the school year progressed. (See Chapter III for the original research questions.)

Three major factors influenced the teacher when she set children apart for special education referral. These factors were intertwined, but for the sake of a clearer presentation, the findings will be discussed as if there were three separate groups. The overlap of the factors should be apparent. The three aspects are not mutually exclusive. As with the nature of the research and the nature of the

questions, all are mutually constituted. These three factors were: (a) the child's interactional performance in the classroom, (b) the teacher's observations and her practical reasoning about them, and (c) the institutional procedures and practices involved in referring a child to special education. Teachers and their students mutually constitute environments as they interact on a face-to-face basis in the classroom. The teacher will be prepared for the arrival of his or her new class. He or she will have the needed materials and an organized curriculum that he or she wishes (or is expected) to teach at the start of a given year. In the school studied, there was a high rate of stability; therefore, the teacher knew quite a bit about the children before they walked in the door on the first day. Yet, the environment is not entirely preset. Even though a teacher has all this information, it is not until the children arrive that the patterns start to take shape. (See Mrs. Meijer's comments about the influence of a particular group of children in Chapter I.)

In Figure 5.1 I have shown how the special education referral children were set apart. The patterns of action and meaning are constructed at the point where the teacher's observation and practical reasoning interact with the interactional performance of the children. This construction takes place in the context of the classroom. It is also from within this area that children are set apart into various groupings, such as the instructional groups for reading and math, remedial groups for reading and math, target children, withit children, the gang of boys, and special education referral children, to use some

of Mrs. Meijer's names. The two circles do not completely overlap because the interactional performances of the children were not all observed by the teacher. (See Spencer-Hall, 1981, for further discussion of what goes on behind the teacher's back.) Also, the teacher's observation and practical reasoning took in more than just the events in her classroom. Any reasoning she did about her children was balanced with what she knew about them, outside her interactional day-to-day perspective. This included reports from former teachers, the gym teacher, and the other second-grade teacher, who taught Mrs. Meijer's class social studies. It included her knowledge of the parents based on conferences and phone calls, and information outside school from seeing the children in local stores or hearing about them from their neighbors.

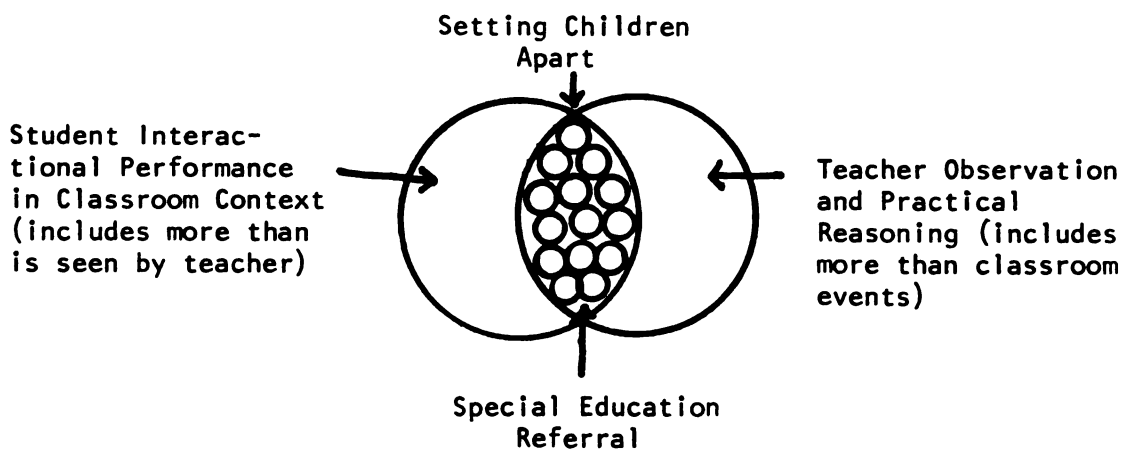


Figure 5.1: Mutually constituted patterns of action and meaning.

Interactional Performance in Classroom Contexts

Although not a new finding, the importance of the interactions that occur on the first day and in the first few weeks of the school year were an obvious factor in Mrs. Meijer's special education referral decisions. Even before the first day of school she had expectations for the children and had made some tentative groupings, but it was in those first real face-to-face interactions that she actually began to set children apart. She watched the children's performances in academic activities and in procedural activities, such as following directions, lining up, and filing completed papers. She was concerned with how the children's academic performance was intertwined with their social performance.

I did not see how crucial the students' interactional performance was in the early weeks of the school year until the year was well underway. Once Mrs. Meijer referred some children for special education and I started going back through the fieldnotes, I found evidence of how they set themselves apart from the beginning. Mrs. Meijer told me that she watched for the following behaviors on the first day of school:

1. Did the child finish the assigned work?
2. Could the child stay on task?
3. Did the child show signs of fatigue?
4. Was the child copying from another child?
5. What types of questions did the child ask?
   (FN's 9-9-81, p. 6)

I have no doubt that she used her answers to these questions to begin forming pictures of each child's interactional performance though we did not discuss this list as such at the time. Even before the first

day of school, Mrs. Meijer already knew of children to whom she wanted to pay close initial attention. Specific children were chosen as helpers on the first day because of what she already knew about them. She looked at the children who had been leaders in first grade as well as those who were of concern to their teachers. In the case of Neil, Mrs. Meijer felt that he was doing better than she expected him to do, based on his first-grade teacher's comments. This may have been one of the reasons that she never submitted his name to the special services department. Besides Craig and Pam, the only other target child whom Mrs. Meijer placed in her "has it, but can't put it together" group was Neil. Craig and Pam were both referred for special education. There was no evidence that Mrs. Meijer was surprised about either child's behavior in the first few days of school.

Dorr-Bremme (1982) found that "students play a collaborative part in structuring the classroom environment in which they are expected to learn and display what they have learned" (p. 460). This phenomenon was readily seen in the class and teacher studied. The "delicate interactional balancing act" spoken of by Erickson (1985, p. 44) was upset in the room when the class did not start to work together, or "jell," as Mrs. Meijer called it. She expected that at a certain point in the year the class as a whole would move from the acquisition of routines and expectations to the independent use of these skills. She expected that the children would take these skills and move into the heavily academic part of the school year with the interactional competence they had gained from working and living together in the

classroom for two to three months. Mrs. Meijer's "big push" was from January to spring vacation. When the patterns of action and meaning did not begin to materialize as Mrs. Meijer expected them to, based on her previous years of experience, her morale was also at its lowest (see Figure 3.4, the rhythm of the year chart). This low point lasted for about six weeks, all through November and up until the winter holiday break. Her big academic push began after vacation, and by mid-January the class seemed to be into a smooth routine. By Interview 9, 3-23-82, she was able to say that most of the children were meeting her expectations.

Once the majority of the class got into the rhythm of the year, Mrs. Meijer remained concerned about those children who continued to set themselves apart. These children were out of step. They were in the wrong place at the wrong time. They said the wrong things at the wrong time. They could not put their completed papers in the correct wire basket. These children were not in tune with Mrs. Meijer's expectations for their interactional performance. Without a doubt it was Craig who set himself the furthest apart. He was the only child in the room to obtain a special education identity. He was to end up being placed into a class for the learning disabled. His problems were ubiquitous. He had social and academic problems in large groups, in small groups, during seatwork, in peer interactions, and in teacher-student interactions. No other target child so fully fit this pervasive pattern of incongruity nor so upset the delicate interactional balancing act in the room.

As I showed in Chapter III, the school year had its ups and downs, its own rhythm if you will, for Mrs. Meijer. At the point in the year when Craig's and Pam's problems stood out the most, they were both referred for special education. They were referred at the time of the year when Mrs. Meijer was most concerned about the class not jelling. There is not enough evidence to say firmly that a teacher's referral decisions are made at low points in the school year. There may have been other factors involved, but the evidence does show that the two children were referred at the time of the year when the class was not "jelling" for Mrs. Meijer. Further, when Mrs. Meijer reconsidered Steve and Joe for special education referral, she was pleased with the class's progress. She did not refer either boy.

I continued to go back to the data to try to decide what had made Mrs. Meijer refer Craig and Pam, but no other target children, for help. I believe that these children's overall interactional performance had as much to do with the decision as any characteristic of learning disabilities or other mild handicapping condition. Successful interactional performance in Mrs. Meijer's class included: knowing what to do and when to do it, the ability to start work independently, and following directions. As stated in the previous section (see Figure 5.1), it is in the constructing of patterns of action and meaning that teachers identify problem students. Problem children "point themselves out" like Craig did when he went up for scissors at art time when it was not his row's turn, stayed seated when all the other children had lined up to go home, sat in the path of

everyone the day he had to sit on the floor for rocking in his seat, and poked his head in front of the flashlight beam after Mrs. Meijer had told them if they did it one more time, that would be the end of the science experiment.

The patterns that Mrs. Meijer looked for when she was trying to decide whether to refer a child for special education or not are summarized in Figure 5.2. The child's focusing ability has to do with the way the child is able to process the information that is given, both verbal and written. She looked at their interactional performance across a variety of classroom events. Her observations from the first days and weeks of the school year were crucial when she formed her first group of target children. These factors were tempered by her own perception of the child's needs and of the services available in the school district. The interactional performance of a student influences "educational gatekeeping decisions and so students' educational careers" (Dorr-Bremme, 1982, p. 11). I will come back to the gatekeeper role of the teacher in the section on identification.

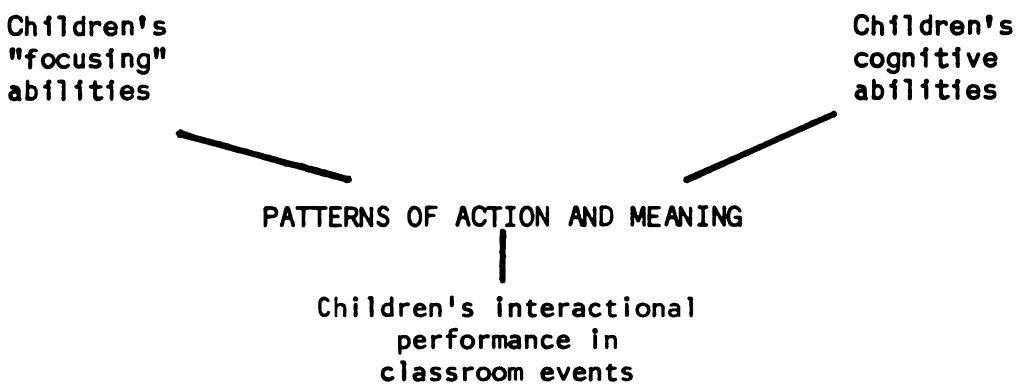


Figure 5.2: Patterns of action and meaning in setting children apart for special education referral.

Teacher Observation and Practical Reasoning

The interactional performance of the children in the classroom was inextricably bound with Mrs. Meijer's observations and practical reasoning about her class. As was pointed out earlier in this chapter, not all of the teacher's practical reasoning is based on the interactions she sees. She does not even see all the interactions in the class. Teachers' grounds for decision making may emerge from the daily observation and reflection in which they engage. Yet little is known about how teachers actually pay attention in their own classrooms and make sense out of what they are seeing. As a result, little is known about the role that these ways of seeing play in a teacher's decision-making process. Mrs. Meijer's special education referral decisions were based on the sense she made out of the interactional performances of the children in her classroom.

Mrs. Meijer's early observations led her to make practical groupings among her children. The ramifications of these invisible groupings are discussed in the next section. She used these groupings as reference points, or family resemblances, to draw upon as she thought about the children at the beginning of the school year when there were so many unknowns. There is so much going on at one time in a typical second-grade classroom that it is impossible for a teacher to pay attention to every detail.

In the discussions of Mrs. Meijer's perceived ideas about the source of each of the three target children's problems (see Chapter IV) I touched on, but did not develop, the idea that her referral

decisions may have revolved around her perception of the source of the child's problems. Mrs. Meijer looked at Pam's problems as an "inner distraction." Craig's problems were a combination of an environmental distraction and his own inability to put all the pieces together in a holistic sense, an interactional distraction. Neil's problems were viewed by Mrs. Meijer as being a result of his parents' inability to parent, more of an outer distraction. She said that the parents figured in both Craig's and Pam's difficulties, but they were not judged to be major factors in either of these two children's cases as they were in Neil's. Mrs. Meijer did not base her referral decisions on any one perspective of the source of a child's problems.

As Mrs. Meijer observed her class and tried to make sense out of what she saw, she also looked at the difficulty of the curriculum that lay ahead for these children in this school district. She knew of the district's expectations because she had been teaching in the district for at least seven years. (Refer to Chapter I for her comments on how hard school would get in the years to come in this district.) She also knew that few children in Pawnee School would move out of the district. It was a very stable neighborhood. For the "doesn't quite have it" children she saw a long struggle with school, always the "C" students, but apparently special education was not the answer for this group of children. For the "has it, but can't put it together" children she thought there was hope of success if they could be assisted in their attempts to put schooling all together. A knowledge of what was

awaiting the children in the years to come was a factor outside the classroom context to be taken into consideration by Mrs. Meijer.

Teachers are guided by theories of perception and categorization when interpreting students' classroom behavior (Mehan et al., 1982). In the special education referral study previously cited (Mehan et al., 1982; Mehan et al., 1983; Mehan, 1984), Mehan and his associates compared teachers' accounts of student behavior with the actual videotaped incidents of student difficulties in class. The teachers saw the problems of the students stemming from within the students, particularly in their ability and psychological states (Mehan et al., 1982). The teachers were attributing the sources of problems to personality attributes of the children over situational factors.

The attributional process is part of a teacher's ongoing system of social perception (Palmer, 1983). A teacher's informal labels are based on ability and effort attributions. Achieving a special education identity gives a child a formal label, and "formal labels are an attributional antecedent indicating a history of failure" (Palmer, 1983, p. 425). Weiner (1976), in his attribution studies, found that a student's effort and ability as perceived by the teacher, combine interactively to influence the teacher's giving of rewards and punishment. Mrs. Meijer's referral of Craig and Pam to special education could be viewed as a reward given to them for their effort and denied to Neil because of his perceived lack of effort and ability. I have already pointed out that Mrs. Meijer viewed special education as a chance at success for a certain group of her students. Evidence does

not support the conclusion that her referrals were made out of a sense of frustration with the child.

Identification of Mildly Handicapped Learners

The identification of mildly handicapped children in Mrs. Meijer's class began with her creation of practical categories that included all the children in her room. The first categories were general: children having problems and children not having problems. She soon began to refine these categories. The children having no problems were left alone at the beginning, while the children having problems became the target children. This group of eight children was further divided into the "has it, but can't put it together" group and the "doesn't quite have it" group. There were two other problem children who were not labeled until later in the year. One of these children had problems with adjustment to a new school, and the other child's problems were termed "developmental" by Mrs. Meijer. Later, the children with no problems, or benchmark students, became the "extra bright, really withit" group of six children. At times she referred to three of these children as being intellectually superior to the others in the room, but this group was not clearly seen as being discrete. The other ten children in the class were never given a practical group name, so I have called them the "normal" second graders. See Figure 5.3 for a diagram depicting Mrs. Meijer's practical categorization of her class resulting in one student achieving a special education identity in the 1981-82 school year.

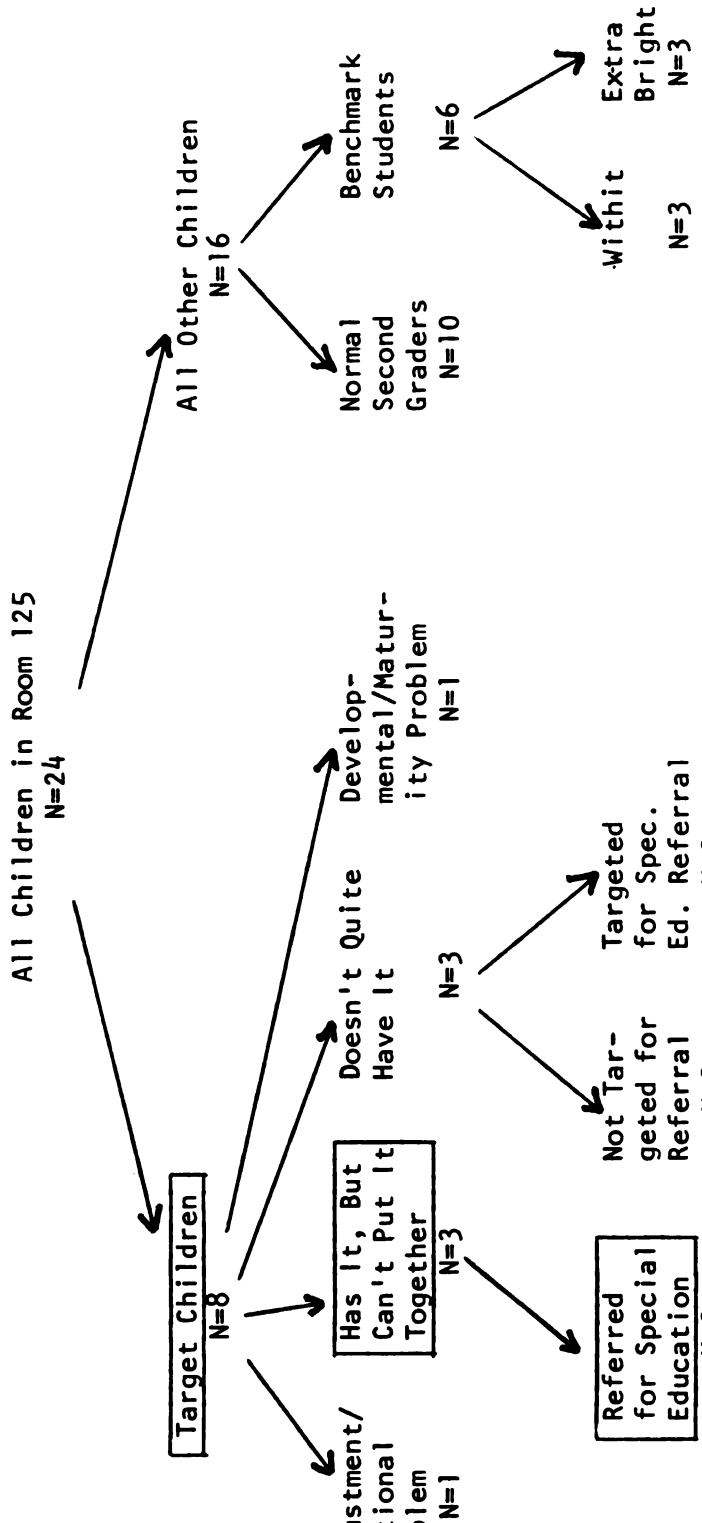


Figure 5.3: Getting a special education identity in Room 125.

I previously referred to the regular education teacher as occupying the position of gatekeeper (see Chapter I), determining who gets referred for special education. The teacher is a gatekeeper because he or she makes the decision about which children to refer in his or her classroom. There are some instances in which parents (as in Pam's case) or the principal ask for special services for a child, but usually it is the classroom teacher who brings a child to the attention of the specialists when a mild to moderate learning or behavior problem is suspected. When Mrs. Meijer was acting as a gatekeeper, she looked at the child's ability to learn in her classroom. Not being able to do the classwork was only part of the concern. She looked at the interactive way the child fit into her class. This included academic and social aspects, as well as how the child handled the materials and the curriculum.

Mrs. Meijer carefully considered the opportunities for extra help within her district. She knew what services were provided for children needing special education and she knew the people providing the services. The evidence supports that her referral decisions were heavily influenced by her perception of the available services in the Seneca School District. This consideration of the extra help available, although it had little to do with a child's particular difficulties, was an important factor when it came time to decide whether to refer the child to special education or to keep the child in general education. Both Craig and Pam had been formally referred for special education by the beginning of November. The referral process time span

varied only slightly for the two children. Other target children were considered for referral, but the process was never set in motion for anyone else that school year.

The reasons for Neil and Steve not being referred for special education may have had as much to do with each boy's previous school history as with the difficulties each was encountering in second grade. They had both been referred, but not placed, in earlier grades. To my knowledge, the other target children--Joe, Mary, Pam, and Craig--had not been referred previously. Joe and Craig received remedial reading assistance. Joe also received speech therapy. Of all the target children, only Pam and Neil were not already getting some type of special help in school. To my knowledge, only Pam and Neil were receiving help outside school. Pam was being seen by a pediatrician, Neil by a psychologist. The three children from the "doesn't quite have it" group were looked at as referral candidates throughout the year, but none for the persistent amounts of time as the "has it, but can't put it together" children. Mrs. Meijer identified Steve on the second day of school as a candidate for extra help. Joe was mentioned on September 21 as being the next child to be tested after Craig and Pam were done. She said that Joe would need help if he was to go on in school. He was never referred for special services. Mary, on the other hand, was never mentioned as part of a group being set apart until January (see FN's 1-14-82, p. 5), but Mrs. Meijer, in interviews, had expressed concern for Mary's progress on many occasions before January. Mary and Steve, along with Craig, were the only children in

the room not reading at grade equivalent or above by the end of the school year, as recorded on their group reading tests (see Appendix J).

The strong link between the children who were actually referred and Mrs. Meijer's perception of the district's services was one of the most striking findings. There has been criticism of those in special education for often giving a child a label (such as LD or EI) that just happens to be equal to the type of classroom that has space available in it at the time of the placement meeting. For example, there may be space in the LD class, but none in the EI class, so the child is labelled LD even though the problems are more emotional. Decisions about placement are often based on the availability of spaces in certain classrooms rather than on finding a program that meets a child's unique learning or behavioral needs, regardless of the label placed on the child (see Mehan et al., 1983, for further discussion). The stated intention of P.L. 94-142 is first, to decide what the child's educational needs are; second, to decide what type of program will best meet those needs; and third, to decide on a label for the child. This study provided evidence that regular educators refer children who they think will qualify for existing services.

Mrs. Meijer felt strongly that the LD resource room program at Pawnee School would benefit Craig. She apparently did not feel, however, that there were any special services available for her slow learners, the "doesn't quite have it" children. Even though they were unsuccessful with second-grade work, they lacked the needed ingredients

to be considered learning disabled. What these needed ingredients were was never clearly defined, but the practical names of the two informal problem groups seemed to indicate that cognitive ability was a strong factor for Mrs. Meijer. She thought Craig and Pam were capable of doing better. They both had all the pieces of the puzzle; they just could not make the puzzle go together. She thought that Mary, Steve, and Joe were doing the best they could because they did not have the ability to do much better. Mrs. Meijer never believed that Pam was learning disabled. She did not use the word in reference to Pam as she did with Craig. She saw a needy little girl and wanted to get some help for her, even after being told ahead of time that Pam would not qualify. The counselor told her that Pam's achievement scores were too high for her to be considered for LD placement. The IEP meetings for Craig and Pam were held on March 3, 1982. The next day Mrs. Meijer told me, "There wasn't real action on either one. According to state guidelines they're performing their basic skills well enough to be uncertifiable" (FN's 3-4-82, p. 3).

Craig and Pam did not fall within the school district's parameters for identification as learning disabled. The district had a learning disabled category, but the decision of the placement committee that Craig was not learning disabled in March did not coincide with Mrs. Meijer's classroom determination that Craig was learning disabled. Wittgenstein (1958) talked about the type of category that is possible and useful, but is imprecise in its boundaries. This category has formal boundaries, but they may not coincide with the actual everyday

usage of the term. The category "learning disabled" seems to be the type of category that Wittgenstein was describing. The building team was using the district's definition of learning disabilities (see Appendix A), but Mrs. Meijer had a different definition of learning disabilities that she was using based on her years of teaching experience.

There were two critical points in the year for special education referrals in Mrs. Meijer's classroom. The first was in late October-early November, at the getting-down-to-business time of the year. Craig and Pam were both referred during this time period. Mrs. Meijer's second crucial point was in late January-early February, after her big academic push had gotten underway. No children were referred at this time, but she strongly considered Steve as a candidate. On February 9, Mrs. Meijer told me that he would be next now that Craig's referral was completed. On February 23, she said, "I don't know what to do about Steve. I don't know whether to try to refer him before spring break or what" (FN's 2-23-82, p. 3). Although she never referred Steve, it appears that the disappointment of Craig not qualifying for LD services initially had much to do with her decision. Mrs. Meijer was also pleased with the way the class was moving along at this point, and this may have been a factor. The big academic push was a time of the year when she evaluated the children closely, thus making it a likely time for referrals.

Mrs. Meijer considered more than the list of behavioral descriptors on a special education referral form when she was deciding whom to

refer for special education services. She took into account an "ensemble of items which mutually support and determine one another" (Gurwitsch, 1966). Mrs. Meijer's special education ensemble items consisted of (a) having the fundamental cognitive ability to perform adequately, (b) not being able to put the pieces of learning together into a whole that equalled success in school, (c) displaying frustration at not succeeding in school as opposed to being unaware of one's difficulties, (d) not being able to manage the interactional demands of the classroom, and (e) having parents whose actions were not detrimental to the child's growth. The last item is stated tentatively. It would be necessary to return in future years to see if this pattern really did influence her decisions. With Neil it seemed important, but it must also be noted that in May Mrs. Meijer told me that she had changed her mind about Neil's ability. She felt he was doing the best he could. She did not see existing services in the district meeting his needs, so in his case the ensemble of items that kept him from being referred for special education was stronger than the ensemble of items mentioned above. The evidence supports Mrs. Meijer's change of Neil's family resemblance over the school year. At the end of the year he more closely resembled a "doesn't quite have it kid" than a "has it, but can't put it together kid."

Mehan et al. (1983) found that educational decision makers make placements into special education by "available category after having reduced the range of alternatives at an earlier time" (p. 286). The construction of a special education identity begins when the classroom

teacher makes the initial referral. I believe that the data from this study support the idea that a teacher's referral decisions are partially determined, whether consciously or unconsciously, by the perceived availability of services in the school district.

Implications for Educational Research and Practice: Preservice and Inservice Education and School District Policy

Preservice Education

There are implications of this study for preservice education. Focused observation in differing types of classrooms needs to be started early in the training program. Observation should be augmented with guided discussion of selected pieces of videotape showing how children's interactional performances can lead a teacher to categorize children. Written vignettes such as the ones contained in this study could also be used as a basis of discussion for the videotape interactions, the actual classroom observations, and as a stimulus for preservice teachers to begin writing their own vignettes of classroom events. These written stories could be a starting point for the school district cooperating teacher, the university field supervisor, and the preservice teacher education student to look at the social interaction in a classroom and to discuss the teacher's role in the construction of student status, be it a special education identity or otherwise. (See Erickson & Wilson, 1984, for further ideas on the use of recorded data and for sources of obtaining videotapes of classroom interactions such as those described in this study. See Shultz, 1983, for further ideas and implications of the use of ethnography in educational settings.)

An example of preservice training in another occupation will be used to illustrate the importance of the field experience. In The Reality of Ethnomethodology, Mehan and Wood (1975) described how a rookie policeman follows a veteran cop around the neighborhood as she or he does the beat. Learning how to do the beat is accomplished when the rookie spends a great deal of time with her or his teacher.

> The rookie would learn to see and feel as his teacher showed him. He would learn how to do the beat, how to use what partial set of rules he was told, and most importantly how, in the day-to-day work at the scene, to generate new rules as previously unmet situations arose. (p. 77)

After reading what Mehan and Wood had to say in the previous citation, I wrote myself the following theoretical note. (See Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, Chapter 6, for a discussion of the writing of field-notes.)

> In order to do the beat, may not a rookie teacher have to be actively taking part in the day-to-day work at the scene? It may only be possible for teacher educators to impart a "partial set of rules" to preservice teacher education students. If this is the case, this partial set of rules must be based on events, practices and procedures most nearly approximating what a teacher does. The teachers chosen by teacher educators to teach the rookies to do the classroom beat must be exemplars of sound pedagogy. The students need intimate first-hand knowledge of the classroom scene. Participant observation seems an ideal tool for accomplishing this end. (TN 2-7-82)

Moving from selected pieces of videotaped classroom interactions to the real "beat" of a classroom would put preservice "rookies" in a context where their observations would be more meaningful because there would be a past, a present, and a future time frame within which specific instances (such as the videotape selections) would take on a collective meaning.

Another important implication of this study for preservice teacher education has to do with the way the findings speak to the need for a teacher preparation program that gives preservice teachers an awareness and understanding of individual difference and of the need to adapt their teaching to each child's unique needs. There may be no one best way to do this. Some institutions of higher education offer course work in "mainstreaming" techniques or in "exceptional children." Some institutions may have designed their core teacher preparation course offerings around multiple-perspectives or heterogeneous-groupings approaches that take into account ethnicity, race, class, and gender, as well as exceptionalities in an integrated fashion. Whatever the approach used, I think that it is imperative for teacher training programs to require some coursework that specifically addresses the needs of handicapped children in regular classrooms. Preservice teachers should be taught how to distinguish between different types of problems in the classroom and what to do about teaching these children effectively once they are identified. Prospective regular educators need to learn how to teach children to succeed in school who are in need of more than a traditional textbook approach. Perhaps such a focus would reduce the number of referrals to special education of hard-to-teach children as opposed to handicapped children who are in need of very specialized methods or materials.

Teacher educators have recognized the importance of the beginning and of the closing of a school year for some time, as evidenced by the typical requirement that student teachers take part in either the

opening or the closing of the school year in which they do their practice teaching, regardless of the university calendar. Another regularly occurring teaching phenomenon that was apparent in this study was the overall rhythm of the year, beyond its opening and closing. I suspect that this phenomenon is not unique to Mrs. Meijer and the particular group she taught in the 1981-82 school year. In this case, there are implications of the finding for preservice education, particularly as the rhythm of the year relates to the identification and referral of children to special education. There are times of the year where learning disabilities are going to stand out more than at other times. As Mrs. Meijer's focus changed from checking to see that the children knew the rules and routines to checking to see if they could complete the academic tasks assigned them, several children set themselves apart from the group as a whole.

Inservice Education

There are implications of this study for inservice education. The videotapes made in the course of this participant observational study (as well as those from similar projects) could be used to help inservice teachers look at the ways teachers set children apart into different groups in their classrooms.

There are many experienced teachers with little or no knowledge of how to teach special education children. Up until a few years ago it was uncommon to find a general education teacher training program that mandated a course in the characteristics of exceptional children, let

alone in how to teach mildly handicapped children in the regular class. This policy is changing slowly as a result of P.L. 94-142. There are now 21 states that require at least one course, or are in the process of requiring a course, in working with exceptional children (Ganschow, Weber, & Davis, 1984). I suspect that Mrs. Meijer is not unique in referring children who she felt met existing special education services in her district. This being the case, it would seem appropriate for both preservice and inservice general educators to be made more aware of the classroom manifestations of mild to moderate learning or behavioral problems. One way this could be done is for a consultant to use selected pieces of videotape that show the target children's interactional performance. (See Erickson & Wilson, 1984, pp. 39-52, for suggestions on the use of videotape of everyday life in schools.)

A suggestion for the use of the videotapes was proposed by Mrs. Meijer herself. We were having a viewing session (for technique, see discussion in Chapter III) as we watched Craig on a videotape that I had made earlier in the day. Mrs. Meijer said that the school psychologist could learn as much about a child by watching the videotapes as the psychologist did in her classroom observations (Viewing Session 3, 12-8-81). Mehan and his associates conducted viewing sessions with teachers who had referred children to special education. They asked the teachers to stop the videotape to make comments about the children they had referred. (See Mehan et al., 1982, for the specific instructions given to teachers in the viewing sessions.) This method, although time consuming, could prove useful to educators carrying out

systematic assessments of a target child's learning environment. It would be best if the viewing sessions were done as an accompaniment to actual classroom observation. The pieces of videotape could be used to focus on the fine details of a particular child's behavior, but on their own they would not provide the outsider with a fully contextualized look at the child's interactional competence in the classroom that is necessary to understand why the child became a referral candidate in the first place. Year-long participant observational studies are more appropriate for some types of questions than for others. The insights that have been gained from Mehan's study of teacher decision making (Mehan et al., 1982; Mehan et al., 1983; Mehan, 1984) and from this one can be used to inform practice and as a basis for further study.

Perhaps recent calls for recognition of the importance of the teacher's need to reflect and write about his or her own practice (Clark & Florio et al., 1982; Erickson, 1985) will contribute to a stronger professional image of teachers and give sanctioned recognition to the importance of their thoughts. Through writing down his or her thoughts about a particular child as a case study, or vignette, of the referral child, the teacher may come to a fuller understanding of the child and the classroom. This written document could be shared with outsiders such as those making systematic assessments of a target child's learning environment, administrators, fellow teachers, and others interested in the fine details of life in classrooms. This document could serve as an opening point of discussion in building team meetings when children having difficulties are discussed. In effect,

the classroom observations, the viewing sessions with carefully selected pieces of classroom interaction, the written reflections of the child's teacher, as well as the more traditional referral documentation--test scores and a school psychologist's summary--would be used by the gatekeepers in an Individualized Educational Program Committee meeting to "triangulate" (Gorden, 1980, p. 12) the information about a particular child before giving that child a special education identity. This written documentation of a teacher's observations and practical reasoning could help to combat the feeling of powerlessness that has been noted in the role of the teacher (Lanier & Little, 1985; Mehan, 1984). Additional uses of such written documentation will be discussed under the policy implications of this study.

Hargreaves (1979) felt that by collecting and analyzing the comments of teachers it would be possible to uncover the teacher's common-sense knowledge about what he or she does. Through the collection and analysis of teachers' comments by supervisors, researchers, or fellow teachers, they are helped to make use of their own observation and practical-reasoning skills at a much earlier point in their teaching careers. Experienced teachers may make use of research findings about teachers' common-sense knowledge by "uncovering and reconstructing" their own common-sense knowledge (Hargreaves, 1979, p. 81).

An area that was identified in this study as needing further study is the pervasiveness of the practice of regular class teachers referring those children for special education for whom they feel there is an available program in the district. Poor academic achievement was

not Mrs. Meijer's sole criterion for referral to special education. This may have been a result of her experience with other handicapped children over the years, or she may have had a deeper understanding of special education children. This is not known. It has been established that she did not perceive the resource room as a place for children with emotional problems or for those who could have been labeled as educable mentally impaired or "slow learners."

This study points to the need for special educators to be aware that regular educators may be making referral decisions based on their perceptions of existing special education services within their districts. These perceptions may or may not be correct. It is the responsibility of special educators and support staff (such as the school psychologist or teacher consultant) to communicate to regular educators the importance of looking at the individual child and his or her needs as opposed to looking at how the child will fit into existing programs.

It would seem that this is an appropriate time, a decade after the passage of P.L. 94-142, to reopen the discussion about the policy that has come to be known as "mainstreaming," placing a handicapped child in the "least restrictive environment" for that child. When the Education of All Handicapped Children Act was implemented in 1975 there was a great deal of financial support for inservice activity to prepare regular educators for receiving the handicapped child in their classes. The financial support for such effort is almost nonexistent today, and most districts regard mainstreaming as a natural part of their

existence. Now is the time to start looking at the programs and services and to reopen staff dialogue as to their effectiveness. Since 1975, a great deal has been learned on both sides (regular and special education) about how to work with handicapped children.

Ten years ago teacher educators were preparing special education teachers to go out to the schools and "educate" regular teachers about the handicapped children they would be having in their classes. No longer does a special educator, in most cases, have to go out and teach regular educators about specific handicapping conditions. Most teachers think they know a learning disabled child, for example, when they see one. While this may or may not be the case, what is needed is to correct faulty conceptions and to talk about effective ways to identify and educate the handicapped child in the regular classroom. This is particularly true in buildings that have little staff or administrative turnover, and consequently have become used to certain ways of doing things. Teacher educators have a responsibility to prepare their undergraduate and graduate students for this expanded role. The faulty conceptions, if they are such, held by regular educators about whom to refer to special education may be partly a result of the referral process itself. Other researchers previously cited have pointed out the need to change current identification and placement procedures.

The type of identification process that I am proposing will require a greater amount of time than most current processes. This has important implications for all involved in the referral process, as

well as for the school district official responsible for paying the salaries of the staff. It becomes all the more important that other measures are attempted before a child's case is taken to the building team for an official meeting to decide if a psychoeducational evaluation is necessary.

A different approach to the issue of making appropriate referrals to special education while at the same time meeting the needs of all students with learning and behavior problems was tried by Graden and her colleagues (Graden, Casey, & Christenson, 1985). The dual systems of regular and special education service delivery were maintained by Graden, but the focus of the special educator becomes one of providing indirect service to handicapped children through consultation and intervention with mainstream teachers rather than providing direct service to handicapped children. Graden et al. set up a model to: first, reduce the members of inappropriate referrals and placements into special education, and second, make the actual special education team decision-making process more relevant to instruction because the model builds in a step whereby classroom interventions must be tried before a referral is made to special education. This step provides the team with a data base upon which to draw during decision making. The model is "an ecological model of viewing student problems in the context of the classroom, teacher, and instructional variables as well as student variables and of attempting appropriate educational interventions that are not focused solely on the child" (Graden et al., 1985, p. 379). I believe this model offers a feasible and appropriate way to

proceed with special education reform at this time. It is an improvement over what is currently happening in most schools, yet it is not as radical as the proposal of Stainback and Stainback (1984), to do away with the dual system of regular and special education. Nor is it as likely to receive only lip service, without the necessary financial backing, as happened in a program developed and implemented by Wang (Wang & Reynolds, 1985).

Graden et al. (1985) implemented a prereferral intervention system in six schools over a three-year period. They judged the model to be successful, in varying degrees, in four of the six schools. They identified system- as well as building-level factors that affected the success or failure of the model. At the system level the factors were: administrative support (both verbal and visible), provision of adequate resources by the district (the personnel and the time for consultation), system-level pressures to test and place children in order to receive reimbursement for special education students, a concern on the part of teachers and administrators for the impact of decreasing numbers of children in special education on resource allocations, a general resistance to change, and the highlighting of system-level and school-level problems (curriculum and teaching) that are brought out by the consultation model being advocated by the researchers.

The building-level factors affecting success or failure of the model were: the high demand on the consultant's time; some of the regular education teachers felt threatened by the model; the

consultants were not all adequately prepared; by working with classroom teachers on interventions to be used in their classrooms, the consultant removed the "quick cure" the teacher formerly had if the child was placed into a special education program; and finally, the model was successful in buildings where there was a strong, internal impetus for change on the part of the staff. While these factors may seem logical, they are not always considered before school districts attempt to change current practice.

Some of the questions raised by the present this study that may be addressed in further studies are: What types of children do other early elementary grade teachers in suburban schools refer to resource rooms? Are learning disabled children the only mildly handicapped children in suburban resource rooms, or are there children with other special education labels, such as emotionally impaired or educable mentally impaired in these rooms? Do suburban elementary school teachers differ from urban or rural elementary teachers in referring children to special education? The practice of referring children to special education based on the perceived availability of services, if found to exist across a range of teachers in a range of settings with differing socioeconomic and racial groups of children, would have broader policy implications.

School District Policy

There are implications of this study for school district policy. Recently, suggestions have been made that would require a "systematic examination of the child's learning environment and the nature and

quality of the regular instruction received" before a student is referred or assessed for special education (Messick, 1984, p. 5).

Wang and Reynolds (1985) pointed out, "A basic problem for all students is that general education programs have been insufficiently adaptive" (p. 498). They applauded the efforts of Heller et al. (1982) and the National Academy of Science Panel on Mental Retardation, but pointed out that the panel failed to discuss the issues involved in the implementation of their own recommendations. To carry out systematic examinations of a referred child's learning environment, increased time to do the observation, increased money to compensate individuals for the additional time to be spent on each case, and the very real possibility of increased resistance on the part of regular educators to being "systematically evaluated" by an outsider would be necessary. The effect of such recommendations may be that regular educators would stop making referrals altogether to avoid the observations. The intended goal of the NAS Panel's recommendations was to reduce inappropriate referrals, particularly of male, minority children, who are overrepresented in programs for the mentally retarded.

Numerous studies of the identification of handicapped children have concluded with a call to change the way special education is currently funded (Gerber, 1984; Mesinger, 1985; Wang & Reynolds, 1985; Ysseldyke et al., 1983). Wang and Reynolds held special education funding policies responsible for the discontinuance of the total mainstreaming program they developed, despite its success, for both children--in terms of achievement--and teachers--in terms of positive

attitudes toward the model. The Adaptive Learning Environments Model (ALEM) was set up to meet the needs of a broad range of students within a regular classroom setting, full-time mainstreaming, as opposed to children being pulled out of the regular class for special education (Wang & Birch, 1984).

There has been a major shift in federal incentives to classify handicapped children since Mehan did his study of the special education placement process in the 1978-79 school year. The focus of special education has shifted from "moral imperative and growth to fiscal efficacy and retrenchment" (Crowner, 1985, p. 58). Many states are moving away from a "search" for handicapped students toward decertification of some handicapped students, or at the least, to stem the rising numbers of children being identified, particularly as learning disabled. (See the "masses are burgeoning" article by Algozzine, Ysseldyke, & Christenson, 1983). Even as the nation's schools as a whole are undergoing declines in overall student enrollment, the percentage of students labeled learning disabled has continued to climb (Gerber, 1984).

I think that participant observational research techniques could be used to conduct systematic examinations of a learning environment (Messick, 1984). Some ideas for the ways that this type of research could be used to inform district policy follow. One, it could provide an opportunity for longitudinal studies of teachers, of children (for example, following the careers of children established in the early grades across school years and across classrooms), of particular

institutional events (such as referring children for special education programs), of particular classroom activities or events (such as "worktime," Florio, 1978; or "first circle," Dorr-Bremme, 1982; or "getting the floor," Shultz, Florio, & Erickson, 1982), or of curriculum (such as implementation of a new program, textbook series, or remedial procedure).

Second, participant observational studies, such as this one, can provide a school district with a link to higher education that could serve both the district and the institution. By the nature of the techniques involved, the district has an opportunity to have a researcher-in-residence rather than a researcher who comes in, does some observing or testing and then leaves, rarely to be heard from or seen again, with the possible exception of the presentation of a written report. In participant observational studies, the researcher goes back to the participants to share the findings. These findings are then discussed and the participants have a chance to say, "Yes, that's exactly what I meant," or "No, I wasn't thinking of that at all." This allows for greater insight on the part of all involved. The institutions have field-reaction to their conclusions, and the reactions of the participants can be used to guide the implementation of research findings into practice, something that is sorely lacking from much of the research on teaching that has been done.

Third, studies such as this one can provide a school district with a document that would initiate a discussion of an institutional procedure such as how children are referred for special education. It

may provide the opportunity for an experienced staff to carry out a self-study of an issue of curricular importance, such as the adoption of a new textbook series or the implementation of a new curriculum. I feel that this type of study could be the basis for teachers to start feeling more valued. One possibility might be that teachers who chose to participate in such self-study would be given credit toward master teacher status or merit pay if the district is exploring, or is involved in, such moves to upgrade the status of a teacher. The current fear of many experienced teachers is that merit pay or master teacher status will be based on the test scores of the children in their classes. If this practice were to come about, the consequences to public education and to the role of the teacher could be devastating. As an alternative, or in addition to process-product types of measures of teacher effectiveness, participant observational research as a basis for self-study would be an alternative way of deciding merit pay over the award of such, based on the pre- and posttest scores of children in a teacher's classroom.

Another implication of this study that affects school district policy relates to the way the teacher identified the children to refer for special education. I believe this study has shown that the identification of mildly handicapped children is not simply a matter of balancing the child's performance with a list of behavioral characteristics on a referral form. Referral is not a clear-cut, rational act. As the year progressed, I had the opportunity to observe the social construction of a special education identity. A better understanding

construction of a special education identity. A better understanding of the ways teachers decide whom to refer to special education is needed before they can do a better job of identifying mildly handicapped children. In effect, this would entail an understanding of the social construction of problem student status on the teacher's part. This type of understanding is needed across the scope of teacher education: regular and special educators, administrators, preservice teachers, and teacher educators themselves.

Concluding Remarks on the Implications

The findings from this study point toward taking a closer look at how teachers socially construct a special education identity for certain children. I use the term "social construction" to mean that the teacher does not refer a child to special education because of some inner attribute that the child brings with him or her to the classroom. Nor is the child referred for special education because of some inner perception of the child that the teacher brings with him or her to the classroom. Rather, the child is referred for special education in the interaction of the two, as they are socially constructed. Mehan et al. (1983) described this as "individuals acting together in organized contexts to create and maintain the link between behavior and categories such as 'special education student'" (p. 141). The organized context in this case is a classroom.

It may be that the social construction of a special education identity is beyond the ways of seeing of most experienced teachers.

Not only may it be beyond their ways of seeing, it may be beyond their ways of thinking about what goes on in their classrooms. This is not to say that teachers are incapable of using alternate ways of seeing, but to enable them to see their classrooms differently may not be a simple matter of teaching teachers to look at their classrooms in a different way. They must understand them in different ways. Shulman and Carey (1984) recently stated that educational researchers have moved beyond thinking of man as a rational being. They further suggested that educational researchers have moved beyond thinking of man as boundedly rational. Researchers are starting to think of man as a collectively rational being. "Human rationality, whether bounded or not, is practiced in the context of social exchange and human interaction" (Shulman & Carey, 1984, p. 515).

One far-reaching policy implication that I can foresee is the elimination of our current dual service delivery system for the mildly handicapped. In Figure 5.4 I present a model that shows how this might come about. Regular educators are currently responsible for some segments of a mildly handicapped child's education, and special educators are responsible for others. Preservice educators should be taught to look for the way that special education identities (as well as other identities, e.g., giftedness) are socially constructed. Practicing regular and special educators should also be presented with this way of looking at children through advanced coursework and/or inservice education. Classroom interventions could be designed that would increase a child's chances for success in the regular classroom

without the need for a child to be given a special education identity (label) and to be removed from the regular class. Special and regular educators could work together within the classroom context to eliminate the need for a separate service delivery system for the mildly handicapped. Children would not need to go to pullout programs; the services would be part of their regular classroom experience. It is beyond the scope of this paper to go into this point further, but it certainly forms a research agenda for future endeavor.

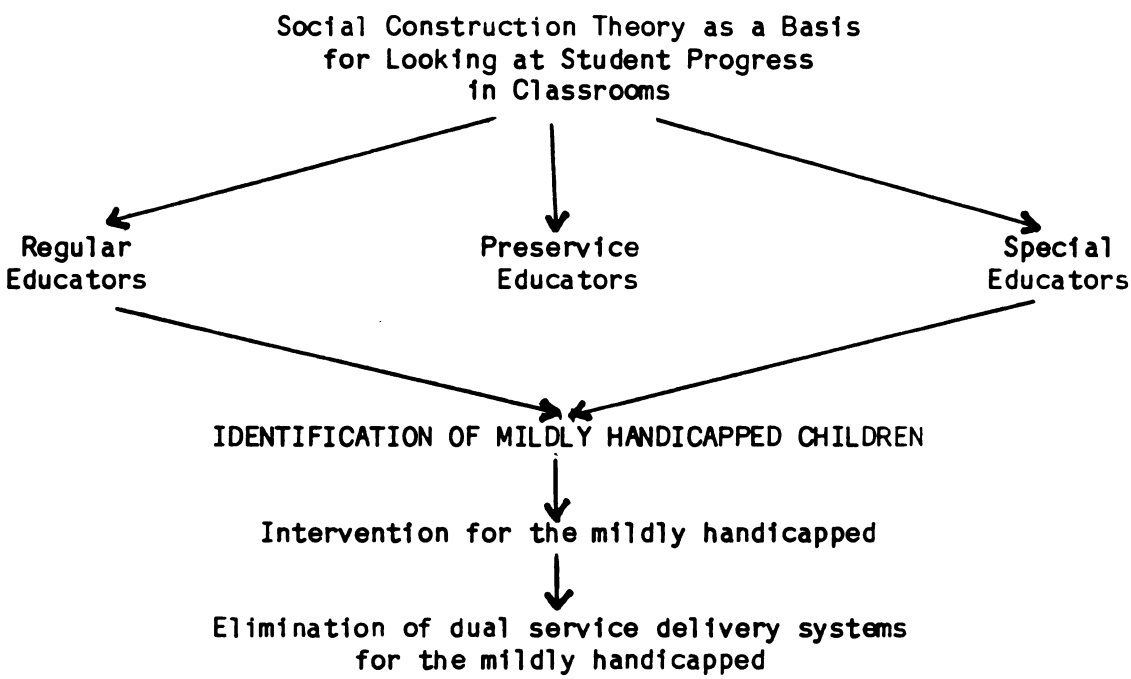


Figure 5.4: A social construction model.

Analysis of the Wider Societal Context

According to Erickson (1985), the interpretive approach to research on teaching is both a "close analysis of fine details of behavior and meaning in everyday social interaction" and an "analysis of the wider societal context . . . within which the face-to-face interaction takes place" (pp. 6 & 7). While I did not consciously set out to examine life outside Room 125 in this study, indirectly it could not be avoided because Mrs. Meijer was influenced in her special education referral decisions by what she knew about her school and her district. The aforementioned suggestions for the identification of mildly handicapped children in schools could well have broader ramifications.

Looking back, I now wish I had not been so careful to avoid asking Mrs. Meijer direct questions about special education. I consciously stayed away from discussing special education or the meaning of its terminology, such as what is a learning disability, because I did not want to prejudice the results of the study. I did not want my focus on the problem students to be Mrs. Meijer's focus as my study was only part of a larger study of Teachers' Practical Ways of Seeing (see Chapter III for details). If I were starting over, I would have gone to the placement (IEP) meetings for Craig and Pam with Mrs. Meijer. She described the team meetings as if she had little part in the decision-making process. I should have asked her more direct questions about her involvement in the building team meetings rather than simply asking her what happened. I found out that a researcher can ask the

anthropological question, "What's happening here?," receive an answer, and still not know for certain if that is what is really happening. Unlike my classroom research, where I had varied pieces of evidence to check and cross-check against each other, I had only one side of the story about the team meetings. Another possibility would have been to interview the members of the team, such as the psychologist and the resource room teacher, because both of these people had been involved with classroom observations and testing of the two children who were referred for special education.

To give the results of this study of one second-grade teacher a broader perspective, future research could address such questions as: Do other early grades teachers recognize Mrs. Meijer's practical groupings of children? Do other teachers' individual methods of grouping children result in similar groups with similar family resemblances? Do other regular education teachers of children with mild learning and/or behavior problems make similar distinctions between low achievers? Do they have a "doesn't quite have it" group and a "has it, but can't put it together" group? Do their special education referrals also come from the latter group? Do other second-grade teachers consider what they feel to be the source of the child's problem before they make a referral?

Mrs. Meijer spent a great deal of her time thinking about, planning for, and working with her "has it, but can't put it together" children. What are the implications of all the extra attention that this group of children gets in a classroom? Other studies have found

that teachers spend more time with "high risk" children (Parker, Larsen, & Roberts, 1981) and "low achievers" (Wang, 1981) than with other children in their classes. I did not look at my data in terms of how much time Mrs. Meijer spent with any one group of children. I was able to go back to Pawnee School the year following the study, in November 1982. I recorded the children's grade equivalent scores on the Stanford Achievement Test of October 1982, a year after they had entered Mrs. Meijer's class. I divided the scores into Mrs. Meijer's practical groups to see if there were any obvious group differences. As can be seen in Figure 5.5, the "has it, but can't put it together" children (Craig, Pam, and Neil) all showed a year or more of academic growth. The "doesn't quite have it" group ranged from no growth to nine months of growth. The extra-bright children ranged from no growth to 1.5 years of growth. The average children ranged from .2 to 1.8 (the highest gain score) years of growth in their grade equivalent scores. The "has it, but can't put it together" children made very good progress on their basic skills as measured by the Stanford Test. Craig, the one child to gain a special education identity, ranked eighth out of 22 children on the Stanford Test in terms of his progress in Mrs. Meijer's room.

The findings of this study clearly fit with the growing national debate over what to do about the increasing numbers of children being referred and placed into special education programs, particularly in the area of learning disabilities. While I do not see Mrs. Meijer's referral of two children for special education as excessive, the ways

HAS IT, BUT CAN'T PUT IT TOGETHER CHILDREN ($\bar{X}$ = 1.1)		DOESN'T QUITE HAVE IT CHILDREN ($\bar{X}$ = .43)	
Craig	1.3	Steve	.9
Pammy	1.0	Joe	.4
Neil	1.0	Mary	0

THE AVERAGE CHILDREN ($\bar{X}$ = 1.15)

Jimmy	1.8	Blake	1.4	Carrie	1.1
John	1.6	Royce	1.4	Jason	.4
Becky	1.5	Karen	1.2	Judy	.2

EXTRA BRIGHT, REALLY WITHIT CHILDREN ($\bar{X}$ = .88)

Donald	1.5	Paul	.4
Andrew	1.4	Elizabeth	0
Jessica	1.1	Sarah	NA (absent on second day of testing 10-81)

Figure 5.5: Gain score grade equivalent growth from 10-81 to 10-82, Stanford Achievement Test.

she decided which children to refer gave evidence that referral was a serious undertaking for her. The cases of the two children she referred illustrate the dilemma faced by many regular educators when they look at students who are not meeting success with the traditional materials and teaching methods. Mrs. Meijer felt that Craig was a learning disabled child and that he would benefit from the one-on-one resource room model used at her school. Mrs. Meijer did not feel that Pam was a special education candidate, but she felt that Pam needed some help to be able to succeed in second grade. It is not clear from the data whether Mrs. Meijer was, in fact, asking the building team to

give her some ideas to help Pam succeed. I noted one suggestion given to Mrs. Meijer by the school counselor. This was to provide Pam with an "office" in which to work. It was never tried in my presence.

The dilemma faced by a regular educator when trying to decide which children to refer for special education appears to stem from a lack of understanding as to the purpose of the building team on the part of the teacher. The purpose of a team referral needs to be made clear to all involved: teachers, administrators, and support staff. The purpose of the team needs to be evaluated and reiterated on an annual basis at a minimum. The high rate of referral to placement (73%; Algozzine et al., 1983) could be viewed as evidence that teachers are making appropriate referrals of children to special education, such as Craig. What is disconcerting about this picture, however, is the concomitant increase in percentages of children being identified as learning disabled nationwide. The rapid and continuing increase in numbers of learning disabled students being identified casts doubt on how "appropriate" the children were in the first place, but the blame certainly does not rest entirely with regular educators.

Currently, there are few ways for a regular education teacher to get help with a student he or she is concerned about other than to refer the child for special education. Even then, unless the child is found eligible, the teacher rarely receives any suggestions to help the child succeed in school. There are a number of promising models being implemented across the country, but these are few and far between and have met with mixed responses, as previously discussed. If the

classroom teacher goes ahead and refers a needy child (but not one she or he sees as needing special education such as Pam), the teacher runs the risk of being discounted as a diagnostician by the team, and perhaps the teacher's referrals of children such as Craig will not be taken seriously. The teacher also risks getting a reputation for not being able to teach children who learn differently, or as a complainer, who tries to find other placement for hard-to-teach children. These concerns are legitimate and must be taken into account by those responsible for formulating and articulating the purposes of the team meetings to the staff.

Epilogue

The reader must now decide if the results of this study make sense in light of her or his own experience. That which is familiar about this classroom as a result of the reader's own school experience should provide the reader with the shared culture of schooling needed to interpret my findings. Even though the reader was not in this particular second-grade class, there most undoubtedly was, or is, a classroom somewhere that can be called to mind. The reader must decide to what extent Mrs. Meijer is like or unlike other second-grade teachers. The reader must also decide if the researcher has clearly presented her case and to what extent it seems credible. While many of the points raised in the discussion of my findings are of a local nature, meaning that they are most important to Mrs. Meijer and the children in her

room, the broader concern of the identification of mildly handicapped children in the regular classroom has nonlocal implications.

This study points to the need to examine further the pervasiveness of the practice of making referrals based on the classroom teacher's perception of the available services within the district. This study of one teacher's observation and practical reasoning concerning the referral of children to special education services suggests a need to find a better way of looking at children in classrooms, one that takes into account the ways in which getting a special education identity is socially constructed.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

DEFINITIONS OF LEARNING DISABILITY, EMOTIONAL IMPAIRMENT, AND EDUCABLE MENTALLY IMPAIRED

STATE OF MICHIGAN DEFINITIONS

Rule 340.1713 Specific learning disability defined

Specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain disfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

Rule 340.1706 Determination of emotional impairment

The emotional impairment shall be determined through manifestation of behavioral problems primarily in the affective domain, over an extended period of time, which adversely affect the person's education to the extent that the person cannot profit from regular learning experiences without special education support. The problems result in behaviors manifested by one or more of the following characteristics:

a. Inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships within the school environment.
b. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
c. General pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
d. Tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

Rule 340.1705 Determination of educable mentally impaired

Rule 5 (1) The educable mentally impaired shall be determined through the manifestation of all of the following behavioral characteristics:

a. Development at a rate approximately 2 to 3 standard deviations below the mean as determined through intellectual assessment.
b. Scores approximately within the lowest 6 percentiles on a standardized test in reading and arithmetic.
c. Lack of development primarily in the cognitive domain.
d. Impairment of adaptive behavior.

(2) A determination of impairment shall be based upon a comprehensive evaluation by a multidisciplinary evaluation team which shall include a psychologist.

(3) A determination of impairment shall not be based solely on behaviors relating to environmental, cultural, or economic differences.

Source: Michigan Special Education Rules, as amended August 13, 1980, P.A. 451, 1976.

APPENDIX B

BEHAVIOR RATING SCALE--TEACHER'S CHECKLIST

Case Coordinator_____Teacher_____

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

School Team Referral

Date_____

Student_____Grade_____Birthday_____

Parent(s)_____Address_____

Home Phone_____Work phone - Father/Mother_____

Family Physician_____

Check appropriate area(s) of concern

Academic_____Social_____Physical_____

Health_____Emotional_____Other_____

Description of concern

Additional information related to the concern (i.e.: CA60, previous teacher)

What other services is the child receiving?

What type of assistance are you requesting?

Parents were made aware of this referral on_____

Teacher's signature_____Date_____

Principal's signature_____Date_____

Copies: Parent
Teacher (CA60)
Principal
Case Coordinator
Special Education Office

IN-SCHOOL SCREENING DEVICE

Teacher's Checklist

Child's Name_____ Date_____

Grade_____ Age_____ Teacher_____

ACADEMIC BEHAVIORS	YES	NO	NO EVIDENCE
1. [illegible]			
2. [illegible]			
3. Disregards words			
4. [illegible]			
5. [illegible]			
6. [illegible]			
7. Guesses at words			
8. [illegible]			
9. [illegible]			
10. [illegible]			
11. [illegible]			
12. [illegible]			
13. [illegible]			
14. [illegible]			
15. [illegible]			
16. [illegible]			
17. [illegible]			
18. [illegible]			
19. [illegible]			
20. [illegible]			
21. [illegible]			
22. [illegible]			
23. [illegible]			
24. [illegible]			
25. [illegible]			
26. [illegible]			
27. [illegible]			
28. [illegible]			
29. [illegible]			
30. [illegible]			
31. [illegible]			
32. [illegible]			
33. [illegible]			
34. [illegible]			
35. [illegible]			
36. [illegible]			
37. [illegible]			
38. [illegible]			
39. [illegible]			
40. [illegible]			
41. [illegible]			
42. [illegible]			

IN SCHOOL SCREENING DEVICE

Teacher's Checklist
Page 2

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL INDICATORS	YES	NO	NO EVIDENCE
1. "Blows up" easily			
2. Cries easily when upset			
3. Has poor peer relationships			
4. Disturbs others			
5. Is inattentive			
6. Demands constant teacher attention			
7. Cannot work independently			
8. Attention seeking "show off" behavior			
9. Disruptiveness: tendency to annoy/bother others by talking			
10. Unwilling to [illegible]			
11. Unwilling to talk in class			
12. Uses inappropriately loud voice			
13. [illegible]			
14. Daydreaming			
15. Verbalizes dislike for school			
16. Disobedient			
17. Uncooperative in group situations			
18. Easily distracted by noises/movement of others			
19. Always on the go			
20. Falling out of the chair			
21. Out of seat often			
22. Fiddles with small objects			
23. Taps fingers or toes			
24. Prefers adult companionship			
25. Social withdrawal; preference for solitary activities			
26. Prefers to play with younger children			
27. Prefers to play with older children			
28. Easily frustrated and confused			
29. Lacks interest in environment, general bored			
30. Trips other children			
31. Hits or pokes other children			
32. Bites other children			
33. Fist fights on playground			
34. [illegible] or physically attacks children in the classroom			
35. Hits adults			
36. Refuses to talk to teacher			
37. Refuses to talk to other children			
38. Afraid to come to school			
39. Fearful of new situations			
40. Specific fear (ie; of the dark, of dogs)			
41. Never smiles, no facial reactions			
42. Easily led by others			
43. Destructiveness in regard to property			
44. Negativism, tendency to do the opposite			
45. Thumb sucking			

IN SCHOOL SCREENING DEVICE

Teacher's Checklist
Page 3

HEALTH/PHYSICAL INDICATORS	YES	NO	NO EVIDENCE
1. Holds reading materials close to face			
2. [illegible] forward [illegible] writing			
3. Grasps pencil improperly			
4. Has a speech problem: lisp, articulatory, substitution, stuttering			
5. Hears poorly			
6. Shows clumsiness, awkwardness, poor coordination			
7. [illegible] for activities			
8. [illegible] rigid to touch			
9. Headaches			
10. Difficulty in [illegible], sorting			
11. Nausea, [illegible]			
12. [illegible]			
13. [illegible]			
14. [illegible]			
15. [illegible]			

APPENDIX C

PROJECT PERMISSION LETTER

September 9, 1981

Dear Parents,

This year I will be participating in a study of teachers that is being conducted by _____ University. The director of the study is _____, Ph.D., of the _____ _____ at the university.

The purpose of the study is to learn more about teachers' ways of paying attention to, and thinking about, daily events in their classrooms. Findings from the study will be used to develop new methods for educating beginning and experienced teachers.

During the study my classroom will be visited by observers who will take notes on what happens during classroom activities. Periodically the classroom will be videotaped. I will view the tapes with _____ and his staff and will be interviewed about my observations and thoughts on the daily events that were taped. The contents of the tapes and the identity of all those who appear on them will be kept confidential. The tapes will not be broadcast--they will be shown only for research and teaching purposes, and no real names will be used in any reports written about the study. Two types of videotaping will be done: general shots of the whole classroom, in which individual students will appear only as part of the total class, and more individualized shots focusing on particular children from time to time. In the second type of taping, a wireless microphone will be worn by the child to record his or her voice. Past experience is that children enjoy wearing the microphones; they do not find them uncomfortable or embarrassing to wear.

If you have any questions about the study or if for some reason you do not want your child to be individually videotaped during it, please call me here at school at _____.

Sincerely,

(Teacher's signature)
_____ Public Schools

APPENDIX D

FIELDNOTES FOR FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1981

Day 11 Friday Sept. 25, 1981

8:40 T arrives. Seemed a little disappointed with her parent turnout. Pammy's mom, Neil's parents, Carrie's parents, couldn't remember about John's parents--if they came. Gail's did not come. T comments about the black circles under eyes (Neil, Pammy, Carrie). Mentioned that she learned last night that Neil and his younger swim an hour every night in a swim club.

9:03 OPENING Children all arriving. Boardwork for today:
1. letters-A,B,C
2. Mighty Math
3. Spelling-p. 4
4. Math-red 9-10, yellow 37-38
5. Journal

Word Bank	
skating	skiing
swimming	sledding

9:06 Neil says: "Oh, word bank....Great."
ON (T still in hall with Elizabeth's mother) [Kids just visiting. Midget cars seem to be the big thing for the boys now.]

9:10 OPENING ACTIVITIES 1. Hot lunchers-Fri. is spaghetti day (T, Paul, Jessica at tissue box).

9:11 Jessica asks T if today is a popcorn party. She says yes for those that earned it. T tells them that there is a letter to go home today about some testing in October that is very important.
2. Pledge

9:13 T asks Gail to pass out handwriting paper and Karen to pass out Mighty Math papers.

9:16 HANDWRITING T starts explaining how to print capital A. "Push down," "Two down strokes""and then across" (T walks around checking their guide letters). T tells John and Neil to blow noses, "lots of snuffies today." Pammy and Sarah get up to blow too. T tells them capital B should not have a "loopy" in the middle and she shows them on the board what she means. (T tells John to blow his nose again, but he just wipes it. He still is not blowing.)

9:21 Craig, "Are we going to go all the way to Z again?"
T asks him what is on his boardwork for today and says that's all he should be concerned with. She demonstrates C and walks around observing guide letters. (T gets Kleenex box and puts a stack of them on both John and Neil's desks.)

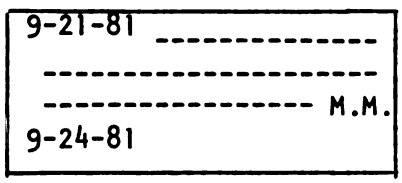
9:23 BOARDWORK EXPLANATION T goes over directions to Mighty Math. Goes over what they are to do, subtraction. Becky is already working. T is doing an example on the board because many didn't appear to understand about the coins.

9:27 T directs them back to boardwork list. Tells them to take out their spelling books. Has Stacy read the directions and then has kids read what the pictures are so that there will be no misinterpretations, e.g. it's a gate, and not a fence.

9:30 T tells them to put their spelling book in the tub she has placed back there today, not overflowing the basket. Tells them to sign the top of the page now.

9:31 T changes names of math groups. (Snoopy group is now the Red group and Woodstock is now Yellow group.) MN (T had told me earlier that she planned to do this because the kids in Woodstock group were getting confused about what group they were in.)
Tells kids to rip out the appropriate math pages for their group. Then tells them that when they put their math book away, they should get out their journal. They are to open up to the front of their journal.

9:33 JOURNALS Tells them that their date should start on the next line after her initials. She puts an example on the board:



Craig asks, "Where do you put it, because I don't have any space? T tells them they have to write two sentences today. Tells them that the word bank is on the board. They are to write about one of these sports. T gives them a two-sentence example for herself.

9:38 T tells them to stack up their assigned pages in reverse order. She goes through how to stack with them. Asks them if they have any questions about their morning seatwork. John asks about the word tobbaganing. Tells them she'll be calling for spelling groups first and then be meeting with reading groups.

9:40 SPELLING Several children already take their completed handwriting paper up to the wire baskets. T is getting boxes with spelling materials out. Calls her first group. Donald comes up and gives T his spelling folder from Monday. (He had taken it to his desk.) T explains how to do the

graph and how today they'll have the same words as Monday. She mentions studying them at home. T, "Did you all bring your half sheets?" (None of them did.) Group is: Steve, Jessica, Paul, Blake, Jimmy and Mary. (Steve forgot his pencil and has to go back to get it.)

9:47 (at desks) Craig turns around to ask Judy a question, and she tells him to "do it yourself." He next asks Pammy and she tells him, "I can't tell you." (It is Mighty Math that he is asking about.) T still giving the spelling test to the first group.

9:50 ON--Many children already on journals and that's their last seatwork assignment (Donald, Elizabeth, Sarah, and Joe).

9:52 First spelling group is finished and returning to their seats. Paul says, "Oh. That was tiring." T calls next group. This group remembers to get paper and clipboards without being remineed, except Neil. T explains graph to them. (Each child's # correct from Monday pretest is graphed.)
Lowest group: Craig, Royce, Joe, Karen, Carrie, Elizabeth, Becky, Neil, Pammy, and Judy.) (ON--Donald is all finished with his work. He wants to go to listening table. Seems unsure if he's permitted as it's so close to the spelling groups. He looks toward T several times but she doesn't acknowledge him, so he goes ahead.) Kids in spelling groups are distracted by Don's record. It's on the wrong speed. No, it's "Fox in Sox"--high speed. Jessica comes back to join Donald.

10:00 T sents this group back and calls up the last group (Donald, Sarah, Gail, Andrew and John). She shows them a sample of how their paper is to be set up. (Steve just sitting at his seat, but work is still on it. Mary is standing and looking around, rest of the kids not in spelling are doing seatwork, except Jason, who is at listening table.) Pammy still on Mighty Math. ON (Large crowd at listening table now interfering with the last spelling group.) ON-(Neil didn't seem to notice that he had been moved to a different spelling group today.)

10:10 Craig is all excited as he's finished all of his seatwork. T sends last group back and gets herself ready for reading groups.

10:10 READING GROUPS T calls Webs and Wheels group back. Circus is topic today. ON-(Pammy has a terrible cough today. She uses her number line for math. Craig is now working on work from the Not Done side of his folder.) Royce on math worksheet.

10:17 Steve comes by to tell me that he's just done his last thing. Craig comes over for help on a worksheet. Pammy now asking Craig for help on a math problem.

10:20 (Knock on door) Class is going over to Mrs. Field's (other second-grade teacher) room with their snack to see a movie.

10:25 FILM "Bread and Jam for Francis," introduced by Mrs. Field. T leaves the room. Mrs. F. goes to her desk, corrects papers.

10:37 Mrs. F. leaves room for a minute. Several children notice her absence.

10:42 Kids are putting fingers up in front of light. They don't know that Mrs. F. has slipped back in the room. She tells them that this is kindergarten and first-grade behavior, not second grade.

10:45 Back in Room 125. T with W&W group again. Has to interrupt to talk to "boys at listening center." ON-(All appear to be done with seatwork except Gail and Pammy.)

10:47 T calls Secrets group back. They meet on the back carpet today. They are reading orally today. T shows them about paragraphs.

11:00 T glances at Craig, Jason and Blake, who are discussing how long it takes to get to Cedar Point. The W&W people are doing their workbook page now.
T puts character names up on board for Secrets story: Juanita, David, Sara. She gives them a question to read to find out. ON-(Jason anticipating Rainbows being called up next and is trying to get Blake to go over by the listening table so they can use it when the Rainbows people leave.)

11:04 T tells Secrets which workbook page to do. (Craig comes over and asks me how many pages of writing I have.)
T tells Pammy that the reading teacher will be here soon so she'd better get going on her reading.

11:05 Rainbows gets called up to table. Too many for the table so T has them meet at the carpet. They read aloud in their group. Secrets doing their reading and worksheets. ON-(Pammy reads audibly during silent reading.) ON-(Becky is making a picture that says: "I love you Mrs. Meijer.")
T calls out to Andrew, Paul and Donald to do their own work. They were talking at their seats. She reminds Rainbows not to "clip off their endings." Says these are

just as important. They are reading a play. T assigns parts. Craig asks to be a troll, but T tells him that he's already read and that Sarah is already chosen as troll.

11:12 Pammy coughs. T looks up, hearing how bad it sounds.

11:16 Play still going on with Rainbows. Other kids are quietly working or at listening table. T reminds the group of the picture clues as they read.

11:20 Dismisses Rainbows with no workbook page today. Paul, Andrew and Donald back asking T a question about their worksheet that they can't figure out.

11:25 T says they are waiting for the reading teacher and suggests that some may want to take their bathroom breaks now. T asks Royce to sit down and tie his shoes, then watches to see if he can do it correctly. T asks if anyone has papers to be initialed. Craig says, "I do." (T tells me she's stalling.)

11:30 Still waiting for the reading teacher. She's here. Several kids say, "Here she comes." T notices Andrew and Jimmy horseplaying. Says to Andrew, "I don't want to see that again, or you will have discipline meted out." (ON--About the strongest statement I've heard her make.)

APPENDIX E

STANFORD ACHIEVEMENT TEST, CLASS PROFILE

STANFORD ACHIEVEMENT TEST
Primary I, Form A
10-81, Grade 2

CLASS PROFILE

Grade equivalent	Subtest	Stanines 1 2 3	4 5 6	7 8 9
3.3	Vocabulary		8	14
2.6	Reading A	3	10	9
2.8	Reading B		12	9
3.0	Reading Comprehension		12	9
3.2	Word Study Skills		8	13
2.5	Math Concepts	2	13	7
2.9	Math Comprehension		12	10
3.5	Listening Comprehension		11	11
3.1	Total Reading		11	10
2.7	Total Math		14	8
3.4	Total Auditory		7	15
3.0	Complete Battery		12(57%)	9(43%)

Number of children scoring in each range.

*Test taken on 10-1, 10-2, 10-5, 1 student absent on 10-2, therefore some numbers total 22 and some 21 for the stanine counts.

APPENDIX F

CLASS LIST

Room 125 Children

Name	Practical Grouping
Jimmy	Average
Paul	Extra bright, withit
Sarah	Extra bright, withit
Steve	Doesn't quite have it
Carrie	Average
Mary	Doesn't quite have it
Pammy	Has it, but can't get it together
Judy	Average
Andrew	Extra bright, withit
John	Average
Karen	Average
Neil	Has it, but can't get it together
Gail	Average
Jason	Average
Doria	Average
Elizabeth	Extra bright, withit
Jessica	Extra bright, withit
Blake	Average
Craig	Has it, but can't get it together
Sue	Average
Joe	Doesn't quite have it
Donald	Extra bright, withit
Becky	Average
Royce	Average

APPENDIX G

STANFORD ACHIEVEMENT TEST, COMPLETE BATTERY TOTALS

Stanford Achievement Test[a]
Complete Battery Totals

Child	Age (Yr-Mo)	Stanine	Range
Jimmy	7-7	6	3-9
Paul	7-11	9	7-9[b]
Mary	7-8	6	5-7
Joe	7-5	6	4-7
Sarah	6-11	NA	5-7
Donald	7-4	8	5-9
Carrie	7-9	7	4-8
Steve	8-8	5	4-8
Pammy	7-5	6	5-7
Becky	7-3	5	4-5
Gail	7-5	7	6-8
Judy	7-2	8	5-9
Andrew	8-0	9	7-9[b]
Jason	7-1	6	5-8
Blake	7-2	6	4-7
Royce	7-1	6	3-9
Karen	7-3	5	3-8
Neil	7-1	7	6-9
John	7-0	8	6-9
Craig	8-0	5	3-7
Elizabeth	7-9	9	7-9[b]
Jessica	7-3	6	5-8

[a]Tests taken 10-1, 10-2, and 10-5-1981.

[b]= and above.

APPENDIX H

CRAIG'S REFERRAL FORM

Case Coordinator_____ Teacher_____

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

School Team Referral

Date November 2, 1981

Student Craig Grade 2 Birthday_____

Parent(s)_____ Address_____

Home Phone_____ Work phone - Father/Mother_____

Family Physician_____

Check appropriate area(s) of concern

Academic_____ Social_____ Physical_____

Health_____ Emotional_____ Other_____

Description of concern

academics below grade equivalent
difficulty with memory tasks, understanding directions

Additional information related to the concern (i.e.: CA60, previous teacher)

referred as a first grader
No spring follow-up was deemed necessary

What other services is the child receiving?

Remedial reading

What type of assistance are you requesting?

Test and follow-up for memory (short term) and listening skills

Parents were made aware of this referral on November 5, 1981

Teacher's signature_____ Date_____

Principal's signature_____ Date_____

Copies: Parent
Teacher (CA60)
Principal
Case Coordinator
Special Education Office

IN SCHOOL SCREENING DEVICE

Teacher's Checklist

Child's Name Craig Date Nov. 5, 1981

Grade 2 Age _____ Teacher Meijer

ACADEMIC INDICATORS	YES	NO	NO EVIDENCE
1. Reads word - by - word	✓		
2. Reads below grade level	✓		
3. Mispronounces words	✓		
4. Has difficulty in blending sounds	✓		
5. Fails to respond to sound/symbol association		✓	
6. Can't rhyme words		✓	
7. Can't remember sight words	✓		
8. Reverses words in reading		✓	
9. Forgets what is read		✓	
10. Reverses letters (3rd, 4th grades)	—		
11. Has poor eye tracking skills			✓
12. Cannot copy from chalkboard to paper		copying	
13. Starts from bottom to top of each letter		✓	
14. Cannot draw basic geometric shapes			✓
15. Shifts letters inconsistantly			✓
16. Spaces poorly between letters/words	✓		
17. Forgets formation of letters		✓	
18. Has difficulty staying on the line		✓	
19. Reverses words letters when writing		✓	
20. Cannot tell time to the hour			✓
21. Cannot tell time to the minute			✓
22. Has poor one to one correspondence			✓
23. Cannot recall basic math facts through 10		✓	
24. Cannot recall basic math facts through 20	✓		
25. Arithmetic skills below grade level	✓		
26. Forgets specific arithmetic processes seemingly known	✓		
27. Uses fingers or other devices to count	✓		
28. Unable to draw a human figure in proportion		✓	
29. Gets letters out of order when spelling		✓	
30. Quickly forgets spelling words	✓		
31. Spells the same word two different ways in same assignment			✓
32. Confuses sounds when spelling	✓		
33. Cannot recall sequence of syllables		✓	
34. Spells below grade level	✓		
35. Spells phonetically	✓		
36. Uses bizarre spellings		sometimes	
37. Does unacceptable written work		sometimes	
38. Gets confused when given a series of auditory directions	⊘		
39. Does not know left and right on self			✓
40. Does not know left and right on others			✓
41. Starts written work but does not finish	⊘		
42. Does not start written work	⊘		

IN SCHOOL SCREENING DEVICE

Teacher's Checklist
Page 2

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL INDICATORS	YES	NO	NO EVIDENCE
1. "Flows up" easily		✓	
2. Cries easily when upset	✓		
3. Has poor peer relationships		✓	
4. Distracts others	✓		
5. Is inattentive	✓		
6. Demand constant teacher attention	✓		
7. Cannot work independently	✓		
8. Withdrawn (easily "flows off") behavior		✓	
9. Disruptiveness: tendency to annoy/bother others by talking	✓		
10. Unwilling to volunteer		✓	
11. Unwilling to talk in class		✓	
12. Does inappropriately [illegible] voice		✓	
13. Talks out of turn [illegible]	✓		
14. Daydreaming	✓		
15. Verbalizes a dislike for school		✓	
16. Disobedient		✓	
17. Uncooperative in group situations	✓		
18. Easily distracted by noises/movement of others	✓		
19. Aware on [illegible]	✓		
20. Falling out of the chair	✓		
21. Is out of seat often	✓		
22. Fiddles with small objects	✓		
23. Has tantrums or [illegible]		✓	
24. Prefers adult companionship		✓	
25. Shows little or no preference for solitary activities		✓	
26. Prefers to play with younger children		✓	
27. Prefers to play with older children		✓	
28. Easily flustered and confused	✓		
29. Lacks interest in environment, general bored		✓	
30. Trips other children		✓	
31. Hits or pokes other children		✓	
32. Bites other children		✓	
33. Lost fights on playground		✓	
34. Shocks or physically attacks children in the classroom		✓	
35. Hits adults		✓	
36. Refuses to talk to teacher		✓	
37. Refuses to talk to other children		✓	
38. Afraid to come to school		✓	
39. Fearful of new situations		✓	
40. Specific fear (ie; of the dark, of dogs)		✓	
41. Never smiles, no facial reactions		✓	
42. Easily led by others	✓		
43. Destructiveness in regard to property		✓	
44. Negativism, tendency to do the opposite		✓	
45. Hard working		✓	

IN SCHOOL SCREENING DEVICE

Teacher's Checklist
Page 3

HEALTH-PHYSICAL INDICATORS	YES	NO	NO EVIDENCE
1. Holds reading materials close to face		✓	
2. Slumps forward when writing		✓	
3. Grasps pencil improperly		✓	
4. Has a speech problem (lisp, articulatory, substitution, stuttering		✓	
5. [illegible]		✓	
6. Shows clumsiness, awkwardness, poor coordination		✓	
7. Alternates use of hands for activities		✓	
8. Tense, unable to relax, rigid to touch		✓	
9. Headaches		✓	
10. Difficulty in bowel control, soiling		✓	
11. Nausea, vomiting		✓	
12. Stomach aches		✓	
13. [illegible]		✓	
14. [illegible]		✓	
15. Frequent unexplained absences		✓	

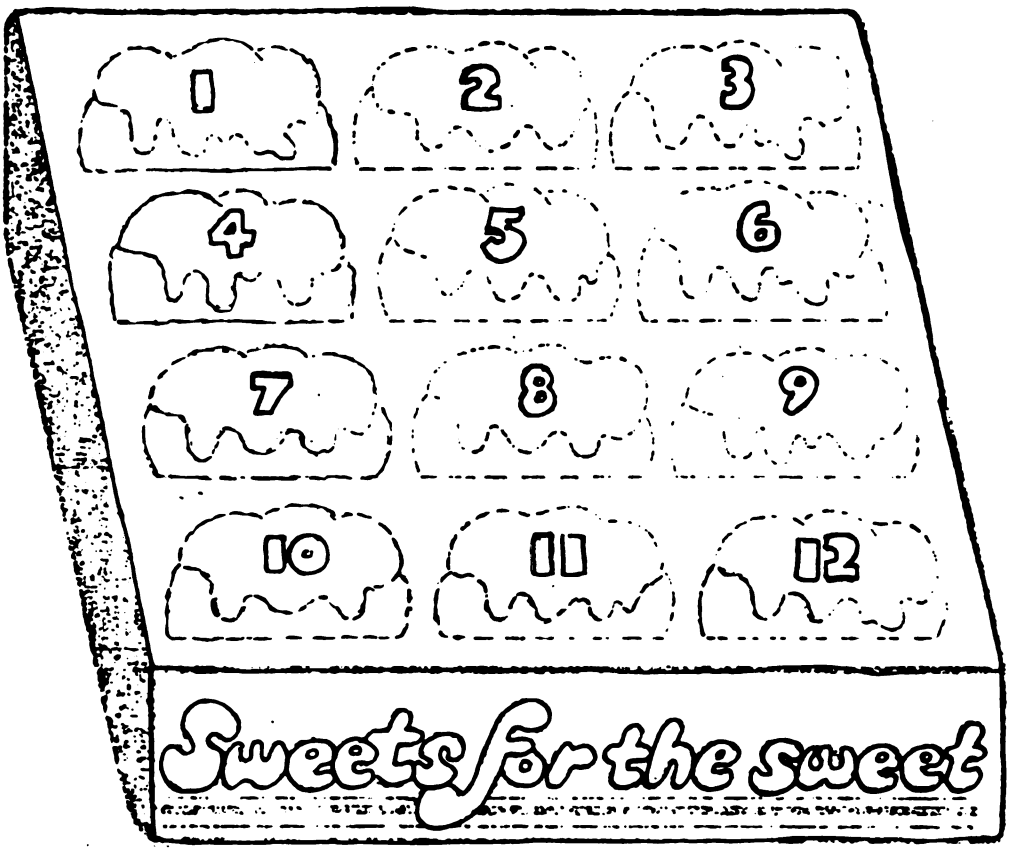
APPENDIX I

THE CANDY PAGE

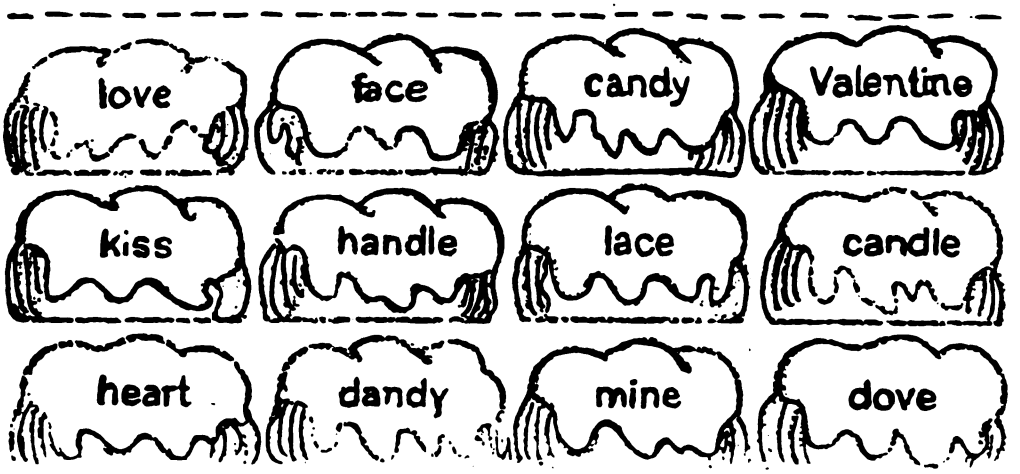
February
Alphabetical Order

Candy Wrappers

Please help the candy maker get ready for Valentine's Day. Put each candy in the box in alphabetical order.



On the back of this paper write a Valentine poem to someone you love. Use the rhyming words in the candy box.



APPENDIX J

END-OF-THE-YEAR READING TEST RESULTS

FOR INFORMAL GROUPS

End-of-Year Reading Test Results
for Informal Groups

	Gates-McGinitie, Form A 5-81 (end of 1st grade)		Gates-McGinitie, Form B 5-82 (end of 2nd grade)	
	Vocabulary	Comprehension	Vocabulary	Comprehension
Paul	3.7	3.7	4.7	3.6
Andrew	2.8	3.7	5.6	5.2
Elizabeth	2.8	3.7	3.3	3.5
Donald	3.7	3.2	5.6	5.2
Sarah	2.5	2.7	3.5	4.3
Jessica	2.4	2.5	3.2	5.7
Craig	1.7	2.0	2.6	1.8
Pammy	2.7	3.1	3.7	3.6
Neil	2.5	3.2	2.8	4.3
Steve	2.4	1.9	3.0	1.8
Joe	3.0	1.8	5.6	3.5
Mary	3.6	2.1	3.6	2.2

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