PERSPECTIVES OF THREE EXPERIENCED TEACHERS IN NEW POSITIONS:

A PORTRAITURE STUDY

by

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(Under the Direction of JO BLASE)

ABSTRACT

This study examined the perspectives of three experienced new teachers during their first three months in their new schools. Research was conducted using the method of portraiture—a qualitative method that allows the researcher to create first-person narratives that attempt to portray the essence of a study's participants. The findings of this study revealed that the participants encountered many struggles as experienced new teachers. They expressed concerns about the induction program, the hiring process, learning their new curricula, obtaining materials and teaching supplies, as well as "fitting in." In addition, four underlying themes that seemed to determine these three teachers' levels of satisfaction emerged: the number of previous years spent teaching, the quality of previous teaching experiences, the presence of preconceived ideas about the new school, and the personality of the individual teacher. Implications for further research and for school administrators and colleagues were suggested.

INDEX WORDS: Experienced New Teachers, Educational Leadership, Educational Supervision, Teacher Induction, Mentoring, Hiring Processes

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the most wonderful man I know—my husband. Jim, thank you for helping me to understand the words "gentleness" and "grace." More importantly, thank you for always showing me unconditional love…the kind of love the Lord has always wanted me to know.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the early 1980s, Schlechty and Vance (1981) noted that graduates of teaching preparation programs—particularly those with higher academic qualifications—were not likely to remain in the teaching field. Even today, teacher attrition "causes concerns about the quality of the teaching force…high rates of teacher attrition increase school districts' expenditures on recruiting and hiring, disrupt program development and continuity, and ultimately hinder student learning" (Shen, 1997a, p. 33).

Schlechty and Vance (1983) found that between 40 and 50 percent of all newly hired teachers leave the teaching profession within their first seven years. Huling-Austin (1987) posited that this happens in part because new teachers are expected to assume full responsibility for their position immediately upon entering the school, and their inability to do so causes them to become discouraged.

Several researchers have examined first-year teachers' issues and professional obstacles and have found that these teachers confront a number of problems, including, for example, managing the classroom, locating necessary resources, talking with parents, understanding administrator expectations, and individualizing instruction (Odell, 1986; Veenman, 1984; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1996). As a result of such studies, educational leaders have developed support programs such as induction and mentoring programs (Odell, 1986, 1990; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1996), as well as supervision techniques specifically appropriate for first-year teachers (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon,

1998). These programs have assisted first-year teachers and provided them with additional guidance during their first year of teaching.

One particular group of new teachers, experienced teachers who are new to a school, has not been examined as closely, however. Due to this lack of research, administrators, staff development coordinators, and experienced teachers have had little assistance with addressing the specific concerns of experienced teachers in new positions, also referred to as "experienced new teachers" (Slaughter, 1988).

Shen (1997b) conducted a study of teachers to determine the characteristic differences and similarities of teachers who stayed in one school, teachers who moved from one school to another, and teachers who left the profession altogether. Of the 4,761 teachers studied, 1069 (22.5%) left their previous school at the end of one school year and moved to another school the following year—making them experienced new teachers.

Kirby, Grissmer, and Hudson (1991) found that these teachers, including those who leave the profession and later return, "account for a larger proportion of new hires than inexperienced teachers" (p. vi). Citing increased pressure for school accountability as a possible reason for this trend, several researchers have noted that administrators tend to hire experienced teachers if available, hiring inexperienced teachers only when the experienced teacher pool has been depleted (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, & Barkanic, 1998; Kirby et al., 1991).

Despite these findings, few researchers have conducted studies specifically examining experienced new teachers. Slaughter (1988) found that although these experienced new teachers' obstacles and issues may be similar to those of first-year

teachers, their experiences are not identical. Slaughter stated that "further examination of (experienced new teachers) would be warranted, simply because little specific information on them is currently available" (p. 163).

Statement of the Problem

Little research has been conducted on experienced new teachers, who are defined as teachers who have teaching experience but who are new to a school or school system (Slaughter, 1988). Kirby et al. (1991) compared various groups of newly hired teachers, including experienced new teachers, and examined the factors that caused these teachers to accept their new teaching positions. Slaughter compared experienced new teachers to first-year teachers and found that "needs for assistance of experienced new teachers were somewhat similar to, but generally less intensive than, those of beginning teachers" (p. 152). Odell (1986) compared the needs of "new to system" teachers with those of first-year teachers, and supported the findings of Slaughter's (1988) study. Odell stated, "the support needs of new to system teachers are not remarkably different from the support needs of first-year teachers. Apparently there are common needs for all teachers who are in a transition position that prior teaching experience cannot transcend" (p. 29).

Although a sizable amount of research regarding first-year teachers exists, the above three studies were the only ones that examined experienced new teachers at the onset of the present study; and each of those studies merely compared experienced new teachers with other groups of new teachers. None of the studies previously conducted with experienced new teachers examined the specific thoughts, feelings, experiences, and perspectives of experienced teachers who were new to a school.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the perspectives of three experienced new teachers. Using data collected from interviews and observations, I portrayed these teachers and the situations they encountered in their first three months as experienced new teachers.

The findings of this study provide some examples of obstacles, trials, and successes that experienced teachers could face in their first few months at a new school. This information has the potential to assist all individuals who hire and work with experienced new teachers: countywide administrators, school building administrators, and mentors and colleagues of experienced new teachers. Simply making these groups aware of the potential struggles and challenges of experienced new teachers may encourage them to focus more attention on the specific needs of this group of teachers, rather than exclusively on the needs of first-year teachers.

Research Question

Data collection procedures were designed to answer the following question: What are the perspectives of experienced new teachers? I addressed this primary research question by observing and interviewing three experienced new teachers, discovering some of their thoughts, feelings, actions, successes, challenges, and concerns.

Research Design

To explore the research question, I employed the qualitative method of portraiture to describe the participants' experiences during their first three months at a school. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) designed this method after being inspired by her experiences of being drawn by artists.

When painting an actual portrait of a subject, an artist may use oils and canvas. When a qualitative researcher draws a portrait of a participant, however, he or she uses words as the artistic medium. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) stated:

> Artists must not view the subject as object, but as a person of myriad dimensions. The artist's gaze is discerning as it searches for the essence, relentless as it tries to move past the surface images. But in finding the underside, in piercing the cover, in discovering the unseen, the artist offers a critical and generous perspective—one that is both tough and giving. (p. 6)

Definition of Term

Experienced new teachers are teachers who are new to a school system and who have recent classroom experience (Odell, 1986; Slaughter, 1988). The teachers in the present study all had recent classroom experience, each having taught school during the previous year.

Assumptions

In conducting this study of experienced new teachers, I assumed that participants were honest during interviews.

Delimitations

This study focused exclusively on experienced new teachers and their experiences and perspectives.

Limitations

This study was limited to the perspectives and experiences of three female experienced new teachers in rural schools in Northeast Georgia.

Significance of the Study

Several previous studies have attempted to understand the needs of first-year teachers. Those studies revealed that teacher induction programs, effective mentoring, and proper supervision assisted first-year teachers in the areas in which they struggled (Glickman et al., 1998; Huling-Austin, 1987; Odell, 1990). The significance of the present study was to reveal some of the specific issues that these three experienced new teachers faced.

Noting that the purpose of qualitative research is to examine the possibilities, not the *probabilities*, of what might happen in given situations, the findings of this study may help educational leaders facilitate assistance strategies that benefit this special group of new teachers. Although not all experienced new teachers will have the same experiences as the three participants in this study, it is at least possible that some will.

Organization of the Study

This study has been divided into three parts: (a) An introductory section which frames the study and introduces the method; (b) a portrait section which contains the portraits of the three experienced new teachers; and (c) a summary and discussion section which highlights some general themes that exist among the three participants and describes the theoretical and practical implications of the findings.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Educational leaders have long recognized that graduates of teaching preparation programs often do not remain in the field of teaching for their entire careers. With between 40 and 50 percent of all newly hired teachers leaving the profession within their first seven years (Schlecthty & Vance, 1983), researchers sought to identify and examine the factors that led to this high rate of career transition.

Veenman (1984) examined all first-year teacher studies conducted prior to 1984 and compiled a list of the 24 most frequently perceived problems of beginning teachers. By far, the most frequent difficulty faced by beginning teachers was classroom discipline. Additional concerns included: motivating students, dealing with individual differences among students, assessing students' work, relating to students' parents, organizing class work, obtaining materials and supplies, and dealing with problems of individual students.

Although Veenman (1984) and other researchers (e.g., Odell, 1986; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1996) focused on the needs and experiences of first-year teachers, few researchers have examined experienced new teachers—teachers who are new to a school but who already have teaching experience. In reviewing the limited extant literature, I will review terms that have been used to describe experienced new teachers, highlight studies that examined experienced new teachers, and review implications of previous research.

Terms Describing Experienced New Teachers

Researchers have described experienced new teachers in a variety of ways. Brock and Grady identified experienced new teachers as teachers with experience who "are transitioning to a new school" (1997, p. 1). Odell (1986) referred to them as "new to system teachers," further describing them as "experienced teachers who are working for the first time in the particular school system" (Odell, 1987, pp. 73-74). Kester and Marockie (1987) identified these teachers as "experienced personnel new to the system," while Kirby et al. (1991) called this group of new teachers "experienced, migrating teachers." Slaughter (1988) simply identified them as "experienced new teachers."

Previous Studies

Before this study was conducted, there existed only three major studies describing experienced new teachers. In the first, Kirby et al. (1991) compared various groups of newly hired teachers in Indiana; these groups included inexperienced teachers, returning teachers, and "migrating" teachers (teachers from either a school in another state or a private school within the state). Kirby et al. examined the factors that caused different groups of teachers to move into the Indiana school system. According to Kirby et al., "the most important reason for transferring to the Indiana public school system appears to be related to a spouse's job transfer to Indiana" (p. 10). One limitation of this study was that it did not examine experienced teachers who migrated from other public schools within the state of Indiana.

The two remaining studies compared experienced new teachers' needs to those of first-year teachers (Odell, 1986; Slaughter, 1988). Odell (1986) discovered that although the needs of first-year teachers and "new to system" teachers were not identical, they

were remarkably similar. Slaughter (1988) found that although the needs of first-year teachers and experienced new teachers were similar, experienced new teachers' needs for assistance were "generally less intensive than" those of first-year teachers (p. 152).

Implications of Previous Studies

Experienced New Teacher Struggles

Hartzell (1990) stated that educational leaders generally expected experienced new teachers to be instantly competent in their new schools. However, as Slaughter (1988) found, these teachers encountered many struggles in their first year at a school. Brock and Grady (1997) and Hartzell suggested possible reasons that experienced new teachers struggled, including both interpersonal considerations and preconceived notions about their new schools.

Brock and Grady (1997) noted that experienced teachers might encounter previously established cliques among staff members, which would cause them difficulties in establishing relationships. For many experienced new teachers, the lack of close relationships with colleagues was difficult to handle, as experienced new teachers often left behind close friendships from their previous schools. One experienced new teacher commented, "I moved eight hours away from home to a city where I knew no one" (Slaughter, 1988, p. 118).

In addition to interpersonal considerations, experienced new teachers might struggle because of their own misconceptions about their new school system. Hartzell (1990) stated that experienced new teachers might expect their new schools to match their own preconceived notions of how schools ought to function. Brock and Grady (1997) referred to the way a school functions as the "culture" of the school:

> Each school has a culture, "the way things are done here." Everyday occurrences and expectations may vary widely from the veteran's experiences. If "the way things are done here" differs widely from the veteran's previous school, this may be a source of great discomfort. (p. 9)

In addition to being unacquainted with their new school's culture, experienced new teachers may also be unaccustomed to the culture of their new communities (e.g., the ethnicity or socio-economic status of community members), which might cause difficulty in relating to students and parents (Brock & Grady, 1997). An experienced new teacher in Slaughter's (1988) study stated, "I was astounded to discover the low level of parental support I received. This was completely different than my previous experience and makes my job much harder" (p. 96).

Experienced New Teacher Needs

Odell found that experienced new teachers needed "fundamental information about the school district" (1986, p. 29), including general policies within the school, curriculum, and evaluation (Slaughter, 1988). For example, one experienced new teacher who needed others to guide him through day-to-day procedures commented, "Teachers have a tendency to forget you are new and assume you know certain procedures" (Slaughter, 1988, p. 95).

To help, some local school systems have offered new-teacher induction programs to experienced new teachers. Kester and Marockie (1987) suggested that induction programs "address the needs of experienced personnel entering as new employees. These experienced teachers not only receive orientation information regarding the system but

also are given opportunities to analyze instruction, observe peers, and study current educational research" (p. 26).

In addition to needing assistance with policies and procedures, experienced new teachers needed assistance in obtaining resources such as instructional materials and supplies (Odell, 1986; Slaughter, 1988). One experienced new teacher said, "The lack of instructional materials current and not antique has been a problem; library books are inadequate. I have supplemented the areas of curriculum lacking with my personal books and materials" (Slaughter, 1988, p. 94).

Slaughter (1988) further found that experienced new teachers wanted assistance with motivating students, teaching students at different levels of ability, and handling student discipline. An experienced new teacher stated, "I would like more feedback from supervisors on how to improve my teaching abilities" (Slaughter, p. 97). Another experienced new teacher explained:

> Discipline in the classroom was my biggest obstacle to overcome. Being new, I didn't want others to know I had a discipline problem. I resolved it through trial and error. As the years go by you gain experience and more techniques in dealing with students. (Slaughter, p. 93)

Experienced new teachers also desired more time to talk with other teachers—particularly those who taught the same subject or grade (Slaughter, 1988). One teacher noted that time spent with another teacher was very helpful, explaining that the teacher "sat down and helped me organize better; she also helped with the mental stress phase of being a new teacher" (Slaughter, p. 110).

Although research indicates that experienced new teachers have had many of the same difficulties as first-year teachers (Odell, 1986; Slaughter, 1988), administrators and other staff members tended to expect them to have the same knowledge base as experienced teachers (Hartzell, 1990). Remembering that experienced new teachers are still "new" teachers can help them successfully navigate their first year in a new school.

Summary

Only three studies have been conducted which specifically examined experienced new teachers and their needs (Kirby et al., 1991; Odell, 1986; Slaughter, 1988). Slaughter commented on the limited amount of research that has been done:

> While experienced new teachers in this study appeared to be somewhat similar in their expressed needs to beginning teachers, further examination of this group would be warranted, simply because little specific information on them is currently available. (p. 163)

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Research Question

Data collection procedures for this study were designed to answer the following question: "What are the perspectives of experienced new teachers?" I addressed this research question by examining three experienced new teachers in order to discover some of their feelings, thoughts, successes, challenges, and concerns.

Subjectivities Statement

Portraiture, the qualitative research method utilized in this study, calls for researchers to recognize their personal positions and concerns before they enter the field of study. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) suggested that "it is important that (the researcher) record her framework *before* she enters the field, identifying the intellectual, ideological, and autobiographical themes that will shape her view" (p. 186). According to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, "the articulation of early presumptions does not inhibit or distort (the researcher's) clear vision; rather it is likely to make her lens more lucid, less encumbered by the shadows of bias" (p. 186). For this reason, I begin by sharing my own autobiographical themes and theoretical framework.

Experiences as an Experienced New Teacher

Like many beginning teachers, I believed I could take on the world. Soon I realized, however, that I did not actually know it "all." I found myself needing words of encouragement to confirm my strengths, as well as recommendations to help me address

areas in which I needed improvement. Unfortunately, I received little feedback of any type from my principal or my colleagues, leaving me to constantly wonder if I was a successful teacher.

After teaching in my first school for three years, I realized that I was becoming more comfortable with myself—both as a teacher and as a person. I had expected that I might feel better about myself as a teacher: I had become more accomplished in my chosen profession. But why did I feel better about myself as a person? I now attribute this increase in self-esteem to the supportive relationships I developed during those first three years with administrators, teachers, and parents—all of whom helped me believe in my value as an individual in that school.

As I approached my sixth year of teaching experience, my husband and I moved to an area with few available public school teaching positions, so I accepted a position in a private school, teaching a subject out of my certified field. Just as in my first year of teaching, I believed that I could take on the world. I felt that I was now a successful teacher who could teach any subject. However, my feelings of success diminished in a few short days when I found myself both dealing with students who had severe behavior problems and attempting to teach in a subject area outside of my knowledge and experience.

Once again, I began to feel that I was failing as a teacher. And once again, I initially received no encouragement or assistance from my administrators and colleagues. However, after several months, I was able to build positive relationships with teachers and administrators in the school, and I found myself beginning to feel better about myself and my abilities.

The following year I returned to a public school to teach a subject in which I was certified. To my surprise, I found myself again combating feelings of inadequacy as a teacher—and as a person. This seemed to be a trend for me: Every time I transitioned to a new teaching position, I began to question my adequacy as a professional, which in turn, affected how I felt about myself as a person. It was not until my second year in that school that I really began to believe once more in my abilities and my self-worth.

In every case, after spending time in a school, I became more comfortable with myself as an individual and a teacher. This level of comfort seemed to be closely linked to the scope and quality of relationships I was able to build with my administrators and colleagues in each setting. The reason I began examining a study population of experienced new teachers was because I wondered whether other experienced new teachers had had similar experiences.

Theoretical Framework

In order to reduce the possibility of bias, it was essential for me to recognize my own epistemological stance before attempting to design a study of experienced new teachers. After reviewing the three major epistemologies (objectivism, subjectivism, and constructionism), I found my own worldview to be most closely aligned with the constructionist viewpoint.

Constructionism essentially states that all knowledge—and therefore all meaningful reality—is contingent upon human practices (Crotty, 1998). According to the constructionist view, reality is constructed through interaction between individuals and their worlds and is developed within a social context. According to constructionists, meaning is not discovered, but constructed (Crotty).

Constructionism differs from objectivism in that objectivists believe that truth is truth, regardless of how people perceive it (Crotty, 1998). Subjectivists, in contrast to constructionists, believe that there is no objective truth, asserting that truth is simply created by individuals. In constructionism, people do not create meaning or truth out of nothing—they construct it, based on objects already in existence (Crotty).

After becoming aware of my own epistemological leanings, I turned my attention to more specifically identifying my theoretical perspective. One of the most widely recognized constructivist theoretical perspectives is interpretivism. There are three major branches of interpretivism: hermeneutics, phenomenology, and symbolic interactionism (Crotty, 1998). Of these, symbolic interactionism fits most closely with the way I view the world. Blumer noted three basic assumptions of symbolic interactionism: (a) Humans act toward things and situations based on the meanings they have for them; (b) meaning is derived from social interaction with others; and (c) individuals understand those meanings by an interpretive process (Blumer, 1969).

Methodologies within Symbolic Interactionist Perspective

There are several methodologies available to the qualitative researcher who is working from a symbolic interactionist perspective. Following are five of these methodological approaches that I considered using for this study of experienced new teachers: grounded theory, phenomenological interview study, ethnography, case study, and portraiture.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory, the first of these methodologies, allows researchers to methodically develop a theory from collected data through a scientific process (Strauss &

Corbin, 1990). The grounded theory method consists of three steps: *open coding*—breaking down the data and examining it, comparing it, and categorizing it; *axial coding*—putting the data back together by making connections between categories and their subcategories; and *selective coding*—making theoretical connections based on the axial-coded data. Methods of data collection for producing grounded theory may include ethnographic inquiry, participant observation, and archival data sources (Strauss & Corbin).

Phenomenological Interview Study

Phenomenological interviewers are interested in understanding the essence of participants' experiences with described situations (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). A phenomenological interview study requires that the researcher conduct in-depth interviews with participants, asking them to describe their experiences with certain situations. The interview is the primary method of data collection for phenomenological interview studies (Denzin & Lincoln).

Ethnography

Ethnography allows researchers to examine participants' cultures, as well as the participants' views of their own cultures (LeCompte, Millroy, & Preissle, 1992). Written ethnographies provide readers with a rich description of participants' lived worlds. Having read these descriptions, readers can understand how to behave within the described cultures. Data collection methods for ethnographers include direct, sustained observations of participants, ethnographic interviews, and the collection of archival pieces (LeCompte, Millroy, & Preissle).

Case Study

Case study researchers are only interested in understanding what can be learned from the specific case, with no intention of generalizing the findings to a larger population (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Data collection methods in case study research include the "main researcher spending time on site, personally in contact with activities and operations of the case, reflecting, revising meanings of what is going on" (Denzin & Lincoln, p. 242.) Interviewing is conducted strictly for the purpose of understanding instances that the researcher did not personally witness (Denzin & Lincoln).

Portraiture

Portraiture is a method that allows the researcher and the participant to co-create a written portrait—a first-person narrative that is shaped by both a participant's experiences and the researcher's thoughts about those experiences (Lawrence- Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Conversational interviews that are guided by the researcher, participant-observation, and a collection of archival data are all methods of data collection in portraiture writing. The procedures of data collection, data analysis, and the writing-up of the data are all pieces of one cyclical process. The researcher is not only looking for emerging themes, but he or she is also keeping the final portrait in mind *while* collecting the data (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis).

A Comparison of These Five Methodologies

Although these five methodologies—grounded theory, phenomenological interview study, ethnography, case study, and portraiture—are all exceptional qualitative methods, I had to determine which one was the most suitable for the present study of experienced new teachers. I compared the approaches on the following topics: the note-

taking requirements, the purpose of the methodology, the focus of the study, the amount of time spent on site, and the presence of the researcher's voice in the final written documents.

Note-taking Requirements

In grounded theory, ethnography, case study, and portraiture, the researcher must write everything down on-site, and then contextualize the information in the final document (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997; LeCompte et al., 1992). With phenomenological interviewing, however, there is no requirement to even go to the "field," as the field is the interview itself (Denzin & Lincoln); this method, therefore, does not allow for the observation of relevant details in the subject's environment.

Purpose of the Methodology

In three of the approaches I examined, the ultimate purpose was to understand the participants' experiences: A grounded theory researcher is interested in the participant's experiences over time or during change (Strauss & Corbin, 1990); a phenomenological interview researcher attempts to understand the *essence* of the participants' experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994); and a portraitist intends to create portraits that share the participants' experiences (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

The remaining two methods—ethnography and case study research—do not necessarily focus on the experiences of participants. For the ethnographer, the participants' experiences are not necessarily the focus of the study. However, the researcher *is* interested in how the participants view their world, and those views are based on their experiences with the world (LeCompte et al., 1992). Case study

researchers do *not* examine the experiences of the participants; they are searching for a specific phenomenon within a situation rather than the individuals' experiences with that phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Focus of Study

In three of the qualitative approaches I examined, the participants themselves are removed from analysis of the data. Both grounded theorists and phenomenological interviewers focus on the participants' issues, not the actual participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). An ethnographer's analytical focus is the *culture* of the participants, rather than the participants themselves (LeCompte et al., 1992). In both case study and portraiture, however, the case—the participant—is the focus, not just his or her experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997).

Amount of Time Spent on Site

Both ethnographic studies and case studies require researchers to spend extensive amounts of time at a site: Ethnographers are expected to describe the *culture* of the participants (LeCompte et al., 1992), and case study researchers are expected to describe the entire case (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). For both types of researchers to accomplish the respective methodological goals, they must spend a lot of time at the research site.

Portraiture does not require such extensive amounts of time at the site. However, portraitists must spend *some* time at the site in order to understand the surrounding world of the participant (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997). Grounded theorists may also spend quite a bit of time at the site when conducting a study, but it is not necessarily part of the method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). And a phenomenological interview study requires no time at

the site, as the researcher could conduct the interviews at any location (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Presence of Researcher's Voice

All five methodological approaches have expectations about the presence of the researcher's voice in the final written document. Grounded theorists, phenomenological interviewers, and case study researchers attempt to leave their own voice out of the write-up as much as possible (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Ethnographers generally include their own voice subtly, although at one time in the history of ethnography, it was not to be heard at all (LeCompte et al., 1992).

Unlike the others, portraiture not only encourages a first-person narrative, but it allows the researcher to make personal comments that add to the readers' understanding of what is occurring at the site (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Although the researcher's voice is never dominating the scene in the portrait, it is not at all removed from the write-up (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis).

Conclusion

After examining each of these five methodologies available to the symbolic interactionist researcher, I concluded that the one most suitable for this study was portraiture. Through constant note-taking at the sites, I would be able to describe the experiences and perspectives of the participants; however, I would not be required to remove their voices from the final analysis. The portraiture method also would require me to observe the participants regularly, but not extensively, causing limited disruption to my own teaching career. In addition, this method would allow me to enhance the reader's

understanding of participants' experiences by occasionally highlighting my own background as an experienced new teacher.

Although I chose to use portraiture as the methodological approach for this study, I realized that pieces of each of the other methods are actually included in a portraiture study. For instance, just as an ethnographer is concerned about the culture of the participant, so is the portraitist; however, the portraitist only examines the culture as it relates to the context of the participants' experiences. Grounded theorists break data apart and put it back together in an organized fashion; so does a portraitist. Even though the essence of the participants' experiences is not the primary focus in a portraiture study, such as it is in a phenomenological interview study, portraitists are concerned about those essences. And just as the case study researcher is specifically interested in examining the case, so is the portraitist. I discovered that portraiture is, largely, a combination of these other qualitative methods—a combination that was most suitable for this study of experienced new teachers.

Overview of Portraiture

The portraiture method allows researchers to describe the experiences of individuals in a first-person, narrative form. According to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), this type of study "has the qualities of an investigation," in that it uses data collection tools to probe into the whole being of a participant (p. 16). Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis further described portraiture as:

> a method of qualitative research that blurs the boundaries of aesthetics and empiricism in an effort to capture the complexity, dynamics, and subtlety of human experience and organizational life. Portraitists seek to record and interpret

> the perspectives and experience of the people they are studying, documenting their voices and their visions—their authority, knowledge, and wisdom. The drawing of the portrait is placed in social and cultural context and shaped through dialogue between the portraitist and the subject, each one negotiating the discourse and shaping the evolving image. The relationship between the two is rich with meaning and resonance and becomes the arena for navigating the empirical, aesthetic, and ethical dimensions of authentic and compelling narrative. (p. xv)

Through the use of portraiture, a participant's life is examined, and a portrait revealing his or her experiences is drawn for audiences to read and explore. In creating these portraits, data collection, analysis, and reporting occur simultaneously. Portraitists reflect on their work in the field, examine emerging themes and situations, and envision the final portrait of each participant. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) stated:

> This ongoing dialect—between data gathering and reflection, between description and analysis—begins in the very early stages of fieldwork (recording the researcher's acclimation to the setting) and lasts throughout the entire research process (until the writing of the final text). The emergent themes grow out of data gathering and synthesis, accompanied by generative reflection and interpretive insights. (p. 188)

A Critical Appraisal of Portraiture

English (2000) argued that portraiture is a less-than-desirable research method on the grounds that portraitists claim to be able to capture essential truth in their research and that boundaries of traditional research methodologies are blurred by the fact that

portraits are written as first-person narratives—and even may include descriptions of the researcher's own experiences.

Recognizing the theoretical stance of the author, however, provides considerable insight into his viewpoints as a researcher. As previously stated, my theoretical assumptions were based on symbolic interactionism—a social science perspective. English (2000), however, openly admitted to writing his critique from a postmodern position—and postmodernism makes markedly different assumptions than symbolic interactionism. According to Taylor and Bogdan (1998), "Postmodernist scholars deconstruct social science writing and hence strip the social scientist, whether quantitative or qualitative, of any claims to authority as an all-knowing observer of the social scene" (p. 15).

Although portraiture purports to create singular narratives of participants, the founder of the method never stated that portraits contain only one truth as discovered by the sole authority—the portraitist. English (2000) himself admitted, "Though not directly stated as such, (Lawrence-Lightfoot believes that) the resulting *portrait* is a literal, encompassing, and stable *truth*" (p. 22).

What English (2000) failed to mention is that in all completed qualitative studies, including portraiture, the researcher is the primary describer of the social scene. Wolcott (1994) said, "In the very act of constructing *data* out of *experience,* the qualitative researcher singles out some things as worthy of note and relegates others to the background" (p. 13). And with those singled-out data, "we create accounts of social life, and in doing so we construct *versions* [italics added] of the social worlds and the social actors that we observe" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 108).

As I wrote the portraits for this study, I clearly recognized and freely admitted that my versions of the participants' social worlds were created through the lens of my own subjectivities and personal experiences. Yet I trusted that my findings were accurate. Glaser and Strauss (1967) asked and answered the following question:

> Why does the researcher trust what he knows? If there is only one sociologist involved, he himself knows what he knows about what he has studied and lived through. They are his perceptions, his personal experiences, and his own hard-won analyses. (p. 225)

Although English (2000) also expressed disagreement with the use of the researcher's own voice, Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) believed that openly identifying "the shaping hand of the artist" may be a worthwhile endeavor (p. 14). Levine (1981) noted that any information collected from participants would be filtered through the relationship between the researcher and the participant. The act of acknowledging this influential interpersonal relationship, as well as the researcher's own previous experience that could potentially influence data analysis, can easily serve to enhance readers' understandings of the findings.

Context of the Study

In determining the context of this study, I considered portraiture's focus on examining the "good," rather than making areas of weakness the primary focus of the study. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) comment on this emphasis, stating:

> Portraiture resists [the] tradition-laden effort to document failure. It is an intentionally generous and eclectic process that begins by searching for what is good and healthy and assumes that the expression of goodness will always be

> laced with imperfections. The researcher who asks first "what is good here?" is likely to absorb a very different reality than the one who is on a mission to discover the sources of failure. (p. 9)

It is important to note that portraits do not ultimately become "documents of idealization or celebration. In examining the dimensionality and complexity of goodness there will, of course, be ample evidence of vulnerability and weakness" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 9). It is not the case that portraiture looks only at the "good;" rather, it finds vulnerabilities within the context of strengths.

Site Selection

I chose to study Cyprus County, a school system in Northeast Georgia that provided an induction program for both first-year teachers and experienced new teachers. Although I did not know at the beginning of the study to what extent Cyprus County administrators distinguished first-year teacher induction from experienced new teacher induction, I knew that they offered the program to both groups of new teachers.

Participant Selection

Kvale (1996) and Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) discussed the difficulty in choosing the appropriate number of participants for a qualitative study. Kvale suggested that the number of participants depends on the purpose of the study; researchers should examine as many participants as necessary to answer the research question. However, Kvale warned researchers of examining too many participants: "If the number of subjects is too large, then it is not possible to make penetrating interpretations" of the data (p. 102).

Kvale (1996) suggested that qualitative research studies focus on a few individual cases, a practice which makes it "possible to investigate in detail the relationship of a specific behavior to its context to work out the logic of the relationship between the individual and the situation" (p. 103). According to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), "the portraitist is very interested in the single case because she believes that embedded in it the reader will discover resonant universal themes. The more specific, the more subtle the description, the more likely it is to evoke identification" (p. 14). Based on these premises, I chose to gather a much more in-depth account of three participants' experiences, rather than attempt to gain a large amount of superficial information from many participants.

The three participants in this study shared four characteristics. They all: (a) Were new to the Cyprus County School System during the 2001-2002 school year; (b) were female; (c) taught in a separate elementary school in Cyprus County; and (d) had between 6 and 13 years of teaching experience. The purpose for limiting participation in this study to these four requirements was to control for differences in perspective that may have been caused more by gender, age-level taught, and years of teaching than by their current situation of being experienced new teachers.

I have identified these three participants as Stephanie Roberts from River's End Elementary, Michelle Perry from Oakwood Elementary, and Ann Jones from Newberry Elementary. All names mentioned in this study—including school, city, and county names—have been changed for purposes of confidentiality. The following section highlights information about each participant's school.

River's End Elementary School.

River's End Elementary School was originally founded as Shell Elementary School in the early 1900s. In January of 1994, the school's main building was destroyed by fire. Temporary provisions for administrative offices and classrooms were made for the remainder of the year. The new River's End Elementary School, which was already under construction at the time of the fire, was completed in the summer of 1994, and was ready for students in grades K through five the following school year.

River's End Elementary has maintained a fairly stable student enrollment of approximately 500 students each year. At the time of this study, River's End had 464 students. Approximately 30% of the students at River's End were eligible for the federal free and reduced breakfast and lunch program.

Students at River's End Elementary attended classes from 7:55 a.m. until 2:45 p.m. Teachers were required to be at the school from 7:50 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. There was a forty-five minute planning period for classroom teachers each day while students participated in a rotation of art, music, and physical education. Each class had a thirty-minute lunch period, and teachers had duty-free lunch. Students also received thirty minutes of media instruction each week.

My first perception of River's End Elementary was that it was a beautiful and welcoming place. It was nestled in a mountain setting, and the lawn was well landscaped and contained some butterfly bushes. The classroom windows had curtains in them, and the building looked like new.

Oakwood Elementary School.

Oakwood Elementary was established in 1986 by merging students from two other small community schools. It was the first completely new elementary school built in Cyprus County since 1948. Enrollment statistics indicated that a small segment of the student population at Oakwood was from highly transient families. Excluding this mobile segment of students, the average student had attended Oakwood Elementary most of his or her school career. At the time of this study, Oakwood Elementary School's student enrollment was 545 students, with 43% receiving free or reduced meals.

The school day at Oakwood lasted from 8:00 a.m. until 2:40 p.m. Teachers had flexibility in scheduling classroom activities other than school-wide activities such as lunch. Teachers had planning time while their students attended art, music, or physical education classes, and had duty-free lunch on four out of the five school days each week.

Oakwood Elementary School looked as though it had been built years before; its exterior appearance was bland. When I first arrived, there were parents sitting outside of the entrance doors, but no staff members visible outside of the building.

As I walked down the hall, I noticed that the walls were especially colorful. Creative items hung outside most of the classrooms spotlighted the children's work. Because the children had not yet been released to go to their classrooms, there were children lining both sides of the halls; the hallway was very loud. Teachers' rooms were well marked and easy to find.

Newberry Elementary School.

Newberry Elementary School served a multicultural population of 500 students, who lived primarily in Newberry's low-income housing projects and mobile home parks.

Sixty-four percent of students qualified for free or reduced-price meals. However, there were also students attending Newberry Elementary who lived in affluent neighborhoods.

The school day at Newberry lasted from 7:50 a.m. until 2:40 p.m. Teachers had planning time while their students attended art, music, or physical education classes. Teachers were required to sit in the cafeteria while their students ate lunch, but were compensated for not having "duty-free lunch" by being allowed to leave school at 3:00 p.m. each day.

The area surrounding Newberry Elementary looked much different than the communities around the other two schools I had visited. The town looked very run down, with many dilapidated businesses and homes lining the street. Arriving at Newberry Elementary was also a challenge, because there was only one entrance to handle parking cars, student drop-offs, and buses.

Upon entering the office, I found the secretary to be very friendly. She asked the P.E. teacher if he would escort me to Ms. Jones' room, and he agreed. While we were walking to Ann's classroom, I noticed that there were many beautiful paintings and murals on the wall. There was another nice touch: Every teacher had a handmade sign hanging on the wall just outside his or her classroom. The school felt very welcoming.

Additional Cyprus County Information.

Cyprus County is a small, rural community located in the foothills of northeast Georgia. The county seat is Newberry, and the county population is approximately 25,600. Cyprus County is primarily a manufacturing area with a diversity of industries.

Educational institutions in this community include four elementary schools, one middle school, one high school, and one alternative school. The total public school

enrollment is approximately 4,300. Three community colleges are located in Cyprus County, and there are also ample preschool opportunities available to four-year-olds within the community.

Data Collection

Because portraitists look "carefully, absorbing details of sight, sound, and ambiance—always collecting more information than will find its way into the final portrayal" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 61), I immediately attempted to acclimate myself to the school's environment, noticing as much as possible, and noting my initial thoughts and impressions in detail.

During the data collection process:

I observed the participants as they taught and as they interacted with colleagues, students, and parents for three full-length school days. These observations occurred between August and October of the 2001-2002 school year.

I conducted three semi-structured interviews with each participant between the months of August and October 2001. These interviews included questions about the participants' experiences in their new school, their family lives, and their feelings about themselves and their work. Interview questions were also guided by my observations of the participants.

At the onset of this study, I was open to the possibility of visiting each site and interviewing each participant more than three times if it seemed necessary. However, during my third visit with each teacher, I discovered that little information was being added to the data that had already been collected, and I realized that it was time to end the data collection process of the study.

Data Analysis

In the portraiture method, the key elements of data analysis are: coding and categorizing data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996), and discovering and describing broad themes (Wolcott, 1994).

Coding and Categorizing Data

Coffey and Atkinson (1996) stated that the first step of data analysis was to create clear preliminary categories within the data. I accomplished this step by way of a careful, deliberate process.

Immediately after my first visit with each participant, I expanded my observation notes and set them aside. I then transcribed the interview with that teacher and read the transcription thoroughly, noting in the margins any categories that seemed to be emerging.

As an example, this is a list of categories that I noted in the margins of the transcription of my first interview with Ann: (a) background, (b) previous teaching experience, (c) Cyprus County information, (d) analogy of "family," (e) personal, (f) frustration, (g) mentor, (h) reading program, (i) language arts, (j) administration, (k) positive reinforcement, (l) committees, (m) induction, (n) interactions with administration, (o) e-mail, (p) students, (q) meeting during planning time, (r) never moving again, (s) future, and (t) relationship with colleagues.

From this initial list of categories, I combined any that seemed to belong together. For example, "meeting during planning time" became a part of the "frustrations" category. Other categories needed to be separated so that they were less broad. For example, a new category termed "the way it's always been done" emerged from the

preliminary category entitled “frustrations.” Other initial categories were eliminated altogether when a statement that at first seemed to belong to one category seemed upon subsequent readings to belong to a totally different category.

Once I felt comfortable with a preliminary list of categories, I assigned each category a color, using a marker or a highlighter. This is the preliminary list of the categories from Ann’s first interview, followed by their assigned colors: (a) background, underlined in purple; (b) previous teaching experience, highlighted in pink; (c) Cyprus County information, highlighted in green; (d) relationships with other teachers analogous to a family, underlined in gray; (e) personal, underlined in black; (f) frustrations, highlighted in orange; (g) mentor/induction, underlined in green; (h) reading program, underlined in blue; (i) teaching language arts, underlined in brown; (j) “the way it’s always been done,” underlined in orange; (k) relationship with administration, underlined in red; (l) about Ann’s students, underlined in pink; and (m) relationships with colleagues, highlighted in yellow.

With that list completed, I printed a fresh copy of the interview and systematically assigned each statement the participant had made to a category, marking each statement with the appropriate color. I found that some statements belonged in more than one category, and marked those statements with both colors. During this process, I occasionally made additional categorical changes as I re-examined each sentence within its context.

After completing those steps of data analysis with the interview, I set aside both copies of the interview—the one with the preliminary notes in the margins and the one

that had been categorized by colors. I then followed an identical analytical process with the expanded observation notes that I had earlier set aside.

This is the list of categories that I wrote in the margin of my expanded observation notes from my first observation of Ann: (a) information about Newberry, (b) personal, (c) background, (d) class activities, (e) relationship with colleagues, (f) relationship with administration, (g) relationship with students, (h) materials, (i) frustration, (j) induction, (k) interaction with colleagues, and (l) my interactions with colleagues/administration.

I combined and organized this list as I had done with the list of categories from the interview, and assigned a color to each of the categories. This is the complied list of categories from my first observation of Ann: (a) about Newberry, highlighted in green; (b) personal, underlined in black; (c) background, underlined in purple; (d) class activities, underlined in brown; (e) relationship with colleagues, highlighted in yellow; (f) relationship with administration, underlined in red; (g) relationship with students, underlined in blue; (h) frustrations, highlighted in orange; (i) induction/mentoring, underlined in green; (j) about Ann's students, underlined in pink; and (k) my interaction with colleagues/administrators, highlighted in pink.

Once I had a color-coded copy of both the first interview and the first observation, I moved to the next step of analysis: compiling the data from each category into one working document that organized the data under appropriate headings. These headings included all of the categories from the first interview and observation.

I then placed every statement and every observation in its appropriate category. The participants' words were placed in quotation marks to distinguish between

information obtained in the interview and information obtained by my observation. The following example shows information compiled into the "personal" category in the working document after my first visit with Ann:

1. When Ann and her husband had been married for seven years, they adopted a girl named Desirae (whom she taught in the 5th grade) a year after she'd taught her. At that time, Ann and her husband had been married for 7 years. She told me that they had to really work hard to get Desirae into their family. DFACS told her that it would never work, that she'd never form attachments, etc. But Ann knew she would be able to do that, because she'd taught her the year before. And although Desirae was a rough child in the classroom, and she and Ann butted heads quite a bit, she knew it could work for her to come live with her. It took almost a year for that to happen, and almost another year for her to be adopted. (She had to go through the Governor and all kinds of other red tape.) Exactly one year after the adoption took place, her first son was born. The most recent baby was a surprise, and Ann had a cesarean section earlier this summer.
2. "Another reason I left Marshall was because I wanted to be closer to home, because by then I had *two* kids, and I didn't realize how hard it was (the drive). But they had teacher day care in Marshall County, so Kenny went to work with me, and he was there. The school was right across the street, so I could go eat lunch with him, if I wanted. That was really nice."
3. "Although most of the experienced teachers at Marshall moved down to third grade so they could stay at the old school, *I'm* not gonna teach that low. Not for anybody."

4. “I enjoy fifth better. The kids are a little bit more mature. Of course, they’re more smart-alecky, but I like them better.”
5. Ann told me that she is really into brain-based learning. She has a sofa, a chair, and lamps that she usually puts in the classroom, because brain-based research states that those items enhance learning.
6. It seems as if Ann is pretty laid back about things. She’s not a “harsh” disciplinarian, unless she has to be.
7. Ann and I talked about how she wants to be a principal. If she could, she’d skip the assistant principalship altogether, because she wants to be the “big boss.” She explained that that won’t happen in Cyprus County, because you have to go through an act of Congress. But she would go back to Marshall County, and she felt sure they would allow her to do that. Ann plans to begin her leadership classes this upcoming summer.

After completing a second visit with each participant, I replicated the steps I followed in analyzing the first visit: I read through the interview and the observation notes, noting possible categories in the margins; I prepared a list of preliminary categories from the interview and the observation notes, assigning a color to each one; I completed a second read-through of the interview and the observation notes, color-coding every statement; and I used these color-coded pieces of data to add new information to the compiled document, which I began to refer to as that teacher’s “story.” To distinguish between the compiled information of the first visit and the second visit, I inserted all of the new information in italics. The following is a list of the items in the “Personal” category of Ann’s story after the second visit:

1. When Ann and her husband had been married for seven years, they adopted a girl named Desirae (whom she taught in the 5th grade) a year after she'd taught her. At that time, Ann and her husband had been married for 7 years. She told me that they had to really work hard to get Desirae into their family. DFACS told her that it would never work, that she'd never form attachments, etc. But Ann knew she would be able to do that, because she'd taught her the year before. And although Desirae was a rough child in the classroom, and she and Ann had butted heads quite a bit, she knew it could work for her to come live with her. It took almost a year for that to happen, and almost another year for her to be adopted. (She had to go through the Governor and all kinds of other red tape.) Exactly one year after the adoption took place, her first son was born. The most recent baby was surprise, and Ann had a cesarean section earlier this summer.
2. *Ann said that she and her husband want to have a fourth child. She also told me that she'd had laparoscopy done to see if she was O.K. Somehow that must have worked things out, because she was pregnant in two weeks. When her first child was born, the doctor said, "Well, that probably won't happen again." The most recent time she was pregnant, it was a surprise. When this one was born, the doctor said, "Well, that probably won't happen again." She told him to hush.*
3. "Another reason I left Marshall was because I wanted to be closer to home, because by then I had two kids, and I didn't realize how hard it was (the drive). But they had teacher day care in Marshall County, so Kenny went to work with me, and he was there. The school was right across the street, so I could go eat lunch with him, if I wanted. That was really nice."

4. “Although most of the experienced teachers at Marshall moved down to third grade so they could stay at the old school, I’m not gonna teach that low. Not for anybody.”
5. “I enjoy fifth better. The kids are a little bit more mature. Of course, they’re more smart-alecky, but I like them better.”
6. Ann told me that she is really into brain-based learning. She has a sofa, a chair, and lamps that she usually puts in the classroom, because brain-based research states that those items enhance learning.
7. It seems as if Ann is pretty laid back about things. She’s not a “harsh” disciplinarian, unless she has to be.
8. Ann and I talked about how she wants to be a principal. If she could, she’d skip the assistant principalship altogether, because she wants to be the “big boss.” She explained that that won’t happen in Cyprus County, because you have to go through an act of Congress. But she would go back to Marshall County, and she felt sure they would allow her to do that. Ann plans to begin her leadership classes this upcoming summer.
9. *Ann told me that when she was the principal, she wanted a BIG sign for her parking place with bells on the side and everything!*
10. *Ann said that she hoped she would make life easier for teachers when she became a principal, rather than harder. She also said she’d have to be careful not to be too power hungry. (I find that interesting, because she’s not that way with her students.)*

11. *Ann mentioned at one point that she wanted to call the special education director and ask what to do about the fact that her resource students aren't getting any science or social studies. She said, "But then I'd be the bad guy when the school gets in trouble. Of course, I've been the bad guy before."*

After the third visit, I repeated these data analysis steps. Once again, I distinguished the new information from the previous information by inserting it in italics. This is an example of the "Personal" category of Ann's Story after the third visit:

1. When Ann and her husband had been married for seven years, they adopted a girl named Desirae (whom she taught in the 5th grade) a year after she'd taught her. At that time, Ann and her husband had been married for 7 years. She told me that they had to really work hard to get Desirae into their family. DFACS told her that it would never work, that she'd never form attachments, etc. But Ann knew she would be able to do that, because she'd taught her the year before. And although Desirae was a rough child in the classroom, and she and Ann had butted heads quite a bit, she knew it could work for her to come live with her. It took almost a year for that to happen, and almost another year for her to be adopted. (She had to go through the Governor and all kinds of other red tape.) Exactly one year after the adoption took place, her first son was born. The most recent baby was surprise, and Ann had a cesarean section earlier this summer.
2. Ann said that she and her husband want to have a fourth child. She also told me that she'd had laparoscopy done to see if she was O.K. Somehow that must have worked things out, because she was pregnant in two weeks. When her first child was born, the doctor said, "Well, that probably won't happen again." The most

recent time she was pregnant, it was a surprise. When this one was born, the doctor said, "Well, that probably won't happen again." She told him to hush.

3. "Another reason I left Marshall was because I wanted to be closer to home, because by then I had two kids, and I didn't realize how hard it was (the drive). But they had teacher day care in Marshall County, so Kenny went to work with me, and he was there. The school was right across the street, so I could go eat lunch with him, if I wanted. That was really nice."
4. *Ann's husband called her at 11:05 and told her that he was ready for her to come home because the kids were driving him crazy! He wanted to know when she was coming home. She told him she had to stay at school until 3:30 or maybe a little later!*
5. "Although most of the experienced teachers at Marshall moved down to third grade so they could stay at the old school, I'm not gonna teach that low. Not for anybody."
6. "I enjoy fifth better. The kids are a little bit more mature. Of course, they're more smart-alecky, but I like them better."
7. *"I'm not anybody who sits down and plans a week ahead. If I think of something, that's just what I do."*
8. Ann told me that she is really into brain-based learning. She has a sofa, a chair, and lamps that she usually puts in the classroom, because brain-based research states that those items enhance learning.
9. It seems as if Ann is pretty laid back about things. She's not a "harsh" disciplinarian, unless she has to be.

10. Ann talked about how she wants to be a principal. She'd like to skip the assistant principalship altogether, because she wants to be the "big boss." She explained that that won't happen in Cyprus County, because you have to go through an act of Congress. But she would go back to Marshall County, and she felt sure they would allow her to do that. Ann will begin her leadership classes this summer.
11. Ann told me that when she was the principal, she wanted a BIG sign for her parking place with bells on the side and everything!
12. Ann said that she hoped she would make life easier for teachers when she became a principal, rather than harder. She also said she'd have to be careful not to be too power hungry. (That's interesting, because she's not that way with her students.)
13. Ann mentioned at one point that she wanted to call the special education director and ask what to do about the fact that her resource students aren't getting any science or social studies. She said, "But then I'd be the bad guy when the school gets in trouble. Of course, I've been the bad guy before."
14. *I asked Ann how she raised $2500 for March of Dimes, because when I spoke to her last, she told me that Newberry was very unprepared for the fund drive. She told me that they told her, "We CAN'T win." She insisted that she could—she's very competitive! Newberry Elementary School raised the most money of all the schools in the county.*
15. *"I have enough stuff to worry about without worrying about what somebody thinks, cause I don't care. My husband says, 'You have to care.' I said, 'I really don't care.' If I offend somebody, I care, but if it's just the way I dress, I don't care. You dress the way you want, I'll dress the way I want, and it'll be fine."*

16. *"If I have something to tell them, I'll tell them to their face."*

17. *Ann loves to get out of the school for a little while during the school day.*

Developing Broad Themes

Wolcott (1994) described the importance of taking the coded and categorized data and looking beyond those pieces to develop broad, general themes. I began developing these themes for each participant during the coding and categorizing process.

After I had inserted all of the information I had gathered from the second visit with each teacher, I printed a copy of that teacher's story and used scissors to cut it into sections (e.g., "background," "personal," etc.) I spread the sections out so that I could clearly see all of data within each of the categories. I then merged the categories into emerging themes. Following is a list of those themes and their categories as they appeared after my second visit with Ann: (a) *Part One: "Before Coming to Newberry Elementary,"* which included categories containing information about Ann's background, her previous teaching experiences, and her relationships with other teachers as analogous to a "family;" (b) *Part Two: "Ann's Frustrations, Her Family, and Her Future,"* which included information regarding Ann's frustrations and personal information; (c) *Part Three: "Fitting In,"* which contained data concerning Ann's relationships and interactions with colleagues, her relationship with school administration, her relationships with her students, her interactions with parents, and her relationships with her mentors, as well as information about the induction process; and (d) *Part Four: "About Newberry Elementary School/Cyprus County,"* including Cyprus County and Newberry information, my interactions with colleagues and administration, and classroom activities.

As I created and placed information into these broad themes, I could see that the portraits were beginning to take shape. However, I was unable to develop a firm outline of each story until I visited each teacher for the third time and inserted the newly analyzed information into her story. Once all data had been compiled into each teacher's story, I put Michelle's story and Ann's story aside and focused strictly on Stephanie's story.

I read Stephanie's story in its entirety, recalling her vocal inflections, her tears, and other specific moments during my observation. I then left the data for a time and wrote an outline of the topics that stood out most to me about Stephanie. After I had sketched an outline from my memory about Stephanie and her experiences, I read Stephanie's story once again, expanding my outline with examples, quotes, and topics that my memory had failed to provide. In completing this step, I was reminded of the analogy that Goetz and LeCompte (1984) used for this stage:

> Once a researcher has established the categories within which the data are organized and has sorted all bits of data into relevant categories, the ethnography as a portrayal of a complex whole phenomenon begins to emerge. The process is analogous to assembling a jigsaw puzzle. The edge pieces are located first and assembled to provide a frame of reference. Then attention is devoted to those more striking aspects of the puzzle picture that can be identified readily from the mass of puzzle pieces and assembled separately. Next, having stolen some surreptitious glances at the picture on the box, the puzzle worker places the assembled parts in their general position within the frame and, finally, locates and adds the connecting pieces until no holes remain. (p. 191-192)

Creating the Portraits

After "putting the pieces of the puzzle together," I began to carefully examine the picture that had developed. As Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) described it:

> Slowly the skeleton of the story would begin to emerge, filled in over time by detailed evidence, subtle description, and multiple perspectives. At this point the task would shift from one of searching for evidence and distilling themes to one of compositions and aesthetic form, from finding the plot to telling the story. (p. 17-18)

Because of all of the preliminary work I had already completed, this process came easily. However, it was important for me to consistently examine the flow of the writing to be certain that I was creating a verbal portrait with words, rather than a collage of topics.

In writing the three stories, I also tried to keep in mind the key features important in portraiture writing: contextual information, relationship with the audience, and voice.

Contextual Information

While I was in the field collecting data, I wrote down every possible piece of information I gathered. However, not all of those pieces proved pertinent to the final portrait. According to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), "the portraitist needs to consider the question, 'Will this description inform the reader's understanding of the site or subject as it is portrayed herein?'" (p. 63). Therefore, as I attempted to describe each experienced new teacher within the context of her external world, I had to sift through the analyzed data and decide which contextual factors were salient to the research question.

Relationship with the Audience

It was my intention that this study would provide useful insights into the lives of experienced new teachers, and would therefore be beneficial to not only educational leaders and professors of educational leaders, but also to mentors and colleagues of experienced new teachers. Just as a novelist attempts to create a plot and a setting to which the reader can relate, a portraitist creates a narrative hoping to draw a correlation between the characters' lives and the lives of the readers. One of the reasons I was drawn to the portraiture method was its "reader-friendly" stance. As Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis (1997) noted:

> With its focus on narrative, with its use of metaphor and symbol, portraiture intends to address wider, more eclectic audiences. The attempt is to move beyond academy's inner circle, to speak in a language that is not coded or exclusive, and to develop texts that will seduce the readers into thinking more deeply about issues that concern them. Portraitists write to inform and inspire readers. (p. 9-10)

Voice

There are six voices that Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) suggested portraitists use when writing-up the data. They are: (a) Voice as witness, the researcher's account of what is happening; (b) voice as interpretation, the researcher's interpretation; (c) voice as preoccupation, the ways the researcher's background helps the researcher describe what he or she sees; (d) voice as autobiography, sharing the researcher's story when it illuminates the participants' stories; (e) voice listening for voice, the researcher's experience of listening for a story rather than to one; and (f) voice in dialogue, stating the researcher's voice and the participant's in dialogue.

In writing portraits, I attempted to use these six voices interchangeably, placing myself "in the picture—not in the center dominating the action and overwhelming the scene, but on the edge witnessing what is happening and revealing (my) angle of vision" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 59).

Data Analysis, Part Two

After writing all three portraits, I re-read each one thoroughly, looking for areas of connection between the frustrations, concerns, and experiences of the three participants. At first, I was merely able to identify some general themes related to each of the teachers. After additional time and reflection, I was able to connect some of the underlying issues related to these three participants and their levels of satisfaction as experienced new teachers.

Authenticity of Study

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) posited that portraitists can ensure credibility with their readers by "capturing the essence and resonance of the actors' experience and perspective through the details of action and thought revealed in context" (p. 12). These authors described "resonance" as a "click of recognition" (p. 247). In other words, the researcher's work is authentic when it resonates with both the participant and the audience. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis noted:

> The portraits are shaped through dialogue between the portraitist and the subject, each one participating in the drawing of the image. The encounter between the two is rich with meaning and resonance and is crucial to the success and authenticity of the rendered piece. (p. 3)

In the view of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), this is "the portraitist's standard, then…one of *authenticity*," rather than validity and reliability (p. 12).

Conclusion

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) pointed out the importance of creating portraits that reflect genuine, carefully designed efforts to discover truth:

> In constructing the aesthetic whole, the portraitist seeks a portrayal that is believable, that makes sense, that causes the "click of recognition." We refer to this "yes, of course" experience as *resonance*, and we see the standard as one of authenticity. The portraitist hopes to develop a rich portrayal that will have resonance (in different ways, from different perspectives) with three audiences: with the actors who will see themselves reflected in the story, with the readers who will see no reason to disbelieve it, and with the portraitist herself, whose deep knowledge of the setting and self-critical stance allow her to see the "truth value" in her work. (p. 247)

CHAPTER 4

STEPHANIE

"I am a teacher. A teacher is someone who leads. There is no magic here. I do not walk on water. I do not part the sea. I just love children."

—Marva Collins

Getting to Know Stephanie

I spoke to Stephanie for the first time during the summer of 2001. She had such a bright and bubbly personality that I was really looking forward to meeting her and observing her. She said that she loved the idea of a study about experienced new teachers. She had mentored several teachers in her former school who were new to the school and who had some experience. She knew there were struggles that those teachers had to handle that most experienced teachers didn't even recognize as issues. She expressed confidence that this study would benefit education.

Personality

As I spent time with Stephanie, I began to discover the underlying personality traits that shaped her beliefs and actions. For instance, on the day I met with Stephanie's assistant principal, she told me what a "hard worker" Stephanie was—a characteristic that I, too, had noticed during my observations of her.

Her strong work ethic, however, was balanced by a refusal to stay at a job where she was unhappy. Stephanie said, "I will turn and I will walk away before I get to where I

hate coming to a job." This is due, in part, to Stephanie's desire to give her best effort towards whatever she does. She remarked:

> You should go into a job with the attitude that, "Whatever I do, I'm going to give my best." My best may not be your best. Your best may not be my best, but it's going to be my *best* to do that job, because that's the trust that you put into me when you gave me this job.

Stephanie described herself as having a "sensory-feeling" personality type. She said that she had a strong need for friends, and noted that when people "push her buttons" she reacts more strongly than others might react.

Another facet of Stephanie's personality is that she "doesn't do well with change. It can be frustrating." She asked:

> Have you ever felt homesick? You know that feeling, that deep down gnawing in your stomach kind of thing? I get that feeling when I go to make a change like moving to a new place. A homesick, depressed type.

Stephanie said that one of the reasons she didn't like change was because her dad was in the Air Force, so her family moved constantly. By the time she was 11 years old, Stephanie had lived in four or five homes, and she did not want to move anymore. She despised "not having the same friends," and she was disappointed with "not having family get-togethers." She said that she just didn't have any roots. She explained:

> That's just part of that yearning to belong somewhere; so when I get somewhere and I've been there for a while, even though it's not the best place for me at that time, at least I have roots. So I don't want to yank those up, and lose that comfort feeling.

Many times in conversation, Stephanie would discuss her childhood with me. Her childhood experiences have affected her views on the world.

Stephanie came from a situation familiar to many of today's students: She had a single mother who had to work long hours to make ends meet. Stephanie regularly made dinner for herself and her younger brother and sister. She said, "Sometimes, there wasn't food in the cabinet, so I would stop and get a can of creamed corn, and we would have creamed corn and loaf bread for supper."

Because Stephanie's mother had little education, she was unable to help Stephanie and her siblings with their homework; however, she still insisted that they do it. Although school was not difficult for Stephanie, she hated it. She tearfully described her years in school in less than glowing terms:

> I was so bored in school, and I can't even remember how I was taught to read. I just did it. I was a little robot child. When they said write, I wrote it. I don't even remember one teacher I had in school, except for that one in high school, and you know why I remember her? Because she was our cheerleading coach. That's where she reached me, as a cheerleading coach. Not as a teacher. I don't remember any teacher. None of them touched me. I was one of those children that needed somebody to say, "You can be better than what you live in." Not one person encouraged me to go to college. Not one person ever said I had what it took. Not one. And I was a straight-A student. It came easy to me. I graduated a year early out of high school just to get out, cause I knew I'd quit if I didn't.

When Stephanie finished high school, she became a waitress. It occurred to her, however, that waiting tables was not the career she wanted to have when she was 65

years old. She went to school to get an Associates Degree in accounting when she was 22 years old, but came to realize that "with an Associates Degree, you can only go so far. They just won't pay you. It doesn't matter how much knowledge you have."

When Stephanie was 33 years old, she went back to school to complete a Bachelor's Degree in education. Although she had no desire to teach at that time, she hoped that a degree in education would open some doors for her in the future. However, most of Stephanie's accounting coursework would not transfer, so her new degree required a great deal of additional work. She said, "I had to complete 101 hours plus student teaching. I did it in two-and-a-half years. So I have 168 college credit hours, and I only get credit for a Bachelor's. But, it's O.K., I have all that experience."

Despite Stephanie's initial lack of interest in actually becoming a teacher, during her student teaching experience she began to "hear a calling" to the field of teaching. She said, "I knew that's where I was supposed to be. And the religious thing…I knew that's what I had been born to do."

Previous Teaching Experiences

Stephanie started teaching at Marcus P. Elder Elementary School in South Carolina at the age of 35. Her first year was not a successful one for many reasons. First, Stephanie had been asked when she was hired to be a mediator between teachers on her team who did not get along. And there were other problems. This is how she described her first year of teaching:

> It was horrid. I wanted to teach so bad that I was willing to take whatever position came my way, and it turned out that a fifth grade position came available in the middle of October. So I took it temporarily. The other four fifth grade teachers

> gave me five each of their children. So I had a classroom filled with children that had different sets of rules. And plus I only had two weeks to get my classroom ready, and I worked at my job the two week notice, and so I was there every night. I walked into a portable with nothing. Not even the desks. And the carpet was filthy. So my mom and I even cleaned the carpet and made curtains and bought posters just to try to make it look like a classroom in two weeks. So I had absolutely no plan, and they did not have a set of standards there. So there wasn't a list that said, "This is what you taught." And the teachers were very protective of their stuff and did not want to share. And so I would create lessons, on my own, a lone man, and it took me a while to establish my place on their turf.

Although her first year was difficult, Stephanie changed grade levels within a few years, and her situation drastically improved. She was working alongside teachers with whom she had developed solid relationships, and that made all the difference. She explained that "in South Carolina, I had a team, and we worked together to plan two weeks of materials. In two hours, everything was copied and ready to go for two weeks!"

Transitioning to Cyprus County

By her sixth year of teaching in South Carolina, Stephanie had begun to grow dissatisfied with a reading program her principal wanted the teachers to use. In addition, Stephanie had married a man and had moved to Newberry from her home near her school in South Carolina. Driving forty minutes to work soon became burdensome, and she had done that for almost a year. Because of the situation with the reading program, Stephanie decided that this would be a good time for her to move to a school closer to home. She

applied in Cyprus County in February 2001 and began teaching at River's End in the fall of that year.

Life Situation

In addition to Stephanie's job change, there were other factors affecting her life during the course of this study. She began the early stages of menopause at the beginning of the school year. She said, "This crazy hormonal thing…Oh, let's throw in menopause at the age of 42!" She said several times that she felt like she was crying on my shoulder because of the stress she was experiencing and because of her fluctuating hormones. At the time of the study, Stephanie's asthma was also causing her significant problems: She was getting up twice each night to use a nebulizer to help her breathe.

In addition, Stephanie's oldest son was in the Navy aboard an aircraft carrier at the time of the September 11th terrorist attacks on the United States. She mentioned to me that she was concerned about her son's safety, but that she had tried not to constantly worry about it—although it was a source of stress for her.

Passion for Thematic Teaching

As I observed Stephanie during the first three months of school, I found her to be an effective thematic teacher. She conducted her classroom so that she was teaching math, science, social studies, and language arts concurrently. For instance, when I arrived at Stephanie's classroom on my first visit, she proudly showed me pictures her students had drawn of "underground communities." The students had been studying America's "Bill of Rights" in social studies, and Stephanie had asked them to create their own "Bill of Rights" for a fictional underground community. The students were to write a "Bill of Rights" (which used language arts skills), draw a map of the underground community

(using math to show the distance between the corner drug store and the sheriff's office), and explain why their "Bill of Rights" was appropriate for this particular underground community (which incorporated social studies).

Another thematic unit I observed Stephanie teach was about the planets of the solar system. During my second visit to River's End Elementary, Stephanie was teaching "planet math" to her students by asking students questions such as, "How far is your planet from the sun?" She also taught "planet vocabulary" by asking questions like, "What's another word for far?" and the children knew the answer was "distant." To culminate the unit on planets, each student was to think of ways to create a sales ad for his or her planet. The ads were to include all the selling features of the planet. For instance, the ad for Pluto might have read, "Don't worry about the –356 degree temperature outside… we have hot tubs!" (One student pointed out that there was no power source on Pluto, but Stephanie reminded them that they were just imagining.) The students also were required to draw a picture of their planets in the center of the ad, for which they had to use a compass. (Using a compass is part of the math curriculum in fourth grade.) The students seemed excited about the entire day's activities about planets, and they were actively involved in learning.

An Overview of My Experiences with Stephanie

I felt as though I knew Stephanie very well by the end of our third visit together. Although she exhibited a real passion for teaching, she struggled considerably during her first three months as an experienced new teacher.

Some of my experiences with Stephanie included recognizing areas where she felt unsupported as a thematic teacher in a school where thematic teaching was not

acceptable; understanding her strong aversion to "book" teaching methods; discovering what motivated her to continue to teach thematically; empathizing with her struggles that were unrelated to thematic teaching (e.g., the hiring process, a lack of information, proving herself); and recognizing her most prevalent question throughout the study, "Why did I move here?"

Stephanie's Lack of Support as a Thematic Teacher

Although Stephanie enjoyed teaching thematically, she explained that thematic teaching is not easy. Stephanie came to realize that she needed support from two groups of individuals to effectively teach thematically: her administrators and her colleagues.

Administrative Support

When Stephanie taught thematically in South Carolina, she had all the administrative support she needed. She said that her former administrators were wonderful mentors who encouraged her to teach using thematic units—even securing a grant to help get needed materials.

One of Stephanie's most prevalent concerns before coming to River's End Elementary was whether she would have the support and encouragement of her new administration. If she did not have it, she knew the administrators might demand that she teach strictly from books.

When I first visited Stephanie, she wholeheartedly believed that she had the support of her principal—Mr. Fields. She thought she was hired to come to River's End to change some things at the school. She said,

> I got the impression from Mr. Fields that they wanted things differently. I was not encouraged to go to any teacher to get help. I think they were just trying to

> discourage me from trying to pick up old habits of things they were wanting to break.

Stephanie told me that the reason Mr. Fields hired her was because he had seen her portfolio with some of her previous activities. “He said that was what these kids need,” she explained.

But by my second visit, Stephanie’s ideas about her administrators were different. She said:

> I think the biggest change is having talked with Mr. Fields about his expectations and finding out that what I thought, when I thought we were in sync, turned out not to be: that book teaching is something he’s encouraging me to do through the reading and the math. And that’s not what I want to be doing as a teacher. I want to be more integrated thematically, and no other subjects are more easily incorporated into other subjects than math and reading. So when you separate those from your thematic unit, then you’ve really eliminated a lot of what you could have integrated. You’re back to teaching mainly subjects and not an integration of those.

Stephanie told me that she had argued her point, unsuccessfully, during her meeting with Mr. Fields:

> I kept saying I wanted to do my activities, I wanted to do my units, and I kept getting told, “Well that may be where you have to cut.” And I told him, “These children need a more realistic approach to the content that they’re learning. They need to be able to apply it. It needs to be real to them.” That’s what’s wrong. They don’t understand because they can’t place it. That piece of that puzzle’s not fitting

> into their life. So if I can, through projects, make that piece fit, and they understand, then at least it makes it more real to them. And they understand the importance of learning it. It doesn't mean that it makes it easier, but it gives them a reason to learn it. And my thing is, if they learned from the book so well, why are they here (in an EIP—Early Intervention Program—classroom)? It's not that "Oh, well we've got a group of children that come out of a whole language or thematic-based room for the last three years, and they're just not getting anywhere; we need to try something different." These children are coming from very structured classrooms that have used books constantly, and they're still not getting it. And I'm supposed to continue with that? And the other thing is my activities: They're not just for the fun of doing something. We're not making Christmas ornaments here. I can tell you all the language arts skills we're using, I can tell you all the reading skills we're using, based on the science information that they're doing, how they're going about doing it. At a drop, I can tell you four different ways on how I've incorporated math into it. And I'm told I can't do that?

Stephanie was so upset about the discussions with her administrators that she said she was ready to leave the school in frustration. She even told me that she "would work at a mill before" going back. She finished that conversation by saying, "I've never been this upset over something like that. I've been upset, but never to the point of, 'I'm leaving. It's not worth it.'"

Because of Stephanie's strong work ethic, I was surprised to hear her toying with the idea of leaving River's End in the middle of the year. She insisted, "I would definitely go back to South Carolina at this time. That's how disappointed I am." But there was no

job for Stephanie at her previous school. And as much as she desired to leave River's End Elementary, she was financially unable to quit without another teaching job.

When I visited Stephanie for the third time, she had resolved how she would juggle thematic teaching—which she believed was a very effective method, and book teaching—which she had been asked to do by her administrators. She told me:

> I will make that work into the realm you've given me, but if it still doesn't work, if I still can't be happy doing it, then I will find a place where I will be happy. I won't stay. Which has been my decision for next year. And I can't seem to make myself change that, and I want to. I want to be *happy*.

Stephanie had mentioned to me earlier that this school "was not the ultimate situation." In her view, the "ultimate situation" would be a school where the administration encouraged thematic teaching.

Collegial Support

Not only did Stephanie need the support of her administrators in order to teach thematically, but she also desired support from her colleagues. Stephanie said that when she taught in South Carolina she had that kind of support. She had really appreciated the camaraderie in her previous situation, saying, "I couldn't have asked for two better partners that I worked with."

But Stephanie did not have that kind of a partnership with anyone in the fourth grade at River's End. She said, "I work better if I have a partner that's there to help. And I just like going to somebody and saying, 'Well, if we tried this, what do you think?' And I just don't have that here."

One of the underlying purposes of mentoring programs is to lessen the isolation of new teachers, but Stephanie received little, if any, assistance from her mentor. Marsha Wilkerson, Stephanie's mentor, was a third grade EIP teacher at River's End. She was assigned to be Stephanie's mentor because although they taught different grade levels, they both taught EIP students.

When Stephanie started telling me about all the trouble she was having at River's End, I first encouraged her to go to her mentor. To this suggestion, Stephanie replied that she had already gone to Marsha, and that Marsha's way of helping had been to invite Stephanie to come watch her teach her own class of EIP children. However, Marsha did not believe in thematic teaching, so she discouraged Stephanie from using her thematic units. Stephanie wondered aloud if anyone in her school would support her use of thematic teaching if even her mentor was unwilling to back her.

One person Stephanie did turn to for support was Jackie, a second grade teacher across the hall. Stephanie told me that she and Jackie "just clicked from the moment go."

I spoke with Jackie during my third visit to the school, and she told me that although it was also her first year at River's End, it had not been quite as difficult for her as it had been for Stephanie. Jackie had done her student teaching at River's End several years before coming to teach there, so she knew what she was getting into when she accepted the job. She said that on her first day as a student teacher, her supervising teacher had told her that the last student teacher she had supervised had quit. Jackie said she had cried every day during her student teaching.

Jackie stated that not only did the teachers at River's End Elementary not work together, they were also extremely threatened by anyone who was willing to put forth

extra effort and do "great things." She referred to the beautiful thematic projects that were hanging outside Stephanie's walls as an example of great things. Jackie said, "You just won't see that out of many teachers' rooms here."

Jackie valued her friendship and collegial relationship with Stephanie, and did not want her to leave. She said, "We on this pod have talked with Stephanie and tried to encourage her. But on that other side, they won't even talk to her." Jackie mentioned that she was sad because of her fear that Stephanie would leave the following year. She said, "I tried to tell her that she needs to stay and stick up for what is right, but I understand if she feels she needs to leave."

There was one other teacher Stephanie mentioned who had been very kind to her. That teacher taught art, and she had been an experienced new teacher the previous year. Stephanie said that because this teacher understood the frustrations she might be dealing with, she would come by and check on her occasionally.

Other than Jackie and the art teacher, Stephanie had very little other collegial support. In our third interview she said:

> I don't have any relationships with any of the teachers. I haven't found anybody yet, other than Jackie, the other new teacher that shares my philosophy. And that *matters* to me, because if you don't share that philosophy, you cannot understand where I'm coming from when I ask questions.

Stephanie also explained, "I don't *have* anybody, and I really don't want to have to do it by myself. I'm a people person. I need that camaraderie, and I'm not going to get it here."

Stephanie's Critical Attitude toward "Book" Teaching

In our first interview together, Stephanie made it clear that she would never teach straight out of a book. She said:

> Book teaching is not teaching to me. And if that's the way I was made to teach, I wouldn't teach. I'll be honest with you there. If they come to me and insist that this is the way it's got to be done and it's by the book, and there's no time for this other, I will quit teaching, because that's not teaching to me.

Not only was Stephanie adamant that she would never be a "book" teacher; but she was also made it clear that she did not approve of "book" teachers or "book" leaders.

"Book Teachers"

During my first visit, I realized that Stephanie had very little respect for teachers who did not teach thematically—a group that included most of the teachers at River's End Elementary. She commented:

> The other teachers are just totally straight out of the book. The students get enough bookwork and worksheets when they get to middle school and high school, bless their hearts. I like doing the projects that I do, and I feel like that's what all kids need. The reason why it's not done more often, is because it's a lot of work…. All the preparation you have to do to make a lesson work.

Stephanie also mentioned her frustration with the fact that she was spending approximately 25 hours a week planning thematic units, when most of her colleagues were leaving at 3:30 every afternoon. And Stephanie did not see those teachers as effective teachers. She said:

> Those teachers who leave at 3:30 are the ones that constantly say they're having trouble with their kids with behavior. Because you keep kids in a seat all day long, they're totally bored. Boredom brings on behavior problems. We do it as adults. Go to a faculty meeting and really watch people. You'll see every one of your kids. We're adults, but we're the same. Listen to your colleagues when you're told that you have to go into a meeting and listen to somebody lecture. Listen to the comments. And yet they'll turn around and take it right back into the classroom.

Stephanie's visible animosity toward "book" teachers increased during the three months that I spent with her. In her opinion, book teachers were those who were unwilling to give up much of their personal time and energy to plan and prepare quality lessons for their students; instead, they relied strictly on books. Because Stephanie put so much time into planning her thematic units, she got angry when she talked about teachers who did not do that.

On my second visit, Stephanie was especially angry with one of her colleagues. This teacher had remarked to Stephanie that one day soon Stephanie would realize how much real work there was to do in the classroom, and she would no longer have time to do her "cutesy projects." I asked Stephanie why she thought a teacher would say that to her. She explained:

> You know what I think? Number one, my thematic teaching will make them look bad. I think they're jealous, because if you do it, and you do it right, it takes a lot, *a lot* of work to build a thematic unit and make it work. And they don't want to put that kind of time…. They are all the time whining about the time that's

> invested in teaching and the work that's involved. They're *always* whining and complaining. They just have no idea. To me, that's just part of the work. I mean, granted, you go through college and nobody prepares you for the amount of work that it is going to take to be a teacher. Nobody prepares you for that. But if you are in this job for the right reason, you should go in there with the attitude that I'm going to give my best. I'm sorry; you cannot do a teaching job between 7:30 and 3:30. It's not possible with 40 minute planning periods to do the planning that needs to be done and to get the papers graded and all that that is a part of it. If you're not willing to do that, if it takes away too much time for your family, and you can't figure out a way to streamline it, then you're in the wrong job.

Stephanie believed that part of the problem lay in a lack of understanding about what thematic teaching entailed. She noted:

> Some of the education grant committee questions yesterday were, "Is your school teaching interdisciplinary?" and "Do they cross over with the curriculum?" and things like that. And I had to stop and think, because we *don't* here. You have your blocks of time. You can look at anybody's schedule and know that they teach reading here, then they teach—that's not interdisciplinary. However, yesterday, when I was mentioning that at the lunch table to somebody, they said, "Yes we do. If you look at our thematic units that they built for science and social studies (which the district office had them to do for new teachers coming in so they'd have something), you would see that they're crossing over."
>
> And I said, "Yes, with language arts, but nothing else. Well, there's some math in there." I said, "But not much." So instead of arguing the point, what I

> came off with the conclusion was you really don't know what this means. You've never been in a *true* atmosphere where developmentally appropriate, hands-on, cross-curriculum teaching was done. And so, I can't really *blame* them now, because I really think they *think* they're doing it. But they don't know what they're *not* doing, because either their true training's not there, the true examples aren't there, they haven't been out to visit other schools that really *do* do that."

Stephanie's critical attitude towards "book" teaching has not endeared her to many of her peers. In fact, I observed several teachers talk down to Stephanie. For instance, during my first visit, there was a meeting of all the fourth grade teachers, the media specialist, and the learning support specialist to discuss the Accelerated Reader (AR) program guidelines. This meeting was to be held in the Blue Room of the school. When Stephanie asked a teacher walking down the hall where the meeting was, the teacher said hatefully, "The Blue Room!" Stephanie shyly said, "Where is the Blue Room?" The teacher sarcastically pointed toward the general direction of the Blue Room and hurried off as if she did not have time to help Stephanie.

Once in the meeting, I began to notice more hostility toward Stephanie. As those in the meeting were discussing how to print Accelerated Reader reports and read them, Stephanie said to the group, "I tried to get into that program, and I am not in the computer." No one responded. The meeting continued, and a few minutes later, Stephanie said, "But I am not in the computer." The media specialist said, "Yes you are! I just checked it. You *are*!" (When the media specialist came to Stephanie's room after the meeting, it turned out that Stephanie was right; her name was not in the computer.)

That instance was not the only occasion when the media specialist behaved in an unfriendly manner towards Stephanie. Later that afternoon, Stephanie's class was scheduled for library time. As we walked into the library, the media specialist said in a rude tone of voice, "No, you don't have library time now." Stephanie said, "Yes…." But before Stephanie could say another word, the media specialist quickly ran her finger down her schedule while shaking her head. She finally said, "Oh. It's Thursday. You do."

I was particularly surprised at the way the faculty at River's End responded to my presence in the school. Several teachers had spread the word that I was a student teacher, a rumor that circulated until someone finally came to ask Stephanie about it. Stephanie described that teacher's attitude as being one of resentment, asking her, "Why do *you* have a student teacher?"

Although most people would not appreciate this type of treatment, Stephanie was especially disappointed by it, because these attitudes were so different from what she had encountered at her previous school. Stephanie said that she had had some preconceived notions about what this school would be like, based solely on what she experienced at her former school in South Carolina. She said, "I saw a school (in South Carolina) where the majority of teachers *really* enjoyed teaching interdisciplinary and hands-on thematics. And we worked *hard* to build those units and relate those, even when they threw the standards at us." The fact that she was now surrounded by colleagues who strongly believed in "book" teaching made Stephanie's first few months at River's End particularly difficult.

"Book Leaders"

Stephanie strongly believed that her administrators would support her unwillingness to be a "book" teacher. In fact, Stephanie argued with her colleagues when they told her it was a waste of time to talk to Mr. Fields and Ms. Chalk about her difficulties with concurrently following the curriculum and teaching thematically. "There were several teachers who said, 'Don't go talk to them. It won't do any good. There's no backing here by the administration.' That's the general consensus of most of the teachers." But Stephanie did not believe them.

She soon came to believe that they were right. Even after Stephanie tried to argue her point with Mr. Fields, his response was, "I still feel strongly in that the reading and the math is where we need to stay with the way it's been done."

Stephanie fumed, "If my kids are reading on a second or third grade level, how can they do a fourth grade level vocabulary book? That would be total frustration. I don't want that." She added, "With the math program, it's fourth grade level, and if these children are not on fourth grade level, how can I teach them fourth grade level math if they haven't finished learning third grade?"

Mr. Fields still told her to stick to the way it had been done. He even told her to go observe Ms. Wilkerson (the third grade EIP teacher) to see how *she* had made it work. Stephanie responded to Mr. Fields by saying:

> The kids aren't doing well, not because they didn't have enough of the teacher's time, but because the way they were being taught wasn't affecting them. It doesn't mean it's a bad way of teaching; it just didn't reach these children. If you don't do something different, you're still not gonna reach them.

Stephanie felt betrayed. Because Mr. Fields had told Stephanie previously that her "projects" were things that these students needed, she felt that he had "gone back on his word." And Stephanie was angry that Mr. Fields would with such certainty give thematic teaching such an unfavorable comparison to "book" teaching when he had never observed Stephanie teach. She said that he had only walked through her room one time: when the Superintendent and the Human Resources Director of Cyprus County stopped by to check on all the new teachers in the school. At least if he observed her, she asserted, he would have been more likely to support her as a teacher. Stephanie wondered aloud: "How can administrators back up their teachers if they really don't know them?"

Stephanie was also disappointed because the administrators at River's End seemed to contradict themselves. At one point when Stephanie was trying to convince the school administration of the curricular value of thematic teaching, one of her administrators told her she ought not worry about the QCC's, telling her that she probably wouldn't be able to get all those fourth grade QCC's in. Stephanie ironically noted:

> But, they're worried about math and reading skills. It just doesn't make sense to me. None of it makes sense. Are they are just so bent over backwards that it's gonna be done the way it's always been done, that they won't even stand up to somebody and say, "This is wrong and we need to change this?" And if that's the kind of people they are, I don't need to be here. Cause they're just playing games, and I don't play games.

Stephanie's early experiences with her administration became for her a source of deep dissatisfaction and intrapersonal conflict, and made her question how she should respond. She said:

> I feel torn. I am so torn right now. Because if I were in South Carolina, them knowing me the way they know me, they would know I would be fighting tooth and nail. But because they don't know me here, my tendency is to keep my mouth shut. And because I don't know them as well, either. Maybe their heart is in the right place. All I have to go on right now is my gut feeling and the little bit that I see. And is that enough to pick a battle? Or am I jumping to conclusions? Am I assuming? Am I taking for granted? So part of it is a wait-and-see situation, and the other part of it is, "Stephanie, you've spent six years building so that you don't have to wait and see anymore. Why should you have to start all over?"

But Stephanie really wanted to fight for what she believed was right, and she believed she *had* fought this "book" teaching issue. She said, "I stood up to them, I went to them, I felt. I let them know."

At the same time, she did not feel like she could really push the issue. She asked herself, "Do you know enough, do you believe in yourself enough to stand up to them and say, 'This is wrong?' And I do, but I don't have enough right to stand up and say, 'I'm not gonna do this.'"

Stephanie also believed that because Mr. Fields was her supervisor, it was not beneficial for her to publicly criticize his decisions. She said that teachers "don't have permission to be upset. It's not the thing to do. You were told and he's your supervisor, and this is what you do. And you don't question it." She noted that when you are a

teacher and you are new, you "don't want to rock the boat. How dare you complain or be critical?"

Stephanie's Attempt at Resolution

Despite her strong beliefs about the ineffectiveness of "book teaching," Stephanie considered herself a "rule follower," and was unwilling to attempt to go against the expressed wishes of her school's administration. She said:

> You tell me what to do, you tell me the rules, and that's what I'm going to do. Jackie was saying yesterday, "Stephanie, just go in your room and do what you do and don't worry about it." I can't. He's laid down the rules, and I have to follow those rules. I *have* to. My own integrity. I'm not going to *tell* you that I'm going to do something and then not do it. I can't live with myself that way.

At the same time, Stephanie said she was unwilling to teach her students ineffectively, saying:

> I play the game because this is what we're told to do, and I don't want to get in trouble, so I just follow along and I do it, and I'm able to go home at night and sleep? I can't. In my own conscience, I can't do that.

By the time of my third visit, Stephanie had come to a resolution: She would do what she had to do in order to comply with her administrators' direction, but she would make it work in her own way. Stephanie said, "I'm teaching reading, yeah, I'm using the workbooks. But I'm gonna do it my way. I'm gonna make it work. It has to for this year, for my own sanity."

Stephanie had already told me that she was planning to leave River's End the following year. But during my third visit, Stephanie began to wonder if it would be

beneficial to even try to teach somewhere else in the future. She speculated that education as a whole might be moving back to a focus on test scores rather than student learning. She asked:

> Is the pendulum swinging in all schools? Are we going back because we still haven't gotten the test results that they want from kids? Are we *all* going back to just total, "Get out your books," put kids in a row, read the chapter, answer the questions, and let's just gear them up for that test they're going to take? Or are there schools that will still fight the system and say, "This is true learning, and you can't judge true learning totally by test scores alone?"

Stephanie had essentially decided that if the pendulum really is swinging back to test scores, she would leave the education field altogether. She said, "If they come to me and insist that this is the way it's got to be done and it's by the book, I will quit teaching. Because that's not teaching to me."

What Motivated Stephanie to Teach Thematically?

Having reached a clear understanding that Stephanie believed thematic teaching to be synonymous with effective teaching, I began to examine her motives for working so hard to teach thematically. What drove Stephanie to spend hours developing thematic lessons and to risk conflict with her peers and supervisors over a method of teaching?

Stephanie's Love of Children

First, Stephanie loved children, and desired to see her students grow and thrive. Time after time during my interviews of Stephanie, I became aware that she loved children.

Stephanie once told me a story about how she had dealt with a situation in which some students in another teacher's class were throwing water in the restroom. When Stephanie's students came to tell her about the incident, she went into the restroom and reprimanded the girls involved – even though they weren't in her class. She said, "Their behavior is bad for the whole reputation of the school. But that's not my classroom, so I should close my eyes, close my door, and walk away. I can't do that. All these kids are mine."

Stephanie also believed that one of her primary responsibilities was to teach life-skills to her children. She said, "They have no role models at home. The only thing they have is here." Stephanie saw that one of her most important duties, for example, was to teach students that fighting is not the way to solve issues. She said, "They have fought, and fought, and fought for everything they've ever gotten, and that's all they know how to do when they get here is fight." To help students learn to cooperate, Stephanie would pair different groups of students together so that they would have to work at getting along with each other.

During one of our interviews, Stephanie summed up her feelings about her students:

> The only reason I'm here is for these guys. They are a precious group of kids, and they have so much potential. So when somebody tells me they "can't," it infuriates me. I was told there was no way they could write a paragraph. My mentor, their last year's teacher told me that. But then you know, last year, they probably could not have written a paragraph. But see you box yourself in when you just look at things from one viewpoint. That's why they need a different

> teacher every year. This opens up another world for them. I was told they would never read a chapter book. I don't believe in never. And maybe that's what's made me different. Even with my kids that are "slow learners," because their IQ is not low enough for MI and it's not high enough for LD – my little 80 IQ kids. And I've got a couple of them in here. I don't see that. I don't look at them and put barriers, and say, "This is all they'll be able to do." Last year, I had a child, had no idea his IQ was 65; *65*, bless his little heart. But every night he wrote his 2 times tables, and it took him all year, but he got a 100 on his twos. He got it! And he was tickled to death, and he never complained the first time, cause he was doing 4th grade math. Just don't fence them in. And don't fence *me* in. Don't build the barriers and say, "This is all they can do."

The fact that Stephanie loved children was not only apparent during our interviews; it was also very noticeable during the day-to-day activities of the class. Stephanie was consistently kind to her children. For example, Shannon—a girl in Stephanie's class—came to her desk because she was frustrated with the straps on her overalls. The straps were too big, and they kept falling down. Before Shannon even asked Stephanie to help her, Stephanie recognized that the straps were driving her crazy. She got two safety pins out of her desk and pinned the straps so they would no longer bother her.

In another instance, Will—one of Stephanie's students—came to her desk with his snack in his hand. Wanting to seal it and save it, he said, "Ms. Roberts, do you have a paperclip?" She looked in her desk and said, "Here. This will work better." Stephanie gave him a large, relatively expensive clip to seal his snack. I remarked to Stephanie that

it seemed as though she really cared about her children. She responded, “Thank you for saying that. That’s why I feel like I can talk to them the way I do, because they know I care about them.”

But Stephanie was no “pushover.” There were times when she had to speak firmly to her students because they were not making correct choices. For instance, one young boy named Ian had to spend time inside during recess because he did not finish his morning work. Because he completed his work before recess had ended, he was allowed to come outside to join us.

Stephanie asked him, “Did you finish?” Ian nodded his head. “Now, you could have finished it this morning!” He smiled. Stephanie said, “Go play…no…give me two laps, remember? Then, go play!” Ian walked away proudly.

Stephanie also had to reprimand another student, Blake, when she was teaching math one morning. Blake was arguing with a girl in the class named Shannon about something, and Stephanie stopped teaching, looked directly at Blake and said:

> Blake, why do you want to argue about everything? You weren’t even supposed to be looking that way. If you don’t want me to call you down in class, don’t misbehave, because I will call you down when I see the behavior.

Stephanie held the line with her students, and they knew not to cross her or they would be scolded. But consequences in Stephanie’s classroom were clearly driven by her desire to lovingly discipline and correct her students. Because she loved them, Stephanie wanted to reach them. She wanted them to be successful—which to her meant changing their destinies. She reflected:

> I graduated a year early out of high school just to get out, cause I knew I'd quit if I didn't. That's what's gonna happen to these guys: They're gonna quit, because they weren't as lucky as I was, in that academics come so hard for them. And it's not going to be worth it if somebody, somehow, doesn't touch them, and let them know that it's gonna make a difference who they are later. So I can't sit back and sign off on my lesson plans and say, "I taught page 2 out of the math book today, just like you told me to, or Saxon Math, Lesson 27. It took us two hours, but we did it," and know that those kids went away with nothing. I can't do that. It just hurts too bad.

Stephanie's Identity as a Thematic Teacher

A second motivation for Stephanie to take such a strong stand on thematic teaching was the fact that she felt great satisfaction and success from having taught that way throughout her entire teaching career. Indeed, much of her identity as a teacher was formed around the skills and dedication required to teach thematically; consequently, much was at stake if the "book" teachers and "book" leaders at her school were right and she was proven wrong.

As Stephanie taught her class, she would walk around the room, speak confidently to her students, and inspire them with her words. The children seemed almost captivated at times. Stephanie's abilities as a teacher were far beyond competent, and I enjoyed watching her as she engaged the children in learning. Stephanie admitted in one of our interviews: "I feel I'm a good teacher. I think I've proven myself."

As early as her student teaching experience, Stephanie knew that thematic teaching worked. She said, "That's what my mentoring teacher did, and I knew it meant

something to the children. And I was determined that that was the way I was going to teach." Stephanie became convinced early on about the importance of tying pieces of the curriculum together so that it meant something to the students: "I want their vocabulary to be from experiences that they're having in the classroom so it means something to them. Not just words picked out of thin air."

Stephanie noted that throughout her six years as a teacher, many of her former students have returned to her classroom to thank her for the job she did while teaching them. In many ways, those expressions of gratitude solidified her belief in the effectiveness of thematic teaching. She told me that students had visited her four years after she had taught them and had told her that they can still find Orion in the nighttime sky because of what she had taught them.

Of another student visit, Stephanie said:

> One of my former students just blew me away. She was in the *seventh* grade when she came back to visit me, and we were doing our tribes at that time. And I don't even know why she actually was there; she just came by and visited. And she said she still had her village on a shelf in her bedroom. *Three years later*. She kept that little village. That tells me she will always remember what we studied. Not maybe every one of the details, but she's going to remember that. And that's going to make a difference in her life in some way. It's meaningful.

Due in part to these moments of success, Stephanie developed a tremendous amount of pride in her teaching style. She referred to thematic teaching as "her way" of teaching, then corrected herself by saying, "I say my way, but it's not really my way. I mean, other teachers teach that way." But thematic teaching *had* become a part of her

identity as a teacher, and being a teacher had become who she was. She claimed in one of our interviews, "Teaching's not a job to me. It's my life."

Stephanie Felt Threatened

"That's my way of teaching" and "Teaching is my life" are two assertions that, when joined together, comprised a powerful part of how Stephanie viewed herself. The moment I connected those two statements, I made a startling discovery about why Stephanie was so unhappy with her colleagues and administrators at River's End: Her own *self* was threatened when they criticized her style of teaching. Every time someone condemned thematic teaching, they were attacking who she was as a person. She had felt so threatened that by the time of my final visit with her, Stephanie said to me:

> If I'm wrong, I hope that I find out soon enough so I can fix it. I hope that I'm not so passionate about this that I even close the doors, and I can't see. That's what's really hard for me right now, is being one of very, very, very few here that believe the way I do, because I'm questioning now my own beliefs and feelings about it. What if my way's not the best way?

Struggles Not Related to Thematic Teaching

Although the bulk of Stephanie's struggles at River's End seemed related to her style of teaching, she also struggled with many other issues. The hiring process in Cyprus County, a lack of information about financial and insurance issues, a lack of accessible information about school policies and procedures, the teacher induction process, her difficulty understanding the EIP program, and the pressure to prove herself were all sources of anxiety for Stephanie.

The Cyprus County Hiring Process

The hiring process in Cyprus County was different from any hiring process I had ever heard about. Stephanie described the steps she took:

> I applied here in February with Cyprus County School System, which was a different type of interview because they interview first with Margaret Tyson (the Human Resources Director), and they choose the ones that are best to then be interviewed by the principals. All the elementary school principals come together and you answer questions, sort of a round-robin type thing. And then, when the jobs came open, they have in mind what job they would like you in, so you have no idea what job you may be offered, and you have no idea what job you're interviewing for. So I didn't have the luxury of asking a lot of questions, because I didn't know where I would be and each answer would depend on who/where you were gonna be. So that was frustrating; that was awkward. Luckily, when Margaret called me back and asked me if I was still interested, she said that they had in mind a fourth grade position here. She still could not tell me for sure and sent a contract out for me to sign. And I walked totally on faith when I signed that contract, hoping that it was a fourth grade position.

Once Stephanie signed the contract, she began to really worry about for *whom* she would be working:

> Mrs. Tyson called and said, "You're going to be working at River's End." To be honest, I couldn't even remember who the principal was. At the interview, I had four men sitting around who had introduced themselves, and three of them weren't wearing nametags. So, when I talked to Ms. Tyson I was sitting there just

> praying, because there was one I didn't want. I knew just from his attitude and his persona, I didn't want to be there. And I just kept praying he wasn't the one. And he wasn't.

To Stephanie, this type of interview process did teachers a disservice. Stephanie said that she viewed the interview process as a two-way process: the school is interviewing the potential teacher, but the potential teacher is also interviewing the school. But with the interview process that Cyprus County used, two-way interviewing was impossible. Because she did not know which administration she would be working under, determining and asking questions about the leadership style of her prospective supervisors proved impossible.

Once the Cyprus County school year was underway and Stephanie began to discover the leadership styles and the educational philosophies of the administrators for whom she was working, she began to feel betrayed by Cyprus County. This betrayal was specifically targeted at Margaret Tyson, the Human Resources Director. Stephanie explained:

> I feel betrayed, more so by Margaret than anybody else, because she was the one that I went to and laid all my cards on the table. I went to her telling her exactly what I had at my former school, exactly why I was leaving. And there was a little bit of dissatisfaction at the other school, but not to a point of, "I've got to get out of here," or "I've got to quit teaching." I had never reached that point yet. So I was not leaving that school because I hated being there. I wasn't looking for a better place to be. I was looking for something that was at least comparable.

> And I also remember telling Margaret, "I would like to know who I am going to be working for, because their philosophy and mine need to be in sync." And she said, "What philosophy would that be?" And I told her how I felt—that children need to experience to learn. I believe that all children could learn if given the opportunity, and that we all learn differently, and the minds need to be open to that. And her answer to me was, "Well, I feel all our principals have that philosophy."
>
> I've later been told Margaret's never taught. So for her to be the first step in the interview process for teachers just baffles me. That makes no sense to me whatsoever. She's a sweet lady, but I don't think that she has any idea of what's going on. So, that's where I feel betrayed.

Between my second and third visit with Stephanie, her ideas of betrayal had softened. She had come to recognize that those who hired her had not intended to betray her, and said, "What I think I'm finding out to be true is *not* that they are falsifying information or trying to mislead us. I really think that they *feel* that their schools are doing the things that they say they're doing."

Lack of Information About Finances and Insurance

Stephanie also encountered unanticipated financial issues when she moved her employment from South Carolina to Georgia. Because the Cyprus County Human Resources Department did not provide her with adequate information about pay or about insurance, Stephanie had to make some unpleasant discoveries on her own. She recalled:

> When I called to find out about the insurance, I found out that Georgia doesn't begin paying until September 30 for new teachers. South Carolina's first

> paycheck is August. So that meant I would have to go for a whole month without pay. I would have gotten June/July pay, but no August pay from either state. So, they considered that, then they came up with the thing that they do for new teachers—thirteen paychecks. So they would do it for those of us that would be considered new to Georgia.

Not only was she now faced with a reduction in monthly pay during her first year (because it was to be spread over thirteen paychecks); Stephanie also encountered problems with her insurance. She said:

> South Carolina came up with this new thing that if you quit, they cancelled your insurance as of June 1st. Well, I wasn't quitting; I was going into a new job. But because it was in another state, they considered it quitting. So they cancelled my insurance as of June 1st. So, I paid the COBRA insurance for June, July, and August, which was $340 a month. And cancelled it around the 10th of August, to only be effective 'til August 31st. And to find out on my first paycheck it had not been taken out.
>
> So they weren't even considerate enough to let us know we didn't get the insurance until September 30th. Now yesterday, Mr. Fields came by and said that somebody from the district office came by and told them we weren't getting it. And they (the county office) just found out last week. That's what he was told. I worked in accounting for twelve years. I worked in a business office. If you're not sure, you get on the phone and you call somebody, before you promise people something.

Stephanie had originally thought that if she taught in Georgia, she would get paid more than she had gotten in South Carolina. But her need to carry COBRA insurance for four months negated any additional money she might have earned this year.

> To have my COBRA insurance for four months—that's $1500 I'm paying that I would not have had to pay if I had not moved. So there goes every bit of any pay increase I would have gotten from Georgia. On top of that, to have the same insurance that I had in South Carolina is costing me almost $100 more a month. So, in retrospect, I'm not making any more.

Lack of Information About Policies and Procedures

Another source of stress for Stephanie was the fact that there were so many things she needed to know about River's End, such as rules and policies; however, no one was available to help her with these issues on a consistent basis. Stephanie said,

> When I came in, there were so many questions that I had that I spent the first two days of being here (after I got my classroom ready) just finding out what do you do for lunch, how do you take attendance, what is the behavioral policy. I had asked those questions, but Mr. Fields really couldn't answer how fourth grade did it, and the teachers did not come early over the summer. Our grade level chair, he's one that is in and out, so he's the one that I was going to, but he wasn't here to talk to either. I really had to wait until the first day to get those basic things.

As a person who liked to make detailed plans, waiting until the last minute was frustrating for Stephanie. It also bothered Stephanie that no one had offered to really help her "learn the ropes." She said, "A couple of teachers have popped their heads in and said, 'If there's anything we can do, let us help.'"

Stephanie said that when she was in South Carolina, she had made great efforts to help two experienced teachers who were new to her school. She had come in over the summer and said to them, '"Here is the schedule I've already created. All you have to do is type in your name and change a few numbers.' I did all that for them, because I knew how hard it would be." Stephanie had not received that kind of assistance. She explained, "All the information I've gotten is because I've gone and said, 'How do you do this?' and 'How do you do that?' Why is there not something established?"

Stephanie believed she would have been considerably helped if information about the school had been written down. She said:

> Learning all those things that are not written down anywhere, and everybody takes for granted because this is the way it's done. But they forget that a new person comes in does not know that on bus duty day, you're supposed to walk the second graders down to the bus and stay with them to make sure they get on, not just send them down there. You cannot just assume that people know this. Or that somebody has told them these things. Don't do that; that's a lot to ask. And especially of a new teacher who is trying so hard to be the best at everything they do.

Bus duty was one specific issue for Stephanie that timely information about the school could have resolved early on. Before school began, Stephanie mentioned to her assistant principal, Ms. Chalk, that she was excited about arriving at school at 7:00 every morning to prepare for her day, and not having to leave her house so early to make that happen. Ms. Chalk's response was, "Well you know you have to be here at 7:10 for bus duty."

When Stephanie asked her to explain how that worked, Ms. Chalk said, "We'll tell you all about that when you come in at the beginning of the year." Throughout the entire summer, Stephanie worried that she would have bus duty every day, which seemed ridiculous to her. As it turned out, it was only once every eight days, so "it wasn't that big a deal." But it bothered Stephanie that the policy about bus duty was not written down and handed to her so she could have the summer to absorb it. Stephanie said, "That's not too much to ask."

In addition to bus duty schedules, Stephanie was also concerned about how committees were handled at River's End. When she asked a colleague about committees, the response was, "Yeah, we have committees." Complained Stephanie:

> I have no idea what committee; I don't know how you're placed on a committee. I don't know when I'm supposed to determine which committee I'm supposed to be on. I have been given nothing. I have asked, but the answers are all the same. "Yeah, we have a lot of committees. They'll be meeting. You'll be asked to join one." How can you join something if you have no idea what it is? Why can't I be thinking about what I would like to be on? (If that's my choice, or do I have a choice?) Will I be placed on one? And how much time is that gonna take?

Stephanie also did not know how to handle lunch. The first week of school, a lunchroom worker verbally reprimanded Stephanie because she allowed too many students to go through the lunch line at one time. The rule was that only five students were allowed to go through the lunch line at a time, but no one had bothered to tell her that. Stephanie wished that "if that was a rule, put it in writing somewhere and let

teachers read it. You've got a faculty manual. Add those things to it. And if you change the way it's done, then change the manual."

And the consequences were not always simple reprimands. Because Stephanie was also unclear about the policies at River's End, there were several times that she had to do things over. For example, a week before the Accelerated Reader meeting I attended with Stephanie, she and her colleagues were given a report to fill out about their students. Stephanie spent a lot of time completing the report, and she took it to the meeting.

What she discovered when she arrived was that the purpose of the meeting was actually to *explain* how to complete that report. Although Stephanie had already done that, she discovered that she had used the wrong standardized test score for the report. She had used the *total* reading score rather than the *reading comprehension* score. When Stephanie and I discussed that issue, she said:

> How hard is that to put those directions on that form? It doesn't take half a second to do that, and it saves so much time. And we assumed, because the sheet said, "Have it done." But then we go into the meeting, and she's acting like she had no idea we would go ahead and try to do it. But that was what the meeting was, to explain how to do it. If you read the front of the paper, it doesn't say that. So, once again all those assumptions people make.

Stephanie pointed out that as an experienced new teacher, "You're inundated with new things." Stephanie said that she had seen a form near the teacher boxes that she thought she should complete, so she asked one of her colleagues, "*Is* this something I need to be doing?"

The teacher replied, “Oh, yeah, we’ll do that at the end of the month—don’t worry about it. We’ll tell you about it then.”

Stephanie said sarcastically to herself, “That makes me feel better. Let me put this with all this other stack of things I need to learn about.”

Little things like “blue jean days” were confusing to Stephanie. One Friday morning a colleague of Stephanie’s asked her why she did not wear her blue jeans. Stephanie explained that she had asked Mr. Fields about blue jean days, and he had told her that she had to wear a shirt with the River’s End emblem on it in order to wear jeans. Stephanie had told him that she did not have River’s End shirt, but that she wanted to get one.

However, by “blue jean day,” a River’s End shirt had not been made available to her. Stephanie’s colleague told her that Mr. Fields did not mean it that way: It would be O.K. for Stephanie to wear her blue jeans regardless.

But Stephanie asked her, “Are you sure, or is that what *you* feel?” She said, “I don’t want him cornering me and saying, ‘You’re dressed inappropriately.’ And then me say, ‘Oh well, the other teachers said it’d be okay.’”

Even Stephanie’s mentor provided very little assistance regarding policies and procedures at River’s End. Stephanie explained:

> We have “mentors,” and mine is Mrs. Wilkerson, who is the third grade EIP teacher, and that makes sense cause these kids were hers, and she can help me with those type things. However, we have no common planning time. I get here early, she gets here later—about 10 till, right when school starts, so I have no time

> in the morning I can ask her things. And I can grab her in the afternoon, you know, she's there. But, that's been difficult.

All of the new things that Stephanie was inundated with in the first month of school proved easier for her to handle by my second visit with her. She explained that learning the ropes was actually getting easier. She said, "I've learned a little bit more of what to expect, or what's expected of me, so the newness is sort of wearing off. I'm finding all the places I need to go, and things I need to do."

Induction Program

The reputation of the teacher induction program in Cyprus County was the main reason I chose to conduct this study there. I had heard that the induction program in Cyprus County attempted to provide assistance to all new teachers in the system. But Stephanie's first encounter with the induction program was ambiguous at best. She explained:

> My first letter told me, "This is when we're planning for induction; but call and make sure this is the date it's gonna be on before you come, cause things might change." It would have been nice to have a confirmation letter. That was my first impression of induction.

Once Stephanie attended her first induction session, she realized that although the program was probably effective for first-year teachers, it was less effective for experienced new teachers. She said:

> There was a lot of really good stuff for beginning teachers that seasoned teachers didn't need to go through. I mean, we went through all the things of behavioral management, conflict management. I didn't need to hear all of that again. We

> went through activities to do with our kids on the first day. You know, that was one whole day that I could have been in the classroom getting things ready.

Stephanie mentioned that the new teachers were also required to complete all of the paperwork (e.g., medical forms, W-2's, insurance paperwork) at induction. She noted that she would rather have had the summer to complete that information, saying, "There again, here's that pressure. You've got two days before school starts, and you're worried about your medical insurance and your dental." To make matters worse, there was no one at the induction session to help the new teachers with their insurance forms. Stephanie said:

> We had spokesmen from both PAGE and GAE; yet we had no one there to help us with our insurance questions. We were given seven different choices, and the only person that might could answer any questions was Sharon (the Human Resources secretary). She is the voice you hear when you call the district office! Payroll doesn't handle any of that. You get a sheet of numbers to call. I spent five hours going through the insurance, and still was not sure with the choices that I made.

To add to her stresses as a new teacher, Stephanie had "homework" to complete for induction.

> Oh, man, and then they give you this homework to do. It's beneficial and it's really good for new teachers, and it helped me to ask some questions, cause that's what it is is questions. "Who is the nurse?" and "What is her procedure?" and that type of thing. But I've gotta have it by the end of August. So there again, it's something extra that I've got to worry about getting done. And you couldn't just

> write down the people that you met. You had to go around and get their signature: the principal, the assistant principal, the nurse, the custodian, the cafeteria manager—who I never have seen in my life. Which was good—I met her, but where do I find time to go in and get her signature? So I was running around crazy. The AR (Accelerated Reader) guidelines was another question, and I went to the media specialist and thought she would understand and be able to tell me; but she had no idea what I was talking about.

Although Stephanie was frustrated with the induction program, she felt that it would be very beneficial if the experienced new teachers and the first-year teachers had had separate induction programs. Stephanie said, "For the majority of us, we were all teachers that already had an idea of what we needed to do." Much of what was required of the induction participants was "a waste of time" for experienced new teachers.

> Stephanie's major concern was her final homework assignment for induction: Our last assignment is to write to a new teacher that's going to be coming in next year—write a letter to them and help to reassure them that everything will be O.K. I can't do that. And I've got to let her (Jan Fitzgerald – Cyprus County Staff Development Coordinator) know I can't do that, because it's a homework assignment, and I'm not going to get credit for the class if I don't finish it. So I've got to let Jan know, so I'm going to write *her* the letter and tell her why I can't write that letter.

She continued by saying, "I don't think that she'd want to give my letter to anybody. I'd be saying, 'Really check this out before you come here."

Difficulty Understanding the EIP Program

Another of Stephanie's frustrations dealt with the fact that she was hired to teach the EIP class. There was only one fourth-grade EIP classroom at River's End Elementary, and Stephanie was teaching it. But that was not how Mr. Fields had originally designed the EIP program for River's End. Stephanie explained:

> When we first discussed it, he was hoping for another full-time fourth grade teacher. They were hoping for *four* fourth grade teachers, but they didn't get the approval for the position. So they had to make due with three. That meant the EIP class had to be total EIP, where there was gonna be a split class before—two reduced levels. So his intentions were having me in a regular classroom situation, and not having the class like I have now.

That type of a situation would probably have been better for Stephanie—at least in terms of her feelings of isolation. She said, "Because I took the EIP class, I am not the quote/unquote same as other fourth grade teachers, so I cannot really plan with them. No one to go to at the end of the day and say, 'You know that didn't work, how are you doing this?'" So, not only did Stephanie feel isolated because she was a thematic teacher; she was also isolated in her position at River's End.

In addition, Stephanie was highly frustrated with the fact that she did not know any of the guidelines for the EIP program. In the State of Georgia, the 2001-2002 school year was the first year for fourth grade to be included in the EIP program, and Stephanie was never informed of the eligibility requirements for EIP. When she asked Mr. Fields what to say to the parents about why her class was so much smaller than the other fourth grade classes, he told her not to worry about it—most of her students had been in the EIP

room in third grade. None of Stephanie's administrators explained to her the purpose of EIP. She said:

> None of the modifications have been made, so what are my expectations? I have no idea. Do you stay with the regular? I know that by law, I'm required to teach certain things, but how, with all of the other programs that they've brought in? Do I have to maintain that, or modify that? I'm like a pilot program. I'm working all these bugs out.

As she began to understand her administrators, Stephanie became more and more frustrated with the way they viewed the EIP program. She said, "They (Ms. Chalk and Mr. Fields) basically told me that there could be no modifications made for EIP." The inability to modify the curriculum for her students became an ongoing problem. Stephanie had been asked by her administration to teach those EIP students, yet she was not allowed to make modifications for them. Stephanie said, "If I can't make modifications, what is the purpose of having EIP?"

Not only did Stephanie not really understand the EIP program, but her Learning Support Specialist, Ms. Holmes, did not understand it either. Stephanie asked Ms. Holmes how to modify the Accelerated Reader Program for EIP students. Her response was, "This may be an EIP issue. Make sure you check with your local AR committee." Stephanie said:

> Even the Learning Support Specialist was saying she had no idea. It's so easy to say, "Well you need to find out what the guidelines are on your own." I didn't like that. I thought as her job, she's supposed to be helping me do it. She's my Learning Support Specialist. She should find that out for me.

In order to effectively teach in the EIP program, Stephanie believed that she needed to understand the guidelines for it and the modifications that would be allowed for those students. Otherwise, it seemed as though teaching EIP was identical to teaching a small class for "regular" students.

Pressure to Prove Herself

One final issue that Stephanie dealt with was the fact that she believed she had to prove herself to everyone at River's End Elementary School. She explained:

> The bad thing about starting all over (and I didn't think that it would bother me as much but it really has) is proving yourself. When you've been with an administration for six years, and you know them and they know you, and you've gone through all your personal problems with them. They were there with me through my divorce. They were there with me through surgeries: the personal side of it. You've built a family, and they know you. And so they're there to back you and when they have that faith in you, then you go to them with a problem, they look at you with different eyes. Right now when I go to Ms. Chalk or Mr. Fields, what I'm seeing is all this uncertainty because they don't know me. And I'm having to build that all over again. And that's hard. Because after we've worked as hard as we have to prove ourselves, you don't want to have to start all over building that again. It's like, "Can't you just accept me and what others have said?" and put a little faith or a little trust in me? But that's not really there. They have so much faith in Ms. Wilkerson, who is a wonderful teacher, don't get me wrong, I'm not criticizing. And so, they want me to continue with what she's done. But that's almost like saying I'm *not* a good teacher. And maybe I'm being

too sensitive. Maybe I'm taking it too personally and they don't mean it that way. But if you tell somebody, "Do what she did, because that's what works, then you're just saying, "Well what I'm doing is not gonna work." You haven't even given me a chance yet. And, that hurts. That really hurts.

Stephanie was not the only teacher at River's End who felt that way. Stephanie's friend, the art teacher (who was an experienced new teacher the previous year) said, "I think, as experienced teachers, we are looking for a *change* and forget that we're completely starting over again. We walk in there and you're like, 'Why should I have to prove this?'"

Stephanie said, "I thought all that I gave, all the proof, all the information I gave would be enough to say, 'Trust me,' and it's not. It's not. You start over. You're starting over again."

In my own experience, proving myself was an issue both times I became an experienced new teacher. It was as if I was accustomed to the trust and faith that my previous administrators had in me, and I had freedom because of that. But when I went to a new place, I had serious difficulty proving myself trustworthy to the new administrators. I believed just like Stephanie did: I am a good teacher. Why can't they just trust that I know what I am doing?

"Why Did I Move Here?" Weighing the Positive and the Negative

Throughout the time I spent with Stephanie, I heard her say several times that she was not certain why she ever moved from her school in South Carolina to Cyprus County. She had generally enjoyed her teaching experience in South Carolina, but the drive was long. In all of our interviews, Stephanie came back over and over to the same

question: “Why did I move here?” Stephanie’s move truly had seemed to bring her a combination of both positive and negative outcomes.

Positive Outcomes

Stephanie said that she lived her life putting a lot of faith in God, and the move to Cyprus County was no exception. She believed God had sent her to the teaching position in Cyprus County for a reason. Stephanie said, “I prayed for this job, so I feel like I’m where I’m supposed to be. I really do. For right now.” She later added:

> It’s meant to be. I am where I am supposed to be, and I know that. I just keep wondering why God wants me to work so hard for everything. But I’m growing and I’m learning from it. I have to keep remembering that. There’s a purpose; there’s a reason. And it will work out. I just have to take one day at a time this year. This is gonna be the hardest year. And after that, I’ll have all the little things.

Stephanie also said that she now had more free time because her travel to and from work was considerably shorter. The previous year, Stephanie had traveled back and forth to South Carolina each day—a 40-minute drive one way. She said that teaching in Cyprus County “makes a lot of difference in going back to the room to make copies or laminate. Just needing to stop by the room to get something or put something up and staying late” and being only a few minutes from home was a lot easier than doing those things and “knowing you have 40 more minutes to drive.”

In addition, Stephanie was able to keep the same grade level as she had been teaching in South Carolina, which really helped her in terms of planning. Although the state guidelines were different, Stephanie had some activities and lessons planned for

fourth grade that she could use in Cyprus County. She said, "I have my themes in my file drawer, so I know what I have used with fourth grade and it works. I can pull that out and modify it based on what Georgia's QCC's are and make it work." Stephanie had purchased materials throughout the course of her career with the possibility in mind of someday moving. She said:

> I knew from the beginning that if I moved, I did not want to be one of those teachers that moved and had to leave everything they had acquired behind. So I would buy a lot of my own supplies and materials, so if I moved, I would take it with me. And basically, the room that I had learned to be comfortable in I could build again in another area. That was important to me. I had seen too many of my friends after *years* of teaching have to leave everything behind and start over. And at my age, I knew that I wouldn't be comfortable doing that. I had already had that vision in my mind when I began teaching. And *if* I moved, I did not ever want that to be a problem. And that's one of those frustrations that you don't *have* to endure. I sacrificed so I could do a lot of this.

Because Stephanie was passionate about teaching science through hands-on experience, it was an added bonus that River's End Elementary had a butterfly garden and a nature trail. During recess on my first visit, I was able to watch Stephanie teach students about the caterpillars that were living in the school's butterfly garden. Several students had gathered in a covered area, playing with a few of the caterpillars from the butterfly bushes. Stephanie talked to them about how important it was to take care of the caterpillars: She explained that the students needed to feed them milkweed, keep them in a safe container (not in their book bags), etc. She also explained how the caterpillars

turned into chrysalises, how long they stayed in that form, and how the chrysalises became butterflies. The students—some of whom were not even in her class—seemed to really enjoy this conversation. And Stephanie seemed to enjoy the opportunity to make use of this experiential resource.

Negative Outcomes

Although there were several reasons Stephanie was glad she chose to move to Cyprus County, there were many more reasons that she wished she had not made that move. In some ways, Stephanie felt she should have known better than to leave her former school. She said:

> It's really my fault for having walked into this situation. I knew—my gut instincts were *right on*. I came down here with my husband before the school opened this summer, and I looked through all the windows. I saw the desks all lined up in rows. I saw the walls bare. I could not find any shelves with manipulatives on them. It wasn't that they were packed up, 'cause the things were still left out. *That* alone told me what kind of atmosphere this school was. But I wanted so badly to believe that it would be okay that I just let go of that instinct. And I did not follow my gut instinct. I should have known.

In addition, Stephanie had mentored experienced new teachers in the past, so she knew she was going to have to "start all over" at her new school. She said, "I knew what they (the experienced new teachers) had gone through to establish that routine to get it together, so I knew what I was getting into." She added, "I guess that's why it was so hard to leave, because I knew that this would be starting all over again. I knew it was gonna be hard. I knew."

Another negative aspect of Stephanie's move was the fact that she had to spend more time planning. Before, in South Carolina, she had created all of her thematic units, and she and her colleagues were a team. Stephanie said, "I was getting to leave at 3:30 or 4:00 and coming on home, and knowing that everything was going to be O.K. And I *left* it. Am I nuts?" Stephanie said that she had gone home the week before our first interview and cried because even though she had taught fourth grade before, she found herself having to plan everything. She said, "Last week, I spent 25 hours just planning!"

Another difficult part of Stephanie's move to Cyprus County was the money she lost through this transition. She said:

> The pay is different. Georgia doesn't pay until September 1st. Georgia *does* pay better, but when I looked at my pay, it was only around $2,000 more a year, and that's better, but insurance is more. It costs $100 more a month. So that takes that. So I knew I wasn't doing this for the pay. And then they took and they gave me an August paycheck by dividing my salary by thirteen. So, this year, financially is gonna be a struggle, because my paycheck is gonna be about $200 less than what I'm used to. So, that's an added stress.

Additionally, now that Stephanie is on Georgia insurance she has to use a different group of doctors than the ones she had in South Carolina. Of course, all of these things would work themselves out over time. In her second year in Cyprus County, Stephanie would make her regular monthly pay, she would not have to pay for COBRA insurance over the summer, and she would eventually establish a new group of doctors.

However, even considering the temporary nature of these financial issues, Stephanie still expressed disappointment that she had moved to Cyprus County. She said,

"I feel disappointed. I don't feel like I made my decision based on facts." She summarized her feelings:

> Is this a hard place to work? No. Are people pretty much nice? Yeah, they leave you alone and never bother you. You *are* isolated, but, in that respect, am I missing any of that from Marcus Elder (her previous school)? Not near as much as just how disappointed I am, and how much I gave up. I wouldn't have given it up. I was that torn about leaving. *That* torn.

Yet Stephanie felt convinced that she had made the right decision before she moved to Cyprus County. She said that she knew what might happen when she moved, but she had no idea how difficult it would be. She explained:

> I guess that's why this one hurt, because I really thought I was being very cautious. This time I thought I knew what I was doing. And that it would be a good change, and even though I would still have those same feelings, cause you have to build friendships, I knew what I was getting into. And then it's like the basket flipped.

As Stephanie began to consider what she had given up by leaving South Carolina, she started asking herself the question, "What is my purpose here?" She said, "I prayed for this job, so I feel like I'm where I'm supposed to be." She speculated whether or not she was hired to "fight this thing." In one of our most intimate interviews, Stephanie began to cry as she said:

> See I still get (weepy). These are those battles I was talking about earlier. Why, Lord? Why? What is it that I'm here for? If this was supposed to be a change that you approved of, why is it so hard now? You've got to show me what it is I'm

> fighting for, because if you don't show me what it is that I'm fighting for, it's not worth the battle. I'm tired. I'm tired. I'm 42 years old and my whole life's been a struggle. And I wanted a change; I didn't want another battle.

At times, though, Stephanie did believe that she *was* fighting a battle, and she thought that God might be preparing her to be an agent of change. Although Stephanie had never imagined herself in an administrative role, she wondered if God might be trying to push her into the arena of educational leadership at some point in her life:

> I've really got to look within and see, "Is this just that push that I need that gets me in that other area (administration)?" I've told you: I don't want administration. I didn't feel strong enough for that. I didn't want to have to mess with the adult part of it. I've had to go kicking and screaming through doors before, the Lord dragging me by my heels, you know? Is this what he's trying to tell me? Is this the battle He's preparing me for? I don't know.

Conclusion

Limited by her inability to see the larger picture of her purpose for being at River's End, Stephanie remained uncertain that she would have ever moved from South Carolina had she known what the beginning of this year held in store. She remained even less certain about what the future holds for her at this new school as well as in the field of education.

CHAPTER 5

MICHELLE

"Success comes in cans; Failure comes in can't's"

—Source Unknown

Getting to Know Michelle

I first encountered Michelle when I called to invite her to participate in this study. Although she immediately agreed, she expressed concern that our interviewing time might be limited. She told me that she would be coaching the high school ladies' softball team during the fall, and that practices would begin immediately after school and would last until 6:30 or 7:00 p.m.

I assured Michelle that she and I could meet in the mornings if necessary, so her coaching duties would not interfere with the study. As I hung up the telephone, though, I wondered what impact her responsibilities as a coach would have on her adjustment to her new teaching position. Would being away from her classroom every afternoon make her first year in Cyprus County more difficult?

I quickly discovered that my concerns were somewhat unfounded. Michelle was a veteran at managing change. She was able to draw from a wealth of experiences, ranging from teaching P.E. and coaching at several levels to teaching early childhood education. Likewise, juggling teaching and coaching responsibilities were nothing new to her. In fact, coaching seemed to drive Michelle's teaching career; having to teach in a classroom

without a concurrent coaching position would have been an unwelcome situation for her. It had been that way for Michelle since the beginning of her career.

Previous Teaching Experiences

Michelle completed her student teaching in Physical Education at a middle school in Thompson County, the place where she grew up. Although there were no P.E. positions available at that school after she graduated, Michelle accepted a job teaching science there. Michelle encountered a number of problems at her first school, many of which stemmed from her attempts to teach a subject she had not been trained to teach. She explained, "I was just *totally* unprepared for the middle school classroom. And I had to work really hard and study and prepare."

Michelle also struggled to effectively manage student behavior in the middle school classroom. Her student teaching experience had taught her how to manage behavior in the gymnasium, not in the science classroom. Michelle recalled:

> It was the discipline, the behavior. I was just appalled at the way kids behaved. It was one of those situations where I just felt totally out of control. Brand new situation, and middle school kids pick up real quick. A new, young person that they think they can control. And they sort of did, I think, and I let them get the best of me. I left the school at Christmas that year. I only taught those first four months.

There were additional reasons that Michelle decided not to continue teaching that year. First, she had just had a baby. She remembered, "There was the thing of Alex being home, too. So that was a big part of it; I hated leaving Alex at home. I remember *that* being a big part of making me dislike it even more." Secondly, when she was hired, she

was told that she would be coaching. Instead, said Michelle, a "black woman got the job" because of a "racial issue." Dissatisfied, Michelle left in mid-year with the intention of never teaching again.

After being at home awhile, however, Michelle began to realize that she had invested too much time in her education to not use it, so she decided to give teaching another chance. She said, "I knew that I liked teaching, and I realized the situation I left was just—a bad situation, a bad experience."

The following year, Michelle had the opportunity to try again, this time teaching remedial math at Reidland Elementary, which was located only a mile from her home. Although she was still teaching out of her field, she only had to work with a few students at a time. She said:

> I had a parapro, so it was just an ideal opportunity, knowing that there was a real good possibility that elementary P.E. was fixing to come about. See, at this time there wasn't. But it did. I only had to teach remedial math one year, and then we started the elementary P.E. program there the next year, and I got to do that.

After teaching at Reidland Elementary for a year, Michelle decided to spend the next year at home taking care of her son, Alex. Before that next school year began, though, she was offered the opportunity to become an assistant basketball coach at the high school level. Because she had already given up her teaching position at Reidland, Michelle needed to find another teaching position in order to be able to coach. She found this position at another nearby school, Leaf Elementary.

Soon after she began teaching at Leaf Elementary, Michelle's second son, Doug, was born. Michelle recalled:

> Doug had some problems. He was born with a cleft palate and lip, so he required a lot of trips to the doctor and surgeries and that kind of thing. So I decided at that point to stay home, which was what I wanted to do anyway with my kids.

Michelle stayed home for the next ten years. During that time, she also had a daughter, Donna. Although Michelle did some babysitting and substitute teaching, she spent most of her time at home raising her children.

When Michelle decided she was ready to go back to work full-time, there were no P.E. openings in Thompson County, so she went back to school full-time to add Early Childhood Education to her certificate. She was subsequently offered a chance to return to Reidland Elementary as a second grade teacher. Michelle taught second grade at Reidland for five years, and also coached at the middle school.

When a middle school P.E. position became available, Michelle took advantage of the opportunity to teach in her original field of study. However, she initially had some reservations because of her previous experiences teaching middle school. She explained:

> That was the first opportunity since I had been back in the school system that had come open in my field, so I decided if I ever wanted to teach P.E., I needed to take that if I got the opportunity. When I went from the second grade classroom into the middle school again, I had a horror of that horrible experience happening again, because I thought that I'd never teach again, and especially not at the middle school level. So when that P.E. position came open at the middle school, I thought about it for literally months before, because I was scared to take it. I'd just had nightmares about that happening again. But it was totally different. And I'm sure that it's from the classroom experience, I was more prepared for what the

> middle school kids would be like. The thing that was hard about leaving second grade and going to middle school was I knew I had a job that I liked; but then there was this part of me that felt like if I didn't get back into P.E. and try that, that I would always wonder: Did I miss out on something that I could have done, or should have done? There was the fear of just dealing with middle school kids as far as discipline. It wasn't being able to teach them what I was supposed to teach them, but discipline.

Michelle's second experience at teaching middle school proved far more pleasant than her first experience, and she spent the next four years there teaching P.E. She also coached basketball and softball at the middle school during most of the time she was teaching there, which was a luxury to which she was unaccustomed. Until that point in her career, Michelle had always taught at one school and coached at a different one. She said, "When I got the job at the middle school, everything was at the same place, so that helped."

After teaching at the middle school for four years, however, Michelle was forced to change jobs. She said, "Because of Governor Barnes' changes in the middle school P.E. requirements, I took a P.E. job at Leaf Elementary." Although the middle school administrators needed her to coach softball and basketball, there would no longer be enough P.E. positions available for Michelle to continue to teach at the middle school.

After one year of teaching elementary P.E., Michelle decided to do something different "because of…just being exhausted. I was ready to go back to the classroom, so I had a fifth grade teaching position at Leaf Elementary for this coming year." Although

she was happy at Leaf and was willing to teach fifth grade for the 2001-2002 school year, Michelle had some concerns. She said:

> The thing that bothered me most about going into fifth grade at Leaf where I had taught P.E. the year before, was that I was afraid that the kids would still see me as their P.E. teacher. They knew me for a whole year as their P.E. teacher, and of course, it's a whole different setting. Well, plus, not only that group coming to me that year, but every group from kindergarten on up for the next five years! Those children originally knew me as their P.E. teacher, and so it was good to come into a situation where they just knew me as a classroom teacher.

Michelle found that situation unexpectedly. Before the school year started, she was presented with the chance to coach at the high school level in Cyprus County. It was this opportunity that led to Michelle's move.

Struggles in Her Previous Positions

Although Michelle generally discussed her previous teaching experiences in positive terms, she expressed that she had struggled with two main issues as a P.E. teacher: feeling undervalued, and feeling isolated. Both issues were related to the uniqueness of teaching outside the regular classroom.

Michelle noted that as a P.E. teacher, "you are not considered a 'real teacher.'" She explained, "There's always a part of you when you're in a different field like that that feels like you're not a real teacher, even though you know you are." I understood Michelle's sentiments clearly. As a music teacher who was not initially given a classroom in which to work, I traveled from classroom to classroom. I would often hear teachers say, "Put everything away; the music teacher's here!" The inference I sometimes made

was that other teachers did not consider me to be as much of a professional as they were, and therefore designated me by function, rather than by name. Although I knew that my certification was equal to the other teachers' certifications, I sometimes felt like a glorified babysitter—tremendously undervalued by my colleagues.

Michelle also talked about the isolation P.E. teachers and other teachers who teach in "different" fields face. She said that when you teach P.E.:

> You're kind of isolated, because you are the only P.E. teacher in the school. So there's not much adult interaction, other than when they bring their class to you or pick their class up. So, you're kind of an island, or it feels that way at times.

This issue of isolation strongly resonated with me. In almost every teaching position I have held, I was the only music teacher in the school. It has sometimes been lonely not working with other teachers or planning activities with them.

Michelle's feeling of being "an island" was only an issue when she taught elementary P.E. When she taught P.E. at the middle school level, there were five P.E. teachers at the middle school. Michelle and one other coach paired up to plan and coordinate their lessons. And when Michelle taught second grade, she had plenty of opportunity to collaborate with other second grade teachers.

Previous Collegial Relationships

Although Michelle did not always have the opportunity to work collaboratively with her colleagues, she said that her relationships at her previous schools were generally good. Many times, the quality of those relationships caused Michelle to hesitate before moving from one school to another. She explained:

> Relationships with my colleagues were always really good. It was a positive environment most of the time. As a whole, the people that I've worked with have been positive and helpful. And that would always make it hard to change schools. Like when I would change schools, those were some of the hardest decisions that I had to make. So the relationships with them have always been positive.

Despite her positive relationships with her colleagues in Thompson County, Michelle said that her transitions from school to school in that county were often less pleasant than her most recent transition (to Cyprus County). She said, "These people here have seemed to be more willing to help or more interested in what's going on with their people." She also explained that in Cyprus County, "It's been more of a situation of them asking" if they could help her, rather than her searching for someone who might be willing to help. She wondered if the reason for the differences was related to the fact that Thompson County was her hometown. She said:

> It's probably because I grew up there. I guess they assume that I knew as much as they did about it. Or maybe they felt uncomfortable offering information. They might have thought I would have been offended by it, maybe. Whereas here, they know when I come in that I don't know, so they feel more free to offer, maybe.

Michelle's Personality

Michelle's personality characteristics seemed to significantly contribute to her ability to succeed in a variety of teaching and relational situations. One of her strongest traits seemed to be confidence. Michelle had a note on her personal bulletin board that read, "Success comes in cans; Failure comes in can'ts." That note seemed to be representative of her attitude toward life. She enjoyed a fairly successful first three

months as an experienced new teacher in Cyprus County—perhaps due in part to her attitude that this would be a good year for her, no matter what happened.

In the time that I spent with Michelle, I also noticed that she approached life with a sense of humor. She once mentioned that she had recently seen a former colleague from Thompson County who asked her how much longer she had to teach before she could retire. When she told him that she had spent ten years away from teaching to raise her own children, he said, "You'll be dead before you can retire!" As Michelle told me that story, she laughed hysterically. Instead of becoming discouraged by that discussion, she seemed to find a lot of humor in her friend's comment.

Michelle also seemed to have an exceptionally optimistic attitude. She referred to herself as "one of these that thinks that everything works together for a reason."

Still, I sometimes found myself wondering if there were issues that Michelle was upset or concerned about that she did not share with me. She was an extremely private person who did not freely divulge personal information or easily share her own feelings. I sometimes was forced to piece together conclusions from bits of information that she offered, and to verify with her the accuracy of those conclusions. I wondered if her guardedness was a personality trait that better enabled her to move from place to place, or simply a behavioral result of the many transitions she has made in her career.

Making the Move to Cyprus County

Michelle experienced very few difficulties in making the move from Thompson County to Cyprus County; however, she talked extensively about the transition and what it entailed. Michelle discussed the hiring process, being released from her contract in Thompson County, her personal struggles with the move, the fact that she had more

questions than preconceived ideas about Oakwood, and the new teacher assistance she was provided.

An "Unusual" Hiring Process

Her first experience with Cyprus County involved what Michelle called "an unusual hiring process." The day after Michelle finished post-planning in Thompson County, the Athletic Director of Cyprus County called to talk to her about two extra-curricular positions: a softball coaching position and a basketball assistant coaching position. Michelle was interested in coaching, particularly basketball, which was her "main love." But in order for Michelle to coach in Cyprus County, she had to have a teaching position there, so the Athletic Director called the County Office to find a teaching position for her. Margaret Tyson—the Personnel Director—then contacted Mr. Lawson, the principal at Oakwood Elementary. There was also another person involved. Michelle said:

> Scott Fralter at the county office is a former coach of my high school from years and years ago. And so he had his hand in it a lot as far as talking to Mr. Lawson and Ms. Tyson, and it was kind of like those three who handled the hiring details.

The interview for her position in Cyprus County was much different than any other interview Michelle had ever experienced. "Growing up in Thompson County," she said, "it's like a lot of politics in there; there was no interviewing process any of those times in Thompson County…or nothing like *that* I should say." Michelle described her interview as "a very detailed interview. They asked lots of questions about your philosophy, how you handle behavior, how you teach reading—you know, things like that."

When Michelle went to the interview, she did not know for which position she was being interviewed. She said:

> The funny part of the interview, well it wasn't funny then, but when he asked the question about what grade level I preferred, my answer was second grade or above—that I didn't think I would want kindergarten or first for sure. I didn't know until after the interview that the opening they had was a first grade position.

Regardless, that situation worked out, because the principal had recently placed another new hire in a fifth grade position, and that teacher was actually more comfortable teaching the lower grades.

Soon after the interview, Ms. Tyson offered Michelle a fifth grade teaching position at Oakwood Elementary, but Michelle did not accept it right away. She said she needed to think about it and be certain that moving to Cyprus County was what she wanted. After thinking about it, she almost did not accept the position. She said:

> I called back and turned the job down. I said, "I just can't do it. There are just too many things… I just can't." I just turned it down. There were several reasons, and I guess fear was a big one – you know just the big fear of all the changes. And then, the week after I turned the job down, I was miserable. I just felt like I had messed up. And this is really strange, but my daughter, who will be a junior in high school, she wanted the change too. So she knew that Coach Fralter and I were good friends from way back. She called him, without me knowing it, and told him that she felt like I still wanted it. So Coach Fralter called me back, and he said, "Do you still want that job?" And I said, "Yeah I do." So he called Mr.

> Lawson, and the job was still available, and it was still mine if I wanted it. So at that point, I took it…and I think the right decision was made.

Michelle said, "I would not have called back and said, 'I've changed my mind.' I probably would not have done that." Had her daughter not made that phone call to Scott Fralter, she admitted, "I probably would still be in Thompson County, and would probably have regretted it."

Being Released from Thompson County

Once Michelle was hired in Cyprus County, she had to be released from her contract in Thompson County, which ended up being "quite a hassle." Although the principal at Leaf Elementary wanted her to stay, Michelle said, "she knew Cyprus County was a good school system and a good opportunity for me. And she knew that it was something that I would have wanted to do. So she was willing to let me go." But that principal was not the only one involved in the process; there were two other schools involved in the contract release: Thompson County Middle School, where Michelle was to coach basketball, and Thompson County High School, where she was to be the assistant tennis coach. All three principals had to be willing to find someone else to fill her positions at those schools, and they did not act at all pleased with having to do that.

Although they eventually all agreed, the Superintendent of Cyprus County called Michelle and said:

> As I've thought through this process, I don't understand why you weren't coaching on the high school level in *our* county. It makes me wonder what's going on at the high school, because everything I hear about you, it sounds like we're losing a valuable person.

Personal Struggles

Being released from her contract was not Michelle's only struggle. She also dealt with some personal struggles as a result of her move to Cyprus County. She explained:

> The decision to come here was really stressful because I've always been in Thompson County. I taught at several different schools within the county, but it was always in that same school system. So the decision to come here was really hard—just fear of the unknown.

Michelle cited the fact that she knew few people in the Cyprus County area as one of the reasons for her fear. In addition, she said, this was her "first head-coaching experience on the high school level," which caused her some anxiety. Michelle also described the increased distance from her family in Thompson County as being a difficult adjustment to make. "It's not like it's that far away," she said, "but still, it's not like being able to drive five minutes and be at Momma's house. So pulling away from the family a little bit has made that hard to come here."

Michelle also struggled with settling into her new living situation. In our first interview, she said:

> I'm renting a place in Shell temporarily. I have a contract on a house in Newberry on Oak Street, which is real close to here, pending the sale of mine in Reidland. But as of right now, mine hasn't sold in Reidland, so I can't buy the place until mine sells, because I need that down-payment. So we're renting in Shell, but going back and forth to Thompson County on the weekends or at other times as needed.

Michelle said that she might have considered traveling back and forth to Thompson County until her house sold; however, in order for her daughter to play sports at Cyprus County High School, she was required to live in Cyprus County.

During my second visit with Michelle, she shared that she was still very frustrated with her living situation. The house that she was renting was only a guesthouse, and there was no washer or dryer. For her, that meant that when her softball team had more than one game in a week, Michelle had to make a special trip to the Laundromat to wash her uniform and her daughter's uniform. In addition, because there was so little room in the guesthouse, Michelle had been unable to move all of her cookware into the house. On most days, Michelle and her daughter ate dinner en route to the place they were renting.

By the final time I met with Michelle, this aspect of her life had improved. She said:

> Things are better personally, too, because we finally got a contract on our house. If everything goes well, I should be settled into a house here by Thanksgiving. That's my goal. So that will help a lot, because right now, my vehicle is loaded down with things where we're going back to Thompson County after school for the weekend to pack. We've got a lot of packing to do. Once all that is settled, and just knowing that I have the contract now helps, because I know in a few weeks we *can* go to a house where our furniture is, where we know where everything is. Where a washer and dryer are. And that's closer, too. It's like 15 or 20 minutes to where we're renting right now, and the place where we're buying is five minutes from here, maybe. So that'll make a difference, too.

Questions, Not Preconceived Ideas

Although Michelle dealt with some personal struggles as part of her move, her transition was made easier because she did not form rigid preliminary expectations about her new school. She said, “I think I came here with more questions than I did with preconceived ideas about what it would be like.” In some ways, Michelle had expected it to be similar to the other elementary schools where she had taught, but she also realized that all schools are managed differently. Michelle noted, “I really don't think I had enough preconceived notions that it affected anything, because I knew it could be very, very different.”

Not only did Michelle not allow preconceived notions to affect her new situation, she also had the attitude that she would need to be the one to adjust to the people and the routine at Oakwood Elementary. She said, “I kind of came into it knowing that things might be very different, and that I would have to be the one that made the adjustments, that I would have to adjust to go with their flow.”

Cyprus County New Teacher Assistance

A final element of Michelle’s move to Cyprus County involved the new teacher assistance programs provided by the school system. Although Cyprus County offered two days of induction before pre-planning, Michelle was excused from attending on the second day because of a prior commitment. Michelle pointed out that she still had some makeup work to do from that second day of induction, and that there was also an induction notebook that she needed to complete—although she had not received it yet. She said:

> The notebook that I don't have yet, I think it has a lot of other stuff in it. It's just their way of making sure that we know who everybody is that we're working with, and know where things are that we need access to, and that we make ourselves aware of things we need to know.

Although she believed the induction requirements were important, Michelle also said that she had not had time to accomplish most of the requirements.

When I asked Michelle to describe her first day of induction, she explained that the new teachers visited each of the schools, met all of the other new people, and filled out paperwork. She said:

> The best thing to me about the new teacher orientation was just seeing all the other new teachers, just getting to know them a little bit that day, and finding out how they ended up in Cyprus County. That first day we spent visiting each of the schools, we were on and off a bus, going school to school, and we had lunch together. And it was a nice welcome for all the new people. So we had a lot of opportunities to interact with the other new people and get to know them.

The induction leaders in Cyprus County guided the new teachers through some helpful computer aids. But by the time Michelle got back to Oakwood Elementary and tried to find those things on the computer, she "didn't remember exactly how to get to it." Michelle commented:

> I think they make the effort to do everything possible to make it easy and to tell us the things we need to know, like we had a checklist for things to cover with new teachers. But because there was so much to do, we still aren't through the list. The

assistant principal and I haven't had time to just sit down and go through that sheet.

Cyprus County also provided two after-school meetings as a part of the required teacher induction; however, because of Michelle's coaching schedule, she was unable to attend either of those. Michelle said, "They've kind of lost me in the shuffle. I'm not sure what they're gonna do with me. But there are several of us that are in that situation, and they're kind of making adjustments for it."

Although Michelle felt "lost in the shuffle" with the county-wide new teacher assistance, she found one aspect of Oakwood Elementary to be particularly helpful: grade-level meetings. In those meetings, she said, "You can sit down with just the people in your grade, and it's not school-wide, so you can just find out just what pertains to you."

Conclusion

Although Michelle experienced some struggles during her transition, she was excited about the opportunities she had been given when she moved to Cyprus County. To her, making the move from Thompson County to Cyprus County was worth the minor difficulties she experienced.

Frustrations for Michelle, the Teacher

As an experienced new teacher, Michelle encountered several areas of difficulty. These included learning "the ropes," learning the curriculum, being overwhelmed with the extra "stuff" associated with teaching fifth grade, team teaching, working with an EIP teacher, and working with a paraprofessional.

Learning "the Ropes"

The first time I met with Michelle, she was experiencing considerable frustration with her attempts to understand the ways her new school operated. She was having a particularly difficult time dealing with issues such as lesson plan requirements, the e-mail system, and the scheduling of staff meetings. She complained:

> The new-teacher sheets tell you that lesson plans are due at such-and-such-a-time, but then, I don't know what type lesson plans you are talking about. Are you talking about detailed plans that are correlated with the QCC's, are you talking about just a plan that I could go by for my own benefit, are you talking about a plan that a sub could pick up? What kind of lesson plans are you asking for?

Michelle was also frustrated because, although her e-mail generally worked, she did not always receive e-mails. One day when Michelle was teaching, the superintendent, the personnel director, and the principal all came in her classroom. After they left, Michelle asked her team teacher, Ms. Etheridge, if she had had any visitors, and Ms. Etheridge said, "No, did you?"

Michelle told her about her visitors, and Ms. Etheridge replied, "Oh, yeah, they said in the e-mail that they'd be coming to all the new teachers' rooms to observe them." But Michelle did not know about the visit because she had never received that e-mail.

Michelle also struggled to learn the schedule of activities for the teachers at Oakwood Elementary. Although she found grade level meetings helpful, she said, "I haven't figured out a pattern yet. I'm not sure if we're meeting once a week, or what."

During my second visit with Michelle, I noticed that it was also taking her some time to learn where educational materials and supplies were kept. In one instance,

Michelle needed iodine for a science experiment, so she looked for it in a science kit in her classroom. When her search was unsuccessful, I heard her say, “I don’t think we have any.” I asked Michelle if she had had trouble looking for other materials for science experiments. She said:

> I've only done a couple of those experiments so far, because of not having the materials to do that. And they may be available somewhere in the building. If I knew exactly which people to ask, I probably could round them up, if I had the time to do that. There are some science materials in the cabinet, if I just took the time to sort everything out and get it organized.

Michelle noted that concerning “regular materials, books, supplies and the bulletin board things,” her colleagues have either told her where the supplies are, gone to get the supplies for her, or they have given her “their stuff.” Michelle added, “So, things like that have been pretty easy to get.” She continued, “That is a concern when you first come into a place, just knowing where things are. But it hasn't been that much of a problem. And I'm getting more familiar with it now.”

By my final visit with Michelle, she was feeling more at ease with many aspects of her job at Oakwood. She said, “I feel much more comfortable now with everything.” She added, “Things that were kind of scary at first, things like AR, putting in goals and stuff that I worried about for *days* earlier. I changed the goals for the second six weeks in ten minutes the other day.”

Michelle had become so comfortable working at Oakwood that she was no longer asking basic informational questions; instead, she was focusing her energy on improving her teaching. She said:

> If I taught fifth grade again next year, I can see some things that I would change the order in which I do them—as I get more familiar with what's in the reading stories and what's in the science curriculum.

Curriculum

During my first interview with Michelle, she shared some reservations about teaching the fifth grade curriculum—even expressing some concerns about being in the classroom. As a former P.E. teacher, she was afraid that she would not teach the students everything they needed to know. She explained:

> Curriculum is still something that I'm learning day to day. And I've had to make myself just take an overall look at the QCC's for the science and the language arts, which is what I'm teaching. So it's just been kind of a brief look at the overall QCC's, and a lot of talk with Ms. Mullis, the fifth grade teacher who does the science for the other group—just trying to pace myself with her.

During my second visit with Michelle, she was working to recognize areas in which her students were having difficulty and to teach to those difficulties. She said:

> I'm getting a better idea of who's falling behind, who needs the extra help, more of individualized ideas about who's going to have to have some extra stuff. So instead of a whole group thing, I'm realizing that there are going to be some that are going to require more.

By my third visit, Michelle said that although there were still curriculum issues that she was "not as comfortable with, especially with the computers," she had made great strides toward understanding the curriculum. She was beginning to focus on ways to

make the curriculum better for the following year if she chose to teach fifth grade again. She said:

> A story we just read would go along better with another unit in science, but since I wasn't familiar with the material, I didn't know to do that this year. So things are kind of pulling together with more ease than they were at first.

Being Overwhelmed

After having taught P.E. for several years, Michelle said that it had been difficult being back in the classroom again, mostly because of "all the extra stuff that's not actually part of the curriculum." Michelle had never taught fifth grade, and she was having trouble managing all of the fifth grade activities. Michelle said:

> Scheduling—figuring out how to get in all the different academics that we're supposed to get during the day—Ms. Etheridge and I have worked with that, and revamped it several times already, trying to figure out what works best. Oh, finding out that we also have 4-H. 4-H makes them do all sorts of stuff, and so figuring out, realizing that I'm going to have to figure out how to combine what 4-H wants in some way with what I need to be teaching, and because it takes up so much time. And then, stuff like the D.A.R.E. officer starts coming week after next. I think it's the extra stuff that's more overwhelming than what I'm actually supposed to be doing.

The teachers at Oakwood Elementary also had one "activity period" a week, which was on the day that students did not have P.E., art, or music. In order to provide a planning time for the teachers on that day, the administrators required teachers to create

an educational activity that could be monitored by a paraprofessional. Michelle said she had difficulty "coming up with stuff, the first few weeks of school especially."

Additionally, Michelle had difficulty understanding the Accelerated Reader program in Cyprus County. She said:

> The Accelerated Reader stuff is overwhelming because I'm not familiar with the goal setting. We were told we have to turn in a diagnostic report every three weeks. And one of those is due, well actually it was probably today. And see, I haven't even done that. And when they tell you stuff like that, and you realize what that entails. You've had to set goals for this child, you've had to determine their reading level, you've had to do all this stuff, and these are kids that I knew absolutely nothing about, haven't had time to sit down and look through their folders, haven't had time to see what their reading level or grade work at the end of last year, that kind of stuff is overwhelming.

Michelle summed up these frustrations by saying:

> When I really think about it, it's not the teaching of the reading or the English, or the spelling, or the science that has me overwhelmed; I can teach those. If I had time to adequately plan and organize that, that wouldn't be a problem. And were it not for all the extra stuff, you could do that. So I think it's all the things that I'm realizing that the classroom teacher has to deal with outside her regular academic stuff, is probably the most overwhelming.

Team Teaching

Team teaching was another area in which Michelle had no experience. Although Michelle had her doubts about team teaching at first, she and Ms. Etheridge decided it would be best for their students. During our first interview together, Michelle said:

> The kids probably get better teaching with us just doing the two subjects, and trying to do those two well, rather than just trying to sort of hit on all four. So, I feel like we've done the right thing for everybody that's involved.

But as I visited later with Michelle, she seemed to become more frustrated with team teaching. She explained:

> There are definite advantages to having the same children all day, because I have more control over my twenty-five than I do over hers. So, at times, I question whether it would not balance out better overall to do the extra planning and have the same routine, the kids being familiar with exactly what I expected. Because even though Ms. Etheridge and I are a lot alike, there are enough differences in us that the kids have to adjust to that, or we have to adjust to what the other one does with their own class. So there are times that I wonder if I wouldn't rather do it the other way.

One factor that became especially stressful for Michelle was that Ms. Etheridge kept a close watch on what Michelle was doing with the reading curriculum. During our second interview, Michelle said, "Ms. Etheridge likes to know what I'm doing and the process that I use. She likes to know exactly what I'm doing in reading with her kids." She continued, "I, on the other hand, pretty much totally trust her with the math."

Because Michelle trusted Ms. Etheridge, she was bothered by Ms. Etheridge's lack of reciprocal trust in her teaching ability.

Michelle was not the only one of the pair who was concerned about team teaching: Ms. Etheridge had expressed some frustrations as well. Michelle said:

> One time she even asked about just switching for science and social studies. But at the end of that discussion, I said, "Let's think about it, and then we'll talk about it." It was on a Friday when she said that. We came back Monday, I said, "Let's just keep doing what we're doing. Is that O.K.?" And she said, "Yeah, I think that's probably what we need to do." So, we both started coming to the same conclusion after we thought about it, even though we see problems with it. I'm not so sure that next year that I wouldn't prefer just keeping my own kids all day—even though it would mean planning the social studies and the math.

Understanding the EIP Program

Another area that proved a difficult adjustment for Michelle was the EIP program. Michelle's class was considered an EIP classroom, which under normal circumstances would mean that she would have had approximately 14 students in her classroom. However, because the EIP program at Oakwood Elementary was designed so that a certified resource teacher worked with individual EIP students in the regular classroom setting, Michelle had 25 students in her classroom. I asked Ms. Etheridge why that had happened, and she explained that Governor Barnes had required smaller class sizes for the EIP program, but Cyprus County did not have enough local funds to build a classroom or "get a trailer" for the EIP class. So the county had created a solution: Divide

fourteen EIP students between two teachers (Michelle and Ms. Etheridge), and hire an additional person to be a resource EIP teacher that assisted both teachers.

The effectiveness of this arrangement was reduced, however, by the fact that Ms. Wilkes, the EIP resource teacher, was a first-year teacher, and she was uncomfortable working with students individually or in small groups. Therefore, instead of functioning as an independent resource teacher, she took more of an assistant's role to both Michelle and Ms. Etheridge. Michelle did not like the situation. She said:

> The EIP teacher and I are in here at the same time, instead of a pull-out situation. I think that that position would be more helpful to us and the students if it was a pull-out thing. When you have two teachers in the room at the same time, one of them has got to be in charge, and so the other one is kind of just monitoring and helping. And that helps, if that person is roaming and kind of helping each one. But to me, it just seems like a small group pulled out, the ones that need the extra help would get the extra help better. *Plus* the ones that were in here could move on. So that's kind of difficult right now.

Michelle was not the only one who was unhappy with the EIP situation. Michelle said that Ms. Etheridge was very concerned, "because when it comes test time, there's the accountability issue. She's concerned that those children are not going to score well at all because they're not getting the help and instruction that they should be getting from her."

Michelle felt that it was partially her fault that Ms. Wilkes was not taking more responsibility for her students' learning. She explained:

> I have a tendency to feel sorry for Ms. Wilkes because I know she's not real comfortable with it yet. And I'm one of these that wants to kind of let her ease

> into it, and so I kind of have a tendency to take it all on myself, thinking, "I can do this, and just use her slowly." But Ms. Etheridge says it's at the point to where it's been six weeks; it's time for her to do what she's supposed to do.

During my second visit with Michelle, Ms. Wilkes was trying to design a schedule that would accommodate both teachers' needs. But part of that schedule included Ms. Wilkes spending an hour-and-a-half every day working on the yearbook with the art teacher. Ms. Etheridge complained to the school administration, saying that if Ms. Wilkes had that much time on her hands, she could come help "my flunking students—that's her job!" So the schedule was changed. In the process, Ms. Etheridge was also assigned breakfast duty, which made her very unhappy.

During my final visit with Michelle, she told me that she had been bringing Ms. Wilkes into her classroom to teach occasionally. Michelle said, "I'd like to think that maybe that helped to give her a little confidence." At first, Ms. Wilkes only taught the grammar lesson, but eventually, Oakwood's administrators asked Ms. Wilkes to teach each class (Michelle's and Ms. Etheridge's) one day a week. They had arranged it so that she taught the reading lesson with the whole group on Mondays for Michelle, and the math lesson for the whole group on another day of the week. Michelle said, "Now she's in a situation where she feels more comfortable working with the kids. It gives her more authority, and more responsibility, which I think she needed."

Michelle, Ms. Etheridge, and Ms. Wilkes had also created more of a "pull-out situation." Michelle explained:

> Now we've worked it out where she's pulling her kids out, the ones that are labeled EIP. She's going to adapt what I am teaching for them, because there's a

> lot of stuff that I do with the rest of the class that's not beneficial for those. It would be better if they were just reading, or working on vocabulary, or that kind of thing, so they're getting more of what they need. And she does seem to feel comfortable with them now. And the kids like her. And with them being pulled out like that, I'll go out to see, and they're working. They're quiet. Some of those can be behavior problems, but they're doing good. And she knows, if they don't, she'll just send them back in. And if they come back in, they have to do what we're doing. So they'd rather be with her. So that's working pretty good right now.

Working with a Paraprofessional

In addition to the EIP resource person, Michelle also had been assigned a paraprofessional to work with her each day. That situation also required Michelle to adjust, because she had never had that kind of assistance before.

Michelle told me that her paraprofessional, Ms. Cook, "does the parapro activity time, which we have either once or twice a week, and that's Accelerated Reader time. And she's really good with the kids. They know what to expect from her, and they mind her really well." But although Ms. Cook's position was designed to provide more assistance to both Michelle and her students than just "parapro activity time," Michelle was not accustomed to having someone consistently available to help her teach. She said:

> When I was in the classroom before at Reidland, we had a parapro for second grade. And she really wasn't with us that much. She did take a few kids at a time and read with them, help them catch up and things like that. And she would do all our running papers, and that kind of business stuff for it, so that we didn't have to deal with that. So that's more of what I'm used to.

By the time of my final visit with her, Michelle was beginning to make additional efforts to more effectively work with a paraprofessional. She explained:

> Ms. Cook made the comment the other day that I didn't need her, that I could do everything by myself, so I guess sometimes she feels like I'm not giving her enough to do. So I'm working on trying to make sure that I use her like I should, so she can feel useful.

A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000

The thing that caused Michelle more frustration than anything else was the fact that A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000 had forced her to leave her middle school P.E. position and teach in an elementary school. Had it not been for that change, Michelle would have still been teaching middle school P.E. in Thompson County, and would never have moved to Cyprus County. She said:

> Changing from the middle school to the elementary school was really hard because that was a decision that I really didn't want to make. I would have rather stayed at the middle school, but not under the circumstances that it was probably going to be: teaching some subject other than health or P.E. So that was kind of a situation that sort of makes you angry at the people higher up, that make the decisions—make the choices for you.

Michelle said that she had "often rethought" her decision to leave the middle school and teach P.E. in the elementary school. Just before my third visit with Michelle, she had gone back to visit her friends at the middle school where she taught in Thompson County. She said:

> You know what's happened since then, I found out the other day that made it even more frustrating? The job that I left because of having to probably go back into the classroom and all that, that would've been the case last year, but had I ridden that out for a year, I probably would've been back there, because they have placed a guy in that position now, so they're back to the five P.E. teachers. They've tried to put the kids back in P.E. because they've realized that they needed to be there. (The other teachers were having more behavior problems and that kind of thing.) When he told me that, I was happy for him because he's wanted to do that for so long, but then I thought, "I gave this up, and I could have it again." In a sense, it's aggravating, but then in a way, I'm one of these that thinks that everything works together for a reason, anyway, so I think that, yeah, I'm supposed to be here, for some reason, and if I had to have gone through all that for it to happen, then that's okay.

Michelle's Challenges as a Coach

One of the things I discovered about Michelle during the time I spent with her is that she truly loved being a coach. Although there were times she seemed exhausted because of all the extra work and responsibility, it was apparent to me that she enjoyed the coaching aspect of her job. She said, "If I had to pinpoint the number one primary reason that coming here has been a good experience is, it would be the coaching opportunity that I had."

Michelle's love for coaching was especially noticeable during my last visit with her. Just prior to that day, the softball team Michelle coached had finished their season with an 11-11 record and an exceptional performance at the final tournament. There were

only two graduating seniors on the team that fall, and just one of those played regularly. Michelle was clearly excited at the prospect of coaching an even better team the following year.

Although Michelle loved coaching, she faced several challenges associated with her extra duties. First, she had very little time to rest when she was teaching and coaching simultaneously. During our final interview, Michelle said, “This week has been good because this is the break. This is the week that I haven't had any coaching. So it's been a nice rest.”

Balancing Coaching and Teaching

Michelle said that one of the most difficult areas of her job at Oakwood Elementary was balancing coaching and teaching. She categorized it as being “pretty overwhelming.” Regardless of what Michelle still needed to complete at the end of her teaching day at Oakwood, she could not stay in the afternoons because she had to go to practice. Michelle commented, “By the time you get home from practice and you have a meal, you get your shower, you do all those things, there’s not a lot of time left.” She added, “It’s like, as soon as one’s over, the other one starts, and then it starts over again, so that’s kind of the overwhelming part.”

Knowing that there are several teachers who do what Michelle does—teach all day and coach all afternoon—some may have a difficult time understanding why she was complaining. But Michelle said:

> I think part of the frustration thing is—I don’t know of a lot of situations like mine. Most coaches either do health and P.E. or an elective class, or something that’s on a schedule that doesn’t require as much accountability. It’s rare for

somebody to be coaching at the high school and teaching a regular ed classroom at the elementary level. And I chose to come back into the classroom. But there are times when I think, "You're gonna have to either give up the coaching, which I love, or you're gonna have to find a teaching situation that's not as demanding."

I asked Michelle if her schedule ever got a little easier to handle. She told me that the coaching responsibilities go on into the year. She explained:

Basketball practice actually starts the 16th of October, and the area tournament in softball is the first weekend in October. Which there'll be a week or so in there if we don't go past region. If we do make it past region, there may not be any time in there. So it kind of goes from one right into the other. And they've mentioned me coaching tennis, but I said, "NOOO." I don't want to take on any other coaching thing.

The significant time required by Michelle's coaching responsibilities created several problems for her in her new elementary school. First, her teaching preparation time was too brief. Michelle was rarely able to stay at school and plan or organize her teaching materials. On the day of my second visit with Michelle, it was raining. Because softball practice had to be cancelled, she was able to spend 45 minutes planning lessons and organizing her room. Michelle said she enjoyed that time, because she rarely had afternoon time to do those things.

Not only was Michelle's preparation time short, she also had little time to spend talking with her colleagues. She said, "As far as building relationships with anybody else, there's just not time."

In addition, Michelle felt that her family time greatly suffered during the coaching seasons. She explained:

> I feel like my daughter gets left out. You know, she's involved in the athletics, but I feel like there's not a whole lot left over for her. So I think that's the frustration. If I just had the teaching part, and didn't work with the coaching or the other way around…which you can't do.

Michelle's Lack of Experience as Head Softball Coach

Although Michelle was an experienced coach, she was not entirely comfortable coaching softball. Not only was Michelle teaching fifth grade for the first time—she was also a head softball coach for the first time. She said:

> Softball is a learning thing, too. I mean, I've coached softball a lot before, but there are still certain things about it that I didn't feel comfortable with that had to grow on me as the season went along. So there are things there that I know I can do better next season than what I did this season. I wasn't really the coach that I normally am because of feeling uncomfortable with it at first. I was worried about my skills, but I could not let the players know it. They can't know that you feel a little uncomfortable with it, because they look up to you so much and have a lot of respect for you, unless you lose it, and you don't want to lose that.

Managing Details from a Separate Campus

One of Michelle's other challenges in her role as the head softball coach was that there were so many team-related details to manage, and she had no time during the school day to do that. A teacher who taught high school P.E. (or any subject that was less demanding than fifth grade) might have had more time to take care of specifics. Michelle

said, “There’s very little if *any*thing done as far as my coaching responsibilities. I don’t even have time to think about stuff with that during the day.”

Yet in the three days I spent with Michelle, there were several interruptions related to coaching issues. During my first visit, it was raining during recess, so Michelle played a video for her students. Over the individual intercom a person said, “Ms. Perry? Mr. White from the Rec. Department is on the phone about the softball field. Is Ms. Cook down there so you can come to the phone?” Michelle took the phone call, and when she returned to the classroom—approximately 15 minutes later—she was obviously frustrated. Because the field was too wet for them to play that night, Michelle had to contact the high school to inform the players of the cancellation. The phone at the high school was busy the entire time; still, Michelle had to find a way to contact the students before they were dismissed.

During my second visit, a newspaper reporter came in Michelle’s classroom and quietly asked her a question about softball. She said, “Yeah, let me get the book.” Michelle and the newspaper reporter stepped into the hall, and he asked her a few questions about the outcomes of some recent games. Michelle told him that the team had lost the game the day before (2-1 in extra innings), but that they won the game before that (7-4).

During my third visit, Michelle told me:

> I have to make a call sometime today to the high school to get them to make an announcement about softball pictures Tuesday. I meant to send the note in with my daughter this morning, and I got here and realized I still had the note, so I'm just going to call them.

One of the things that made details like these even more difficult for Michelle was that the other softball coach did not teach at the high school either; he taught at the middle school. When softball-related issues arose, it was hard for either of them to take care of the problems because they were both off-campus.

Problem Player

In addition to Michelle's struggle to balance her schedule and to manage a high-school softball team from an elementary school campus, she was forced to deal with a player on the softball team who had caused problems for her. Michelle explained that the player was consistently "late for practice" and when she arrived, she would stretch "with drinks and snacks in her hand." In addition, she had "smarted off to the assistant coach at a ballgame," Michelle said, and "she mouthed back at me. And this was several different instances." But the "final straw" for Michelle was the player's extreme disrespect in one particular instance:

> She sat on the bus in the midst of all the other players and told them exactly what she thought about me, and of course the other players gathered around me when they got off the bus and shared it. And so the next day at practice, I talked to her and gave her the opportunity to redeem herself. And she told me to my face what she thought of me, which was what she'd said on the bus. And so I told her that because she had no respect for me as a coach, there was no place for her on the team, that she was causing dissention on the team. And so for the benefit of the team, I thought it was best if she just be dismissed.

Immediately after Michelle dismissed the player, she wondered if that player had retaliated against her. She said:

> That same day that I released her from the team, when I got home, a screw, this little short thing had been put in my tire. And I can't prove that she did that, but I drove the same route, parked in the same place, and it was on the tire that would have been real easy for somebody to get to as they were leaving. I know that there have been some things in the past that make me aware that she's capable of stuff like that.

Michelle said that even if the player or her mother did not put the screw in her tire, she had a "feeling of, 'When *are* they going to say or do something?' because they're not the type to just sit back and do nothing."

Setting Her Sights on the Future

Despite the struggles Michelle experienced that fall with her new position as head softball coach, she enjoyed what she was doing, and she was looking forward to coaching basketball that winter. She explained, "I made it clear when I came here that I would not have come just for the softball position. I know basketball so much better."

Relationships in Cyprus County

Michelle developed various relationships with individuals in Cyprus County that affected the quality of her transition to Oakwood Elementary. These included a relationship with her team teacher, Ms. Etheridge, and relationships with her mentor, her administrators, her students, and the parents of her students.

Ms. Etheridge

One of the first comments Michelle made to me about Ms. Etheridge was, "God couldn't have put me with anybody who was more like me." She expanded on that comment in our first interview:

> We're alike and yet we're different. It seems like our personalities are enough alike that we can be in control of our classrooms, and yet we're loose enough that some things don't bother me that bother other teachers. And she's that way, too, and if something doesn't work, we'll do something else. But she has just been wonderful. She tells me things I'm supposed to do, helps me find stuff that I don't know where it is. But yet, on the other hand, she's not controlling. She doesn't come in and say, "You've got to do this, and you need to do it now." It's not like that. It's like, "This is something we're supposed to do, and this is how we do it, but you can do it anyway you want to. This is your classroom." She makes sure that's clear. But she's real good to just pop in whenever I need her, and/or meet me in the hall just to take a deep breath.

However, Michelle's opinions about Ms. Etheridge changed over time. During our second interview, Michelle told me that Ms. Etheridge had made a couple of comments about Michelle being a coach that she did not appreciate: "She indirectly has said that coaches kind of get some privileges that others don't get. I think she feels like coaches kind of get cut a little slack in some areas." Michelle remarked to me, defensively, "We *do* get to leave early; we *do* miss the faculty meetings; we *do* miss PTO stuff. But, we get home every night late. We are somewhere when we miss these things. We're responsible for something else. Maybe some coaches take advantage of that. But I don't."

I had several casual conversations with Ms. Etheridge during the time I spent at Oakwood Elementary. In one of my discussions with Ms. Etheridge, she mentioned that she had to do a lot of things for Michelle because of her coaching responsibilities, such as

helping her plan lessons. When I asked Michelle about what kinds of things Ms. Etheridge had to do for her, Michelle seemed offended and said:

> Ms. Etheridge doesn't have to do anything for me. I mean, she has helped me as far as what I'm supposed to do, like I'll question stuff like pulling up AR reports on the computer; she showed me how to do that. But as far as my lesson planning or any of that, she hasn't done any of that. Now when I leave at 3:00, I have four, sometimes five kids that are still here that she will take and they just go in her room and read until their bus is called at 3:15. But other than that, she doesn't have to do anything for me because of my leaving at 3:00.

Michelle went on to say that contrary to her initial impression of her colleague, Ms. Etheridge sometimes did worry about things more than she did. Michelle said, "Ms. Etheridge gets in a tizzy about things that I don't let bother me," citing instances such as Ms. Etheridge's concern about Ms. Wilkes' reluctance to take on her responsibilities as an EIP resource teacher, as well as Ms. Etheridge's insistence on making sure her students completed an upcoming 4-H project. Michelle said:

> Ms. Etheridge came to me yesterday, and she wants to cancel regular reading and stuff next week and spend that time helping them get their 4-H projects done. But I don't want to use class time to do the 4-H stuff. To *me,* that's the 4-H leaders' thing. They'll get a grade on some of the 4-H stuff, but nothing that's going to make a pass or fail difference. So I don't see taking a lot of school instructional time to help them with their 4-H stuff. Where on the other hand, she's into winning the 4-H award. So I listened to what she wanted to do, and then I said, "Well, I need to do the reading next week. If we don't change classes but just for

> an hour, and you do math an hour, I do reading an hour. I want to get in at least an hour of reading each day. And if we have to miss the science/social studies, fine. But I want to get in the reading." So Ms. Etheridge agreed to that.

During my third visit, I asked Michelle how her relationship with Ms. Etheridge had changed since I first visited Oakwood. Michelle recalled that at first she had thought she and Ms. Etheridge worked together very well, but added:

> I guess the comment about her having to do a lot for me kind of bothered me, because I didn't want her to feel like she was having to do my stuff. But we still get along; we get along real well. We still work together, we still switch classes…and she still offers suggestions, when she feels like it's appropriate, and I still do whatever I think is necessary, in spite of suggestions!

Michelle's Mentor

During my first visit with Michelle, I assumed that Ms. Etheridge was her assigned mentor. Although Michelle had also originally thought that would be true, Susan Richards, a special education teacher at Oakwood, had actually been assigned to mentor her. Susan worked at Oakwood Elementary in the mornings and at Cyprus County High School in the afternoons. She was in the process of obtaining the Teacher Support Specialist (TSS) certification, so she needed to mentor a new teacher to complete the training. Michelle said:

> I didn't know her until just a few days ago. But I think we were both surprised because we both just assumed that Ms. Etheridge would be my mentor. But Susan has a class, which I guess is that TSS, where she has to have one that she can mentor for. But that's about all I know about her. We're supposed to meet

> tomorrow morning during my planning time. It'll be the first time we've actually sat down and spent any time talking. We've tried it a couple of times, but there was always something else that came up.

During my second visit with Michelle, I asked her if her meetings with her mentor had become more regular. She said, "Her schedule is almost as busy as mine, because she's only here half-day. So our time is still very, very limited. We meet when we can. We talk in passing." Michelle also told me that there had been several afternoons that her mentor had "come out to the ball field as she's leaving in the afternoons, and we'll yell something back and forth." However, Michelle did not seem concerned about her relationship with her mentor. She said:

> I know she's right down the hall, and I know the kind of things she has to come up with for what she's responsible for. And it's a situation where she doesn't really feel like she'll be a whole lot of help to me, but it's just something that we both have to do. But it's not a situation that's gonna be really helpful for either one of us, I don't think.

Michelle's Administrators

When Michelle introduced me to Mr. Lawson—the principal at Oakwood Elementary—he immediately asked Michelle if she was comfortable with my presence. When she responded affirmatively, he asked if he could speak to Michelle in private.

Later, she told me that he had assured her during that conversation that he would not allow the parent who had recently caused problems with the softball team to interrupt her instructional time. He told Michelle that he fully supported her, and if she had any trouble to let him know. Michelle told me in our interview that she appreciated the

support of her principal. She recalled, “And the deal with Mr. Lawson today, willing to help me with a situation—something that I didn’t want to deal with while I had children here.”

Michelle’s principal had also offered to help her move into her new house, and he reminded her of that offer only a few days prior to my first visit. Michelle said he had told her, “When you’re moving, if you need people to help, let us know, because we don’t want you to be an island.”

I also observed Mr. Lawson being especially helpful to Michelle. He once called over the intercom and asked, “Ms. Perry? Any luck on your lost item?” When she said, “No,” he responded, “O.K., just checking.” Michelle explained later that she had left her phone card in the office the day before, and he wanted to know if she had found it yet. Michelle was very impressed with all of Mr. Lawson’s helpfulness and support.

Michelle also developed a positive relationship with Margaret Tyson, the Personnel Director for Cyprus County. Michelle commented:

> Ms. Tyson is just one of these people that just makes you feel good about yourself. When I finally got my Level 5 certificate, I wasn’t sure who did payroll at the county office. But I knew Ms. Tyson, and I knew that she would get it to the right person. So I put it in the mail and sent it to her, and I e-mailed her and told her. And then she just e-mailed me back and told me that she had taken care of it. And she ended that e-mail with a note about how she had *already* heard a lot of positive things about me and my daughter, and realized that they were blessed to have us in the community. And I thought, “This extra something like that means a lot.”

Michelle's Students

Soon after meeting Michelle, I began to notice that she had wonderful relationships with her students. When I mentioned that observation to her, she responded, "This group of students is a really good group." She admitted, "There are days" when they have trouble, particularly "any time you have anything extra, like the book fair," or on "rainy days, they tend to be a little more—not as settled as I would like for them to be." Overall, though, she was pleased with the group of students she had been given.

I noticed particularly the terrific sense of humor Michelle employed with her students, often lightheartedly teasing and joking with them. One afternoon as they lined up to go to lunch, Michelle said, "I'm gonna count to five and you'd better be in line. One, two, five." Of course all the students were in line by that time, but one of them said, "That's not how you count to five!" Michelle ignored that comment and we walked to the lunchroom.

In another instance, a girl came to Michelle and started to ask her a question. Before the girl could even voice the question, Michelle teasingly said, "The answer is no." The girl walked away laughing, saying, "Uh, Ms. Perry!"

I told Michelle that I thought she sometimes treated her students as though they were middle-school students. She told me that her previous colleagues always asked if she missed cutting up with her students. She said, "I still cut up with them, even though they're not middle-schoolers. Of course, some of them don't get that I'm cutting up, but some do."

Michelle did have one student in her class who caused a number of problems outside of her classroom. Michelle said, "It's when he gets out into other situations, like

when somebody says something to him. Never in here. He's *wonderful* in here." During my second visit, when Michelle was having her planning time, Mr. Carlyle—the assistant principal—called over the intercom and told Michelle that he would be coming down to get this student's things: He was "going home."

Michelle whispered to me, "Oh gosh—why is he going home? He's capable of hurting somebody when he gets mad. It's scary because there's always the fear that he *will* hurt somebody."

When Mr. Carlyle walked in the room with the student, Michelle read the paper that explained what he had done. They left and Michelle said:

> He threatened and hit somebody. So I need to talk to Mr. Carlyle later. But see, things like that look bad on me, because I know that he's a problem for him to be in the bathroom without—but see that's the thing because I can't—I either go to the bathroom with him and leave these 24 in here. But see, I didn't *let* him go to the bathroom this morning. But they don't know that. As far as they know, I just sent him out. So evidently he went to the bathroom before he ever came, or either he just went to the bathroom without my permission, because I don't even know when he was in the bathroom.

Although Michelle was concerned about what the administrators would think of her after that situation, she seemed much more concerned about what had happened to trigger that student's anger.

Students' Parents

When I asked Michelle who had been helpful in her move to Cyprus County, she said that there had been many people, "like the parents of my ball players." That spurred

a conversation about her relationships with the parents of her students at Oakwood Elementary. Michelle said:

> The relationships with most of the parents have been pretty good. I've had several contacts with parents, good and bad. I try to put good stuff in their agendas once in a while. I communicate a lot through the agendas, mainly because of time. I *have* called a few students who were really getting to be a distraction, and calling their parents has been very helpful. Every parent that I've called has been very supportive, and behavior has improved after the call.

Michelle added, "Unfortunately because of time, I haven't had contacts with every parent since school started." Since report cards were to go out the following week, Michelle was planning to "get some positive comments on those," because she did not like it "when every parent contact is because of a problem. I want to take time to say something nice about the ones that always do so well."

Michelle was also pleased with the parents of her softball players. She said:

> As far as softball parents, of course you're going to have those that you coach at the high school level, that gripe about playing time for their daughter. I had, I think, three of those. But other than that, everything's been positive. And it's a situation where when you coach, I'm sure there are things that are said that you don't *hear*. But as far as people actually coming to see me, there have only been three. And with the exception of one, there's only been one that was really ugly about it. But the other two were nice in their approach. And they were told from the beginning that I was willing to listen to any complaints they had or any questions they had, that I was willing to listen to them. *But* that I was also the type

> person that would do what I felt like was best anyway—that I would make the decision and do what I wanted. And I told them from the very beginning that I'd rather them talk to me than about me. So I feel like they've kind of done that. But as a whole, the parents seem to be real supportive.

Relationships in General

As previously noted, Michelle did not have time to build many relationships due to her coaching responsibilities. The only colleagues she knew fairly well were the other fifth grade teachers: Ms. Etheridge, Ms. Mullis, and Ms. Nations. Michelle said, "Even the teachers on this hall, I double check sometimes looking at the signs to make sure I've got the right name with the right face." Michelle noted:

> There's somebody that's kin to my sister's husband that works on the other end of the building. And my sister asks me every weekend, "Have you met Cindy yet?" And you know, after six weeks, I still have to say, "No, I don't even know which one she is."

Even without much time to build relationships, Michelle found many people in Newberry who made her move there simpler. She said:

> The parents of my ball players, the people that I knew here before at the county office and some of the parents and coaches that I've coached against in the past… they were all willing to help. They would all come up and suggest even stuff like, where places are to eat, where places are to get the clothes washed. They were all willing to say, "Always feel free to call if you need anything," or "We're gonna have you over to eat." Now at Oakwood…almost everybody that I've talked to

> has asked me if I needed anything, or told me to let them know if I needed anything.

I asked Michelle if she had been apprehensive about meeting and getting to know people at Oakwood Elementary before she started working there. She said that having to establish herself amongst a new group of people was something she "probably thought about even more so then the actual job part of it, cause that's always a concern." Although she was still relatively close to the people she had worked with in Thompson County, she said, "It's not like being with them day to day." But she added, "That was definitely a concern that was quickly erased, because everybody was so friendly and easy to get to know. Everybody's just been really nice."

Conclusion—She is Glad She Moved

Michelle seemed grateful for the relative ease of her transition to Cyprus County. She expressed very few frustrations or struggles related to her status as an experienced new teacher, and she claimed to be enjoying her new position. She reflected:

> I think the coaching thing was a good thing for me. It was a good move career-wise; plus, it was another one of those things where if I hadn't taken it, I would have looked back and I would have said, I just passed up something I've always wanted to do. So I don't regret the decision to come here, because everybody has just been super nice. There are days that I think, "The other was familiar, the other I knew, the other would have been a whole lot easier." But I don't regret the decision to come here.

CHAPTER 6

ANN

"Those things which don't kill us make us stronger"

—Friedrick Nietzche

Getting to Know Ann

Ann was the last participant to become a part of this study because I had a difficult time making an initial contact with her. She was pregnant, and her principal did not want to contact her at home during the summer. When I finally spoke with Ann over the phone during pre-planning, she seemed somewhat annoyed that I had called her, and did not seem particularly interested in participating in the study. Although she acted skeptical, she agreed to participate.

When I met Ann in person, the reasons for her frustrations became clear. She told me that she had thought I was a full-time doctoral student with no teaching experience. As soon as she saw me, Ann realized that was not the case. I was wearing a vest with a pattern of children of the world on it—an article of clothing perhaps best categorized as "teacher clothing." I was also wearing my White County Elementary School nametag. When Ann discovered that I had been teaching for ten years, which was longer than she had been teaching, she was relieved. She said, "When you first called me to ask me about this, I wanted to say to you, 'Go get some experience and then come talk to me.'"

Ann's Previous Teaching Experiences

Ann graduated with a Bachelors Degree from a university in Florida, and at first had a difficult time finding a teaching position in Georgia. She explained, "I didn't have any contacts here. I had them all in Florida."

To develop contacts in Georgia, Ann accepted three long-term substitute positions in Marshall County—two counties away from where she lived. Ann was hired in Marshall County as a fifth grade teacher almost a year-and-a-half after she began substituting.

Although Ann would have liked to begin her teaching career where she lived—in Cyprus County—she said, "Cyprus County was not hiring, and then it was not what you had to be, it was who you knew. If you didn't know the right people, then you were not hired in Cyprus County." The county adjacent to Cyprus was Bentley, Ann said, "And Bentley wasn't hiring at the time, so I ended up in Marshall County."

Ann described working in Marshall County as a wonderful experience—somewhat analogous to being with family members. She explained:

> It wasn't unusual to go into work 10 or 15 minutes early just so you could talk to everybody, just to say hello before class started. We all would meet in the lounge in the morning and talk and tell jokes, and somebody would bring in doughnuts, and somebody would bring in juice, and it was just like eating with family. That's what it felt like. Everybody was also saying, "How can you stand that long drive?" (It took me 30 minutes to get there.)
>
> It was nothing. I said, "It's like visiting your family's house. You don't even think anything about it." The principal was the same way; he was great. He

> was like a grandpa to everybody, and we all just loved him and loved each other. And it wasn't unusual on your lunch break, we'd all sit around a big table. Everybody that had lunch at that time, we all ate and talked. You never heard of anybody sitting in their room to eat, or that they were working through lunch. You just didn't, cause we had such a good time, and we were always joking and laughing. At the end of the year we had big cookouts at somebody's house, and during the year we had cookouts, we had squirt gun fights in the hallway, and we just had a blast. And it was like that all the time, and there was no animosity. I mean, somebody got on each other's nerves, you had a little bickerings, like you do in every family. And that's what it was, because after it was over, it was over, and you didn't even mention it again. But you didn't have to backbite any. You didn't have, "You're going to do it my way"—"No, my way"—because it didn't matter, cause we were all in it together. And that's what it felt like.

After Ann had been teaching for six years, the administrators in Marshall County decided to alleviate some space problems by dividing the elementary schools. Ann's school—which had previously housed third, fourth, and fifth graders—became a second and third grade school. All of the fourth and fifth grade students were moved to the middle school, which had acquired more space due to the completion of a new high school.

Ann strongly disliked that arrangement for several reasons. For one thing, there was no principal hired to be responsible for the fourth and fifth graders. Ann recalled:

> The principal of the fourth and fifth grade school was the principal of the middle school, and instead of hiring the fourth and fifth grade their own principal, they

> put another assistant principal under her. It was his first year as assistant principal, and he was awful. He was a coach; he wasn't a principal. He went from being a coach to being a principal. In Marshall County it's the good ole boy; they made him a principal. He was awful, terrible. But she was over him, and she was over us, and we knew who the boss was, and it wasn't him. But probably if they'd hired us our own principal, then we might could have been O.K.

Ann described this assistant principal as "an idiot," and said that she was totally unimpressed with his leadership ability. She explained:

> Some administrators need to mix their leadership with some personality. You can be the best leader in the world, but if everybody hates you, they're not going to follow you, and that's been a problem with some of my other principals. They had great ideas. They would have been super principals if they had had even an *ounce* of personality. Any kind of skills where they could bring people together or negotiate or compromise, but they had none of that. So all their ideas, everybody just didn't even get on board, because they hated them. Of course, it was their fault, but I feel kind of bad, because like I'll think of the one at Marshall County, the lady that I had. She had the best ideas. She would have had the best school, if she could have just pulled them off. But she couldn't. She was mean. Just mean. She wasn't a people-person, and she'd tell you that she didn't like people. And you know that doesn't get you a whole lot, especially in her position. But she would have been a good administrator; she just didn't have the people skills to get everybody on board with her, and she couldn't do it by herself. And she didn't try to.

Beyond the administrative issues, there were other problems resulting from the split in Marshall County. The middle school teachers and students did not want the fourth and fifth grade students at "their" school. Ann said, "The sixth and seventh grade didn't want us there, and we didn't want to *be* there. And you had fourth graders and eighth graders sharing bathrooms, and it was just never a good situation." Originally, the fourth and fifth graders were supposed to be kept separated from the middle school students, but that plan was not followed. Ann remarked, "There were doors in between that were supposed to be kept closed, to keep the two grades apart; but it didn't work."

Another concern Ann had about the school split was that she had lost the "family" that she once loved at her job. Ann said that she "didn't really have *any* relationships," because "everybody was new." She explained:

> I stayed in fifth grade, but I was the *only* teacher that stayed. The rest of them were new, so it was me and five new teachers. And it was awful. And the fourth grade had two with some seniority, and the rest of them were new. So it was like the whole fourth and fifth grade was new teachers.

Not only had those new teachers not been a part of the "family," they were also first-year teachers. "Trying to get them 'broken in,' and trying to make sure they knew what they were doing," Ann said, was a problem.

After one year of teaching in that situation, Ann made another attempt to be hired in Cyprus County, where she still lived. When that attempt was unsuccessful, she accepted a position in Bentley County. One week before the school year began, Ann received a phone call from a Cyprus County administrator who wanted to offer her a teaching job; however, Ann felt committed to stay at Bentley.

Although Ann said that she generally enjoyed her experience in Bentley County, not everyone was nice. She explained: "You didn't have that…it just didn't click. Everybody didn't fit in, and they didn't want to. They had no desire; some of them didn't even want to socialize. They didn't want to speak in the hall. So you always had that tension."

In addition to the lack of a close-knit community of professionals, Ann said that she never knew what was going on at that school. She said:

> We never had faculty meetings. And I know people think faculty meetings are awful, but I like faculty meetings. A place where you can get together and get your head on straight, and know which direction to go next, instead of just walking around in the dark. Looking back, I still don't know what they were trying to do.

Ann also had some concerns about her principal in Bentley County. She remembered:

> The principal is moody, so the school was kind of moody with her. But I like *her*. She's very nice. But moody. You never knew from Monday to Tuesday if she was going to love you or hate you. And so you kind of walked around the building in that mode, waiting to see what was going on with her. She was moody… *bad*. So, she'd go for weeks, and you didn't want to get near her. Or she'd come put her arm around you and walk down the hall and talk. You just never knew. So you always had that static in the air. We didn't ever really know exactly.

Although Ann disliked her principal's moody behaviors, she said, "She's a good principal. She's probably one of the better ones I've had. She supports her teachers:

stands behind you 100%. And the best disciplinarian I've ever seen, as far as a principal went."

Ann said she "was miserable" in Bentley County; but she had planned to stay there until her son was in kindergarten in Cyprus County. However, toward the end of the year, county administrators started talking about sending the fourth and fifth grade to another school, and Ann decided to leave. She applied in Cyprus County and accepted a teaching position in spring 2001.

Ann's Family

Ann and her husband had been married seven years and had been trying to conceive a child when a social worker in Ann's school approached her about adopting Desirae, one of her former students. Desirae was in the sixth grade at that time. The Department of Family and Children's Services told Ann that Desirae would never form attachments, and that the adoption would never work. But Ann had taught Desirae the year before, and although she and Desirae had "butted heads" in the classroom, she said that she knew the adoption could work. After almost two years of "red tape," Ann and her husband adopted Desirae.

Exactly one year after the adoption was official, Ann's first son, Kenny, was born. Then, only a few weeks prior to the start of the 2001-2002 school year, Ann delivered a second son, Josh, by cesarean section. At the time of this study, Desirae was 16 years old, Kenny was 2 years old, and Josh was 2 months old.

Despite her busy schedule and her two very young children, Ann said that she enjoyed spending time with Desirae. The two of them would typically spend one evening together each week. They would see a movie, go out to dinner together, or just

spend time together. Ann noted that she and her husband would like to have a fourth child sometime in the future.

Ann's Personality

One reason Ann loved spending time with her family so much was because she enjoyed being around other people. She seemed to draw her energy and strength from interpersonal relationships. Although she had not yet attended any social events at Newberry, she talked highly about a faculty meeting there that was "like a party." She said, "It was fun. We laughed, talked, cut-up." Ann claimed that no matter what type of teaching situation she was in, she "would never be isolated." She said, "I'll find *somebody* to talk to. Otherwise, I'll lose my mind." And when she found that person, she would "go personal automatically." Ann explained:

> If you can't talk personal, you can't talk. I can't talk to you about how you teach if I don't know who you are, because we might have a conflict, and then we don't need to go there. It's kind of like talking politics with somebody. You can't talk politics until you know that person. You don't want to say anything *about* Bill Clinton if they loved him. So I don't want to say anything about your teaching style because you're in *rows*, if I don't know anything about you. So it's personal first. I have to get to know you personally, and then we'll do education. Cause you don't need to work with somebody and them know that you think they teach crappy.

During the time I spent with Ann, I also discovered that she was extremely opinionated. She knew what she believed, and she did not mind telling others about it.

Ann said, “If I have something to tell them, I’ll tell them to their face.” She did not seem to worry about what people thought of her. She said:

> I have enough stuff to worry about without worrying about what somebody thinks, cause I don’t care. My husband says, "You have to care." I said, "I really don't care." I mean, if I offend somebody, I care, but if it's just the way I dress, I don’t care. You dress the way you want, I'll dress the way I want, and it'll be fine.

But in some ways, Ann was, in fact, concerned about what people thought of her—especially in the professional realm. Ann was so frustrated with the way her school was managing a special education situation that she considered calling the Cyprus County Special Education Director. She told me, “But then I’d be the bad guy when the school gets in trouble. Of course, I’ve been the bad guy before.” At the end of this study, she had not telephoned the director about that issue.

Ann was also extremely competitive. She put her competitiveness to good use by chairing the March of Dimes drive for Newberry Elementary. When she first described the drive to me, she said she was nervous because her school was so unprepared. By the next time I saw Ann, however, she told me that Newberry had raised $2,500—more than any other school in Cyprus County. When I asked her how she had accomplished that kind of goal, she said, “My principal told me that we *couldn’t* win the county competition.” Ann had viewed that comment from her principal as a challenge, and she accepted that challenge.

Ann also liked to do things on the spur of the moment. During my observations of her, Ann changed her schedule whenever necessary to accommodate others. Her

flexibility extended to her teaching style. She admitted, “I’m not anybody who sits down and plans a week ahead. If I think of something, that’s just what I do.”

Ann’s Future Plans

One of the first things Ann told me when I met her was that she wanted to be a school administrator someday. Although she had not yet begun her training in leadership at the time of this study, she was considering a one-year, one-Saturday-a-month cohort program that would provide her with a Level 6 certificate in school administration.

Even though Ann had not begun her formal training, she already had begun formulating her own, utopian, style of leadership. First, she said, she wanted to skip being an assistant principal altogether, because she wanted to be the “big boss.” Secondly, Ann planned to “make teachers’ lives easier, not harder” by leaving them alone. She claimed to also be excited at the prospect of having a designated parking place with a big sign that contained not only her name, but also “bells and streamers.” Ann only mentioned one concern that she had about being a school administrator: She would have to be careful not to be “too power hungry.”

At the time of this study, Ann had moved from one school to another three times in three school years. She told me:

> I’m not going to move again. The only time I’ll move again is to be a principal. I will teach here until I stop teaching, because that first year’s awful, and it’s just not worth it. Every place you go, it’s gonna be something, so you might as well get used to where you’re at and learn it and it’ll be easier. So I’ll teach here till I get a job, and then I’ll be a principal. But I will never *teach* anywhere else. This is it. ‘Cause it’s just too hard. I’ll stay right here. In this room if he’ll let me, cause I

> don't even want to move down the hall. I don't want to move. It's just too much work, too much trouble. I don't want to change grades again, even though I like fifth grade much better than fourth, I don't want to change grades. I want to learn where I am and stay there. (Emphasizing this point with her finger on the table.) Paperwork, and meetings. Whatever I'm supposed to know. By next year, I should know everything, so it should be easier. Hopefully I'll know everything, but no I'm not going to move again. I'll retire from here, or become a principal, one or the other. Hopefully principal.

Ann's Frustrations

Although Ann had no plans to move to another school, it was not because she believed that Newberry Elementary was perfect. Ann was frustrated and had many concerns about her new school. She expressed to me her frustrations about her difficulty getting settled into her classroom; about the way curriculum issues were handled; about a lack of teaching materials; about the way the Behavioral Disorder (BD) and the Emotional Behavior Disorder (EBD) programs were handled; about her realization that some employees at Newberry wanted to keep the school "the way it's always been;" about a number of unnecessary requirements for teachers; about the new-teacher induction requirements; about her overly idealistic preconceived ideas that she would find that "family" feeling she had in Marshall; about her feeling that Newberry was lacking in social events; and about her feeling of "walking around in the dark."

Making the Transition to Cyprus County

Ann was not originally hired to teach at Newberry Elementary, but rather at River's End Elementary. When she found out she was coming to Newberry Elementary,

she was told that she would be teaching EIP resource, and that she would teach approximately eight students at a time, from 9:00 a.m. until 2:15 p.m.

In mid-July, shortly after Ann had her baby, Mr. Turner called and said that she was no longer going to teach EIP, but fourth grade instead. He told her that he had not wanted to call her so close to her delivery, so he waited until after she had the baby. Ann had already purchased several materials to use for EIP, and told me that she would rather have known about the change earlier.

Ann also described the Cyprus County hiring process as frustrating and "weird." She said, "You interview with all the principals, so you never know where you're going to end up." She had no choice concerning which school she would be in or which grade level she would teach.

Moving into her new classroom proved to be another challenge. Ann went to the school one Sunday afternoon—two days before Open House—to get her classroom ready. When she walked in the room, she was shocked to find that it was still "stuffed" with the former teacher's items. Ann had to wait until Monday afternoon for the other teacher to remove all of her things. During my first visit, Ann said she still had many of her personal supplies in her basement at home; she had not yet had time to move all of them into her room.

Ann also had trouble with her class roll. Ann believed that because she was a new teacher at Newberry Elementary, she was assigned the most problematic students in the fourth grade. She said, "The deck is stacked against me." Two of the children in her class were considered the two most difficult students in the school. Ann said, "They should never have been placed near each other." Although she knew she had been given a

challenging group of students, Ann remarked that she had done the same thing to new teachers in the past, and that she would do it to new teachers in the future.

Curriculum Concerns

Soon after settling into her new classroom situation, Ann found herself becoming frustrated with the curriculum at Newberry Elementary. She was primarily bothered by the reading and math curricula, but she was also annoyed that she was expected to teach subjects at the same time as the other fourth grade teachers.

Ann also complained that although the Accelerated Reader (AR) program constituted one-third of the total reading grade, the librarian was the sole monitor of that program. Ann explained this process:

> To assess the students' reading levels, they give us this sheet, and you write down their ITBS scores, any scores they had in reading, and then their STAR test, and then, I don't know if the librarian uses a formula to figure that. I don't really know how Ms. Benefield does it, because *she* decides what level they're on. And then she sends it back to us and says, "They're on this level." And Ms. Benefield says they can move up. That's all I know. Because evidently *I* can't move them up, because I've said to a child, "I don't think this is a high enough level," and she'll come back and say, "Ms. Benefield said," and that's that. So, Ms. Benefield obviously is in charge of AR. So we just kind of write down the scores and send them to the library. That's the only thing I've seen that I do so far. I come up with goals. They have to have a weekly goal, but I have a chart to figure that up. I just look at their level, and read across the line, and it tells me what their goal is: their weekly goal, their yearly goal. I have to keep up with that. And that's all I do.

Although Ann was frustrated because she was not "teaching reading" and she was "*supposed* to teach reading," she was also concerned about the motivation behind the librarian's control over the AR program. If students scored too high on the STAR test, they were asked to go back and take the test again. Ann speculated about one possible reason for this: The school's "Pay-for-Performance" objective in this area was that "the majority of the students will make a one-year gain in reading," which was measured by the STAR test. The librarian could guarantee that goal would be met if she monitored the AR program and had every student begin the year on a lower-than-normal reading level.

In addition to her lack of control over the AR program, Ann was frustrated by the lack of time she had been allotted to teach reading. She said that she was supposed to have a thirty-minute block to teach reading. During that time, however, she also had to teach vocabulary. Ann noted, "They don't want you to do vocabulary words that go with your reading; they want you to do separate vocabulary words. So they can get a *double* dose of vocabulary." The thirty-minute block designated for reading also had to include instruction in grammar. Ann said that she actually needed an hour-and-a-half block of time to accomplish everything. But she said:

> Saxon Math takes up too much of my time. I can't get it all in. We don't have an hour and a half when Saxon Math takes me an hour and a half to do. So then you're left with not enough time. You also teach science and social studies, and health. And there's not enough hours in the day to teach it.

Still, Ann recognized the importance of making time to teach reading effectively. She said, "I can't sit and let these kids not know how to read. I have six kids on first

grade level. And I'll send them to fifth grade on first grade level if I don't hurry and do something." So Ann decided to change her method of teaching reading. She said:

> We have one textbook that teaches to the fourth grade. I have about three kids in here that are *on* fourth grade. The rest of them are either below or above. So it's not working. So we're going to rotate them to centers.

Ann was attempting to modify a program that she used in Bentley County called "guided reading," which she said she loved. She commented:

> I'd like to do that here, but we don't have levelized books. So I don't know exactly what we're gonna do about the levelized book problem. We may call our "Partners in Ed" and see if they'll give us some money to buy some, and we can share them. That way we get a few book sets, and we're gonna send home notes to parents to see if they can donate this book or that book.

However she could make it happen, Ann insisted, "We're gonna try something different. I can't sit and let these kids not know how to read."

I asked Ann if she had spoken with Ms. Michaels—her team chair—about changing her reading method, and she said, "I'm not gonna ask permission, I'm gonna ask forgiveness." She added, "I don't teach like the other fourth grade teachers do, and I can't teach like they do." Ann continued:

> We'll have the same subjects covered, as we're supposed to be covering at the same time, we'll just be covering them in a different way. So hopefully, that'll make everybody O.K. with it, if they do question us. And they may not. We're just gonna do it. And we're not gonna ask. If they say something, we'll fix it then.

By the time of my third visit, Ann admitted that this reading plan did not work. However, she said that she had learned how to "teach these kids." She explained that these students did not do well with direct instructions, so she would give them a brief overview of what they would need to accomplish during the next few hours, and then she would allow them to work at their own pace. She assigned activities (e.g., creating drawings of the assigned vocabulary words) that would help students learn the necessary objectives. I was able to observe Ann using this method during my last visit, and I was very impressed with the way the students stayed on task. They were enjoying the learning process.

In addition to Ann's frustrations with the reading program, the Saxon Math program presented another challenge for her. Newberry Elementary had been using the program for several years, and all of the teachers knew how to effectively teach with it; they assumed that Ann did, too. However, not only was Ann uncomfortable with the math curriculum, she also did not have the necessary materials on hand for all of the lessons. Ann had bought compasses the night before my first visit with her because she did not have enough for every student.

By my second visit, Ann said that she still did not like the Saxon Math program, "but it's got good components, and good ideas behind it." One of the components Ann liked was "the fact that you go over the skills over and over everyday." She also noted that with Saxon Math, "You don't have to worry about lesson plans; you don't have to worry about coming up with anything. It's always there." But Ann added:

> The *bad* part is I don't think the kids get enough practice, and what they do get, I think, is too teacher-led. They don't get a chance to try it on their own. And the

> top kids don't get a chance to go any further. The low kids don't get a chance to slow down. And it's great for the middle kids. But last year I had kids that were very advanced, so I just pulled out the fifth grade math book and put them in groups and the high kids did fifth grade math, and the low kids did lower math, and the middle kids worked right with the book. But with Saxon Math, you're real confined to what you can do. It takes out all your flexibility.

In addition to her frustrations with the math and reading curricula at Newberry, Ann was also annoyed that every fourth grade teacher was expected to teach the same subject concurrently. Ann had never taught in a school where that was the rule, and said, "This school is more intense than the others I've taught in."

Lack of Materials

Ann was also frustrated at her new school's lack of available materials. Although her frustration appeared to me to be somewhat well founded, Ann also seemed to have arrived with the preconceived idea that Newberry Elementary would provide materials for teachers the way her first school in Marshall County did. She said, "We had a supply closet. You just went and got whatever you wanted, whenever you needed it. Construction paper…we always had plenty."

But some materials were more crucial to her ability to meet her teaching objectives than construction paper (e.g., compasses for use with Saxon math). I asked Ann if she had to purchase supplies often with her personal money. She responded by telling me that her husband liked to joke that she spent more money on school stuff than she actually made.

Ann also realized that finding supplies was “a problem everywhere you go.” She said:

> You never know where anything is, until a few years later and you happen to mention it and somebody says, "Oh, that's in this place." It's something that people don't think to tell you. Last year was the same way, and by the end of the year, I was starting to figure it out. And then I left. And this one, I'm starting to figure out. But a lot of things, you just have to get on your own.

BD/EBD Resource Program

Ann was also frustrated that she was not given time to meet with the resource teachers who worked with her students. She taught several students who were enrolled in a program for Behavior Disordered or Emotionally Behavior Disordered children. During our first interview, she said:

> We’ve had some meetings together, with parents there; so you can’t really *talk* to them. But I know Ms. London; she’s new. This is her first year here, too, so she may just be trying to figure things out. And Mr. Sanders, the other one, he’s only here half the day. He doesn’t even *get* here until 1:00. So I don’t ever see him, hardly. A little bit in the afternoons, you might run into him. But he’s not here very much, so there’s not very much opportunity to talk to *him*.

At that time, Ann had not really needed to talk with either one of the resource teachers. But during the first Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting, she discovered that Brandon—one of her students—was supposed to have two segments of resource, when he had only been getting one. When Ann mentioned that in the meeting, Ann “got looked at really funny.” But she said:

I really thought he was only supposed to get one, cause that's all he was gone for. So now Mr. Sanders is trying to pick him up a little bit extra in the afternoons. Some days he does, some days he says to come back at the regular time.

Another of Ann's frustrations with the BD/EBD programs began when one of her students did not have a social studies or science grade on his report card because he was always in a BD/EBD resource class during social studies and science. She asked Ms. London what she should do about it, and Ms. London told Ann that she should either leave the space on the report card blank, or should use the grade that students had received for a mobile that the class had made several weeks earlier. (That lesson looked fun to the student, so he had asked Ms. London if he could stay in the classroom to do it.) Giving that student a grade based on that one activity seemed unfair to Ann, because he would have only one grade in science—and it was on a fun activity—compared to the other students who had twelve or fourteen grades in science, which included test and homework grades.

Ann also asked Ms. London how this situation could be avoided in the future—how all of her students could receive social studies and science instruction. Ms. London said that from that point on, Ann should send some social studies and science work with the student to complete in her class. Ann told me, "I don't want to send work with those students"—that was more work for her to do.

Ann said to Ms. Callaham, her assistant principal, "They're missing science altogether. Isn't that a problem?"

Ms. Callaham replied, "We can't do anything about it. That's just the way it is. He's got to have BD. It's one or the other."

Ann was frustrated about her assistant principal's response, because she knew that it meant that those students in BD/EBD would never receive science or social studies instruction. In her previous teaching experiences, Ann had always seen resource programs designed to include subjects that students were missing while they were in the resource classroom. But that was not the case at Newberry.

The Way It's Always Been Done

Ann did not sense that she was afforded the right to point out that the BD/EBD resource situation could have been managed differently, a perception that she attributed to her belief that people at Newberry Elementary wanted to do things the way they had always been done. Ann complained to me, "If you go to the other ones with a suggestion, it's not the way it's been, and so it's kicked out, and it's not ever an option. It's either *this* way or no way." An example of this was the way Ann managed the discipline in her classroom. She said, "There was no *option* on how you did your discipline. This is the way you do your discipline. This is what you need; this is what you need to write."

Ann told her team leader that she wanted to change her method of discipline, but her team leader was unwilling to listen to her ideas. Ann responded by changing her method anyhow. She said:

> I changed my discipline. I used the same idea that they told me I had to have, but the way *they* did it is they start off and nobody has any colors, and you'd get colors through the day for doing good things. They rewarded good behavior. But that took me all of my time, trying to catch people being good, when I knew that some kids were gonna be good, so by the end of the day, if they weren't there, I just went ahead and stuck their colors in, because that meant I had just forgot.

> And the bad kids, the ones that don't care if they're getting a reward or not, it wasn't working at all. So I reversed mine. So now you lose colors for bad behavior; you keep them if you do what you're supposed to do.

Once Ann changed her discipline plan, the other teachers on her team chose to change their plan, too—with the exception of the team leader. Ann said:

> When I did it, Dawn did it, and then Gail did it. So now, all three of us are doing it one way, and only one teacher is doing it the other way. (The original way it's *supposed* to be.) So, I may have lost brownie points for that, but it wasn't working.

Ann said, "It was a big deal for me to change, which I thought was ridiculous, because it's my class. So I changed it anyway."

Ann's team leader was not the only one who wanted to do things the way they had always been done. Mr. Turner, Ann's principal, was discussing the March of Dimes fundraiser with Ann and said, "Well let's see how we did it last year." Although the way things had always been done "was the way he wanted to stick to," Ann said, "I *did* convince him on a couple of things." She added:

> I guess it's that's way with *every*body. However it has always been just feels a lot more comfortable than anything you might have to do new. It's like being in your own house. It's good to go visit people, but your house always feels better. Change is hard, especially for some people. And I know, because I'm the same way. I get comfortable in a certain thing, like my old gown. And my husband's always going, "Do you have to wear *that*?" And I say, "Yeah. I like it."

During my third visit with her, Ann told me that she believed the people at Newberry Elementary had become more open to new ideas, but that it had a long way to go. She said, hopefully, "Everybody'll come around eventually. They'll have to, because we're getting more and more new people. And they're going to have an opinion, and it's probably *not* going to be the way they've always done it." She added, "It's going to have to change."

Requirements of Teachers at Newberry

One area where Ann would have liked to see more immediate change was a reduction in the requirements of teachers at Newberry Elementary. She said that she had more duties, paperwork, committees, and meetings than she had ever had as a teacher.

One of most irksome responsibilities to her was the mandatory lunch duty every day. The administration's compensation for the lack of "duty-free lunch" was a workday that ended at 3:00; however, Ann was never able to leave at that early because she had so much to do.

During my second visit with Ann, I asked if her responsibilities were becoming more manageable. She said:

> I still don't like eating with kids. Even though it's not too bad. We get to sit together and socialize, but you still have to correct kids and I just don't want to be responsible for them for 30 minutes. It's a good break, especially this group I have this year. You need a break. It's good for somebody else to get onto them. If nothing else, to know they're just as bad when somebody else is with them.

In addition to lunch duty, Ann and the other teachers in her grade level each had an after-school duty every day. Ann wished her team could combine some of those duties

to allow individual teachers to have an occasional break from them. She noted, "When you have morning bus duty, you start at 7:15 a.m., and you stay with children until 3:25 when the last load is picked up." Ann believed that was a lot to expect.

Ann was also required to distribute medication to her students. During my second visit, Ann pulled a medicine bottle out of her desk and said, "Is Ryan here?" The students told her he was not. I asked her if she kept up with all the student medication. She nodded her head.

"Don't you have a nurse?" I asked.

She responded, "Yes. It's a puzzle isn't it?"

In addition to her required duties, Ann had an enormous amount of paperwork to complete. She had been given "a huge stack of paperwork" at the beginning of the year, which included a list of requirements to be completed by August 31. Ann said:

> We had to go through all their permanent records to find a lot of these things. It wasn't due till August 31, so we'd already had them for three weeks. I had to have Social Security numbers for some of it, and we had to look through there and see if there is a note saying they can't be paddled, is there another note saying they can't be picked up by somebody? There's one in there for in-county field trips, you have to check for Internet, those kind of things. Then turn those lists into Ms. Callaham. And the biggest problem was my folders were so full of *junk*, that I couldn't hardly get through some of them, so I cleaned out a lot while I was in there.
>
> Once you got through the folders, the rest wasn't too bad. But like, "Picking Up Student" forms. It says, "Make a list of all the kids that can't be

> picked up by a certain person." Well one of my students couldn't be picked up by certain people, but it was written on a scrap sheet of paper, on a little sliver of a corner of a notebook paper, stuck in the permanent file. It's a million chances in one I even *saw* the thing, but he's not supposed to be picked up with these certain people. And that's the way it was in there. That was the most time consuming, just getting everything straightened out.

During my second visit, Ann said, "The paperwork's still frustrating. I don't know that it's gotten any better. And people tell me things at the very last second that I was supposed to know about."

One of those instances happened while I was visiting with Ann. It was the day report cards were to go home. Ann went to Ms. Michaels' room to get some supplies. While she was there, she saw Ms. Michaels' report cards on her desk. Ann noticed that one of them had an additional sheet stapled to it, so she asked, "What is that?" Ms. Michaels explained that it was a modification sheet, and that Ann should have stapled one to the report card of every student who had special education modifications. Ms. Michaels was unaware that Ann did not know about it, and she gave Ann some modification sheets to use for her students. However, Ann was annoyed at having to complete more paperwork when she thought she was finished with report cards.

Another requirement placed on teachers was committee assignments. Ann complained that she was assigned to committees for which she did not know the purpose; she was also not allowed to choose which committees best suited her interests and abilities. Ann was placed on three committees: a Pay-for-Performance committee, a QuESt committee, and a school committee.

In addition to committee meetings and responsibilities, grade-level meetings were often held during the teachers' planning times. Ann said that there were usually at least two or three of these meetings a week. However, the one type of meeting that Ann thought would be most beneficial—faculty meetings—were infrequently held, and were of somewhat limited value to her. Over the course of my three visits with Ann, Newberry Elementary had only two faculty meetings. I asked Ann to describe the first one:

> It was great. You should have seen all the food. I've never seen such a spread. There were like three different kinds of finger sandwiches. Mr. Turner made a big crock-pot full of this chili dip thing for nachos. He had little candy bars and sugar cookies and oatmeal cookies he'd made. And five or six different kinds of drinks. It was like 12 different foods at the faculty meeting. And the mood of the faculty meeting is real laid back and he tells jokes and he's funny, and it was funny. We had fun at the faculty meeting. I mean it was 4:00 and you didn't even realize you'd been in there long. It's the only one we've had, but it was good. We didn't really do anything that was really informative. It was more like United Way stuff. We talked about more stuff I don't remember. Doesn't seem like anything important. I hope it wasn't, because I don't remember what it was.

Although that faculty meeting had somewhat of a party atmosphere, and Ann remarked that she would have appreciated her administrators using that time to tell her "what to put on report cards," she admitted that she "got to know more people" during that meeting. She added, "And maybe that will help because maybe *they* can help me get my head on straight. The more people you know, the more you learn."

Newberry had one other faculty meeting during this study. Ann told me that they went over "piddly stuff," but noted that once again, there was a great deal of food and fun. She added, "Me and the music teacher had a ball!"

Induction Requirements

In addition to her responsibilities at Newberry Elementary, Ann had to complete paperwork for the induction program in Cyprus County. She noted:

> If you were a "new, new" teacher, it's good stuff. It says, "Go introduce yourself to the media specialist and have them sign this paper." Being an experienced new teacher, you know that. You go meet those first, you go to your resource people, and you know all that… you've done all that.

Ann was also annoyed with the first after-school induction meeting. She called it "boring," and said, "It might have been great for the teachers that were actually new teachers, but I'm not a new teacher." She elaborated on the purpose of that meeting:

> It was going over how they evaluate us. Well, I knew all about that. I've been doing it now for a long time. Ms. London's been doing it for twenty-something years. She was *really* bored. And that was part of the meeting and the other part was going over the Code of Ethics on the computers. Well I know the Code of Ethics, too. So it was just unnecessary in my opinion. We didn't learn anything new at all. I'm sure it was good if you were a *new* teacher. But it was just boring. A waste of time.

Ann wanted to suggest that the administration separate the new teachers from the experienced new teachers. She said, "We have to modify for our kids all the time. They

really should modify it if you're not a new, new teacher; they should offer you some different training—like what to put on report cards."

Ann also suggested that new teacher training needed to be individualized for each school, with the school administrators present for the meetings. She explained:

> You'd be a lot better off if you got some training from your individual school, instead of system-wide, because they do everything different at each school. And the administrators should be there. If it's new teacher training, and they're your superiors, they should be there to answer questions or add anything. 'Course, I know that's part of what the mentor's for, but if I'm going to have to sit through a meeting, I wish it would be at least something I need. Two hours of my *own* time, in addition to all the *other* "own" time you have to use, it's just a waste. But I could have definitely benefited from two hours of some training here probably on what was going on a lot more than I did this.

There were many induction activities and requirements for which Ann was responsible. During one of our conversations, I shared with Ann the reason I had chosen to study Cyprus County: They have the reputation of having good induction programs for new teachers.

Ann responded, "I wish they would induct us less."

Newberry Did Not Have a "Family" Atmosphere

The fact that Ann did not feel as though she had a "family" at Newberry made her transition more difficult. Particularly during my first two visits with Ann, she often longingly reflected on her "family" in Marshall County. She recalled:

> We had fights, and we had people that got on your nerves, but it was like a crazy uncle. It was just somebody that was crazy in our family, and everybody knew how to deal with him, and just moved on. That's the way it was. It wasn't, "Oh, I can't stand this person." You just never heard that, because nobody felt that way. It was really sad when it broke apart. Even the principal—he's about ready to retire—I think he's gonna retire this year, cause he said, "It'll never be the same." He said, "Those few years we had will never be the same." So it's gonna be hard to find something like that.

Ann admitted, "It was just a perfect fit. You couldn't ever get it again." But it seemed that in the back of her mind, she was, in fact, hoping to find that type of situation again. However, she had not been able to find it at any of the three schools she had taught at since—the middle school, the school in Bentley County, nor Newberry Elementary. Ann said that she was starting to believe "it's like Oz…there *is* no place."

Although she seemed to be trying to come to terms with never finding her personal "Oz" again, she desperately wanted to recreate that kind of situation. She would vacillate between saying, "Maybe we *can* find it again somewhere," and "I may never find anything like that." It was as though she were trying to prepare herself for the disappointment of never finding another "family."

By my third visit with Ann, she had gained some insight about her experiences. She said, "You always compare your job to the first one, cause the first one's the best. And I'll try not to compare it anymore, because it's not gonna happen again." She had also come to the realization that it might not happen even if she were to return to that same school in Marshall County. She said, "If you went back to the same circumstance

five years later, *it* may not be the same anymore. Things change, and you change." She added, "That perfect place you set up in your mind probably never was perfect in the first place." She explained:

> It probably wouldn't be the same, especially after you've had more experiences. With that being my first school and my only school, and most of the people there, it was their first school, and the only school they had been to. And when you get out and experience new schools, and then you go back, things can't be the same anymore, because you're tainted. You can't go back the same. It's like leaving home and coming back and trying to live with your mom. You can't. I mean, you'll kill each other, because you've had experiences, you've learned things, you come back, you want it to be exactly the same, and it's not. And it can't be, so I guess that's what I've realized. Even if I went back to the place I love, it may not be the place I remember. Kind of like when you go back to a place where you were a kid and you think it's so big, and now it's so small. I think that's helped me to say, "Okay, enough of that. May not even be there, anyway. You're wasting time thinking about it."

Ann's initial frustration had been heightened by the fact that she had come to Newberry Elementary with unreasonably high expectations that it would meet all of her needs—including her social needs. She said:

> I came to this school thinking it would be perfect, because I'd heard so many things. And it is a good school—it really is—but it's not perfect. So you have to get over that couple weeks of disappointment before you can really get going to say, "Well, what can I do to make it better?" Instead of sitting around, whining

> about how it's not perfect. So it took a while for me to get over that preconceived thing this year, because all I heard of this school was, "It's the best school in the county." And it may be, I don't know what other schools are like. But it's not *perfect*.

Lack of Social Events

Even if the people at Newberry Elementary did not seem to be "like a family," Ann wished the school would schedule more social events. She said:

> We don't even have a teacher's lounge. That *says* something to me, when you don't have a teacher's lounge, where teachers can get together and socialize. That's important. It's important for the *kids*, I think. Cause if we're not happy, they're not happy. Like that old saying, "If momma ain't happy, nobody's happy."

During our first interview, I asked Ann if her new school had scheduled any social activities since the beginning of the year.

She responded, "No. A lady had a Southern Living party at her house, but I didn't get to go. But other than that, no."

However, Ann and her teammates had been trying to plan their own social outing. They had planned to have dinner and to go bowling together; but a scheduling conflict forced them to cancel.

Walking Around in the Dark

The most predominant theme I heard from Ann throughout my time with her first surfaced during my initial interview with her. Ann said she felt like she was "walking around in the dark." She used this analogy:

> It's kind of like cleaning the house, without knowing what the house looks like. So you don't know if you're ever done. Because you pick up this, and you pick up that, and you put this away, and then you don't know that the rest of the house is still looking like a wreck. You don't have any direction, that's what it feels like. Someone can tell me all about what I need to pick up, but I don't know if I'm ever finished with that *room*. Can I leave this room, or do I need to dust? That's kind of what it feels like.

During my first visit with her, Ann told me that one reason she felt "in the dark" was because Newberry had not had a faculty meeting yet. She said, "I know people think e-mail is wonderful, and it is. But it's not the same as sitting down with everybody and knowing which way you're going." She noted, "This is my fourth week. I don't know at all where we're going." She told me that she had surmised that the general plan for the school was to improve math scores, at the expense of the reading scores—but that it that was only a guess.

By the time of my second visit, Ann claimed to be able to see "a little bit of the way the house looks." She added, "But the *big* picture—I still feel like I don't have a clue. I don't know what the school-wide plan is."

But Ann felt more "in the dark" in other areas besides understanding the general school-wide plan. The school had applied for several grants, about which Ann knew nothing. She said, "Nobody's sat down and said, 'You're on this committee, and this is what you do.'" Instead, Ann was given a sheet of paper with all of the committees and committee members on it, and she had to find her name. She said:

> I don't have a *clue* what QuESt is to be honest with you. I know it's some kind of school improvement plan. I know everybody hates it, and I know that it's a lot of work. But other than that, I don't have a clue what it is. And nobody has told me.

Ann's administrators were also of little help to her at times. In the instance (previously mentioned) when the student in a resource class did not have a grade for science or social studies, Ann left the spot for the student's social studies grade blank on his report card. Ms. Callaham, the assistant principal, came to Ann the day report cards were to go home and said, "You cannot just leave it blank. I'm not sure what you put there, but you cannot leave it blank."

Ann had tried to find out what to do about the situation before she gave Ms. Callaham the report cards to proofread. She said, "I talked to two administrators that didn't know, and the lead teacher didn't know, so how should *I* know? So maybe I shouldn't be as frustrated as I think. Maybe *nobody* knows. We're all in the dark." Ann commented, "Somebody's supposed to be telling us which direction to go. And we don't get much direction. And if you do, it's '*Why* didn't you do this?' It's not, 'Did you realize you were supposed to do this?'"

In another instance, Ann did not know that Newberry Elementary did not recognize students for being on the Honor Roll. She said:

> Nobody remembers to tell me because they're just used to doing it. It's not that they *mean* to not tell me, they just don't *think* about it. So it's harder to figure out what's going on administrative wise and school wise.

In another case, her team's failure to distribute pertinent information had lasting consequences for Ann. She described what happened when she and the other three fourth grade teachers had met to create their schedule for the school year:

> We sat down together to make a schedule, the four of us, which was kind of a joke, because I didn't even know what they were doing. This was during pre-planning. I didn't even know what we were doing. I just knew that they told me to come to this room at this time, and I went. I said nothing, cause I did not know what they were doing. Dawn would say, "Well what if we do this this time?" and Wendy would say, "No, *this* this time." And we said, O.K., and we wrote it down. And so you pretty much figured out that first day who was in charge. So we just went with whatever Wendy wanted.
>
> And now we're stuck with it, because what they told me was, "This is only on paper." But then when it came down to it, it's not just on paper. That's the way they expect it to be done. Because when I was agreeing to it, they said, "Oh, it's just on paper; you can do what you want." So I thought, "Well what difference does it make anyway? Let them do whatever they want." But that's not the way it is, because then you have the assistant principal come and say, "Why aren't you doing this when they're doing this?" So you're expected to do everything on that schedule that we turned in at the beginning of the year. Which in my opinion is not the best way to do it, but that's the way we do it now.
>
> But at least, they were going to teach reading after lunch, and I thought that would just be disastrous, and I said something to that, and that's when they told me it didn't matter, anyway, it was just on paper, but luckily it didn't work,

> and so we *had* to change it. And that was a little better. With the Saxon Math, we should have a bigger block all at once, instead of having to go to activity and then come back and finish up. If they'd give us a little more time to do that, that would be helpful. Just different little things like that.
>
> The schedule could have worked a little better, a little smoother. Have bigger blocks of time instead of having little chunks left over here, and a little chunk left over there. But you're expected to stick to the schedule. But we didn't know we were going to have to stick to it when we made the schedule, or we would have made it different.

By the time of my third visit with Ann, she told me that she no longer felt like she was "walking around in the dark"—at least within the walls of her own classroom. She said, "I just turn my lights on and close my door." But Ann noted that when she walked through the school, she was "still in the dark."

Ann's Relationships

During the first three months of teaching at Newberry Elementary, Ann developed significant relationships with several groups of individuals. These included her colleagues, her administrators, her mentors, and her students.

Her Colleagues

Ann worked closely with the three other fourth grade teachers at Newberry Elementary—Wendy Michaels, Dawn White, and Gail Ray. In my first visit with her, she said, "I like the ladies I work with here. There's tension, but there'll be tension everywhere. I've decided that. Doesn't matter where you go." She also pointed out,

"They're all different. Completely. But I like them. They're all nice at heart, irregardless of how it comes across sometimes, so that helps."

In our second interview, Ann talked more extensively about the similarities and differences between the four teachers:

> Wendy's got a really good *heart*. And when you realize that, it takes the edge off the other. She can be standoffish, but not in a shy way—in a haughty way: standoffish. But when you get to know her, she's funny; she likes to laugh. I think it's self-preservation is what it seems like. She's looking out for her. But you just have to get to know her. She's one of those people that you don't know her right away. You have to kind of work at it. And I mean *work* at it. Not just get to know her; you have to *work* at it. You have to realize what she likes and do it.
>
> And I think that's probably why we got a relationship so quick, because I watch what she does and see what she likes, and that's what I do. Like she likes to take the lead, which is fine with me. So she takes the lead; I listen to what she says. If I disagree, I do it humorously, so she laughs, and she doesn't take it so strong. Dawn, when she disagrees, does it harshly. That's just her way. And her and Wendy butt heads continuously. That's why. Gail's more like me, except she just agrees with whatever. I disagree humorously; she'll just agree, so her and Wendy get along fine.
>
> So I just have kind of figured out what each one of them likes. And kind of like a chameleon, I just change colors according to which one I'm with. I'm not saying I talk about one behind their back and one behind the other, but I just know

> that we *have* to work together. And if I can be the one that *pulls* us together, then that's fine.
>
> Dawn said, "Wendy likes you; she listens to everything you say." And I don't know that that's necessarily true, but that's the way Dawn perceives it. But her and Wendy don't get along, and so if one has a suggestion, the other one shoots it down. And I think they're starting to get along better, too and that's helping. Because there's always tension if the two of them are together. But it's getting better. I think by the end of the year it'll be good.
>
> I don't know that we'll ever the four of us *socialize*. Three of us might, but I don't think there'll ever be the four of us, but that's O.K.

Ann's descriptions of her colleagues seemed accurate to me: During the time I had spent at Newberry Elementary, I had already noticed every one of the characteristics Ann used to describe those three colleagues. And as the first three months of the school year went by, I noticed what appeared to be some positive changes in their interactions with each other. Ann agreed that there had been changes, and she said, "I don't know what changed. It's nice, but I don't know what changed it. Except for other than we're just building a relationship. Maybe that's all it is."

By the time of my third visit, Ann had come to some interesting conclusions about the dynamic that existed among the four teachers. She said:

> I learned things I didn't know about everybody that made a difference. Like, Dawn is really the one that's like this control freak. She wants everything done HER way, and if it's not, she gets offended and makes it into a personal issue, when in reality, it's not. The way I found that out is because we decided to do a

“Read All Day” day. We were going to do one thing a month to encourage reading, like next time is a western theme, and they're going to bring trail mix and they're going to make it and read and they bring in their sleeping bags.

When I mentioned it, it was kind of a collaboration of mine and Wendy’s; we were talking in the hall and it just came up. It wasn't a planned thing; it just evolved into this thing. So we went to talk to Gail, and I went to talk to Dawn, but she wasn't in her room. So I had to talk to her later, and I told her, "We came up with this idea," and she said, "We’re already doing something in my room. I'm not really interested; but that will make me look bad." And she turned it into this big personal thing why she wasn't involved, but it wasn't a big personal thing.

So immediately, she goes and types us all up a schedule and tells us exactly what we have to do every month, when it was more of a relaxed, "See how it comes up." But her personality is, everything has to be exact. In her mind, it's just organized, but to other people it looks like—it’s her way.

So then I heard a comment from Gail, which, she never says anything about anybody, and she said, "Yeah, Dawn always has to have her way." So I was really surprised, cause it's not so much Wendy like I thought it was, as it is Dawn. And the two of them just butt heads, because Wendy isn’t going to let people tell her what to do; I mean, that's just the way it is, and Dawn's mostly pretty close to the same way. So there you just have a personality conflict.

So it kind of turned around, and now Dawn's kind of withdrawing. She even made the comment to me today, "You're really getting to be friends with the other two."

> I'm like, "Yeah, I like'em." And I like Dawn, too, but I could see what she would do to people is why she would feel alienated. She does it. *She* does it, because I haven't pushed her away or anything. I've tried to do just as much with all of them. But I'm seeing a change, and I think that's her personality. It's either, "You're on my side, or you're against me." It can't be that you just don't agree with that idea at the time. So the dynamics have kind of changed.
>
> I guess I must have misjudged Wendy, because what I saw was her being negative to Dawn. What I didn't see was what Dawn was doing first. I guess it's really changed the dynamics of our group. I don't know that it's a bad change; it's just something I've realized.

Although Ann worked more closely with her teammates than with other teachers, she had built many other relationships throughout the building. As she and I walked down the hall together, everyone was friendly to both of us. As we approached the music room to drop off Ann's students, the music teacher and Ann gave each other a "high five" as a friendly gesture.

Ann was particularly impressed with the way her entire school pulled together to support her March of Dimes fundraisers. She said, "The people are *so* nice. Like raising $2500 for the March of Dimes. They didn't know me. They didn't have to support what I was doing at all." She added:

> The teachers really got behind me, and that made me feel good—for me to be the new guy on the block, and for them to get behind me like they did. I had 14 that walked with me on Saturday. *Fourteen people.* Most of the schools that had somebody doing it that they'd known for years had two people: the one person in

> charge and their buddy. But we had 14 to walk on Saturday, so that says a lot about this school. So, it was good. That made me feel a lot better. That made me feel like this is a school you could put down some roots here.

Her Administrators

Ann had mixed opinions about her administrators—Mr. Turner, the principal, and Ms. Callaham, the assistant principal. Ann described Mr. Turner as a fairly moody individual. She said, "Some days he's funny and laughing, and the next day he's looking at you mean almost. And you don't know, did I do something, or is he just in a bad mood?"

I told Ann that I had not met Mr. Turner, and she said, "I only see him after hours, or at bus duty when we're all at the buses." But Ann did not know what he did when he was not in the school building. She said:

> When I ask, they say he's doing publicity or something. He's real social. But that works for him, because he gets a lot of "Partners for Education" that give a lot of money to the school, so maybe that's his focus. I don't know how they really work it, but you don't see him very much.

Even though he was rarely in the building, Ann's opinion of Mr. Turner was that he was "a servant" to the faculty when he was there. The day prior to my second visit, he had cleaned lunch trays because the lunch staff was shorthanded. Ann said that he had served lunch several times before, and that he had checked out books when the librarian was sick. And when Ann had to quickly move into her classroom at Newberry, Mr. Turner was the one who cleaned her room for her. In addition, Ann said that he was the

only principal in Cyprus County who called substitutes for teachers so they did not have to do that.

Regardless of the fact that I never met Mr. Turner, I did speak with Ann's assistant principal several times throughout each of the three visits. Ann said that Ms. Callaham was moody, like her former principals. She said, "Not to the extreme that I've had it before. I guess 'moody's' the right word for her. It's not *exactly* the same, but it's very similar, because you never know." She added:

> Ms. Callaham has to do all the grunt work from what I've seen. All the things that *he* doesn't want to do, like fold the newsletter. She was here one night when I was here til like 5:30 folding newsletters. Well that's something a parapro or secretary should have done, so I know she has that frustration. And sometimes I think hers is less moody and more frustration. Because when you're talking to her just on a person basis, and not an administrative basis, she's not moody. She doesn't seem to have that tendency even. But as an administrator, she does, and so talking to her one night when I was here late and she was here late, she kind of hinted around to some of those frustrations.
>
> So that got me thinking. I even went home and discussed it with my husband that maybe she's not moody, she's just *really, really* frustrated. And she gets stuck with all this work, and here we come with our little problems, and she's just…overwhelmed. And like the old saying goes, "It runs downhill." And I think that's probably what happens sometimes.
>
> But this administration's different, because we know that he's in charge, but we don't *see* that he's in charge. Kind of like when they went to see the

> Wizard, there's this big, *booming* voice, but you don't know what's behind the voice. It's kind of like that. We *know* he's charge, but we're not sure what he's in charge of. Everything comes through her. Everything that we hear does. So, she's always the bad guy. And that's what one of her comments was when we were talking. I know everybody thinks I'm… nobody likes me, because they feel that I'm always the bad guy, and I hate that part of it. She said, "But that's my job." And she's right, that's her job. Her job is to be under the principal at his discretion, so, she's the "axe-man." That's her job.

I observed several interactions between Ann and Ms. Callaham, but one situation stands out. Ann and I were walking with her students to get a snack after school, and one of the students said the secretary had promised to give him snack money because he had been behaving himself in school. Because the boy had to stop by the office to pick up the snack money, he came into the lunchroom behind the rest of us.

When Ms. Callaham saw him without an adult, she was about to reprimand him when Ann said, "He's with me. The secretary told him that she'd buy him snack because he was good."

Ms. Callaham let him go to the machine and then told Ann that she would speak to the secretary about that. When the student sat down with us, Ms. Callaham said, "You should be good every day, not just so you can get a snack. I want to see good behavior all the time."

On the way back to the classroom, Ann said to me, "When you become principal, *smile* sometimes."

I asked Ann if Ms. Callaham usually handled discipline problems. Ann responded:

> She *will* handle them. Some days she doesn't seem to want to. Others, she doesn't mind. You just never know. Like this morning, she said, "No, I don't want them up here," so you never know if you're going to get to just take them off your hands, or if she's gonna say, "No," or if she's gonna be upset that you're even bringing them. You never know how she's gonna handle it. And Mr. Turner, I've never sent one to him. They always go to her. So I don't know how he would do. Well *actually* Brandon had to be sent to him one day, but he just sent him to his resource teacher. He didn't really do anything to him.

As of my last visit in October 2001, neither Mr. Turner nor Ms. Callaham had conducted a formal observation of Ann's teaching. On one occasion, the superintendent and the personnel director of Cyprus County came to all of the new teachers' classrooms, and Mr. Turner accompanied them to Ann's room. But that was the only time he had been there. Ms. Callaham had been in Ann's classroom one day, but Ann did not think it was an official observation. She said, "Ms. Callaham was just kind of browsing, I think. It wasn't too special. She walked around, talked to some of the kids, saw what they were doing. She was probably here 15, 20 minutes. I wouldn't say anymore then that."

I asked Ann if Ms. Callaham had written anything down and given it to her. She said, "No, she was just kind of walking through. I don't know if it was an observation, or just her interacting with the kids." Ann later mentioned, "You just don't see people enough in your room to think anybody's watching anyway, so we can do what we want when the door's closed."

During my first visit to Newberry, I had an interaction with the librarian and Ms. Callaham that gave me the sense that either the school had something to hide or that the administration felt an unusually high need to be in control. I went to the media center to request the most recent SACS study, which I had obtained from each of the other schools involved in this study. After looking me over carefully, the librarian handed me the study, and I asked her how long I could keep it. She said, "Well, where are you going with it?"

I said, "I am doing a doctoral study on one of the teachers at your school, and I was interested in getting the community profile from it. I will be back in two weeks."

She said, "No. We'll need to talk with Ms. Callaham about that."

We walked to Ms. Callaham's office, and the librarian exclaimed that I wanted to take this document for two weeks! She asked Ms. Callaham, "Don't we need this?"

Ms. Callaham said to me, "Well, we have other copies, but why do you need the whole thing?"

I reminded her that I was conducting a study involving Ann, and that I was interested in the community profile in the SACS study. I also told Ms. Callaham that I would have come to her first, but in the other schools I had visited, all the administrators had sent me to the library to find the study. In addition, none of the other schools wanted to waste copies on the documents I needed when I would be returning to their schools soon.

Ms. Callaham said, "Well, if all you need is the community profile, I have that right here. I'll just make you a copy." The profile Ms. Callaham printed for me was only two pages long and contained limited information. My overall sense was that both Ms. Callaham and the librarian were uncomfortable with my presence in their school.

Her Mentors

Ann essentially had two mentors: Christy Rider, who was her official mentor, and Wendy Michaels, a fellow fourth grade teacher. Christy was a third grade teacher at Newberry Elementary who was enrolled in the Teacher Support Specialist course. Ann said, "She's still going through the training, so she can't be an official mentor yet." Ann later added, "Christy does all the stuff, on paper, I guess. And she's really good; and anything I need to know, she tells me."

Ann also had a positive view of Wendy. She said, "She helps me out a lot. It's a lot better now than it was even a few weeks ago. I guess we're just getting used to each other. It takes awhile."

One interesting relational issue surfaced while Ann was telling me about her mentoring situation. She said, "Christy doesn't like Wendy. They don't get along at all. She doesn't *not* like her; she just doesn't want to socialize with her. Whatever that means."

Her Students

As previously noted, Ann had some difficult students in her class during the time of this study. She said it was hard for her to believe the circumstances in which many of her students lived.

Ann taught one girl whose brother had to get stitches in his head because he was hit with a glass bottle on the neighborhood playground. Ann at first assumed that this brother was a teenager, but later found out that he was only in second grade.

Ann said, "I could take you around to all of their houses. I've been to them all." She added that one of her students lives on a street that is so bad, police cars will not

drive down it alone; they must be in car units of three. Ann said, “These kids are worried about not getting killed, and I’m supposed to teach them how to use a compass!”

Ann had a high tolerance for what she accepted behaviorally from her students. She believed that for some of them, they were doing the best they could do.

Three of Ann’s students were especially difficult to manage behaviorally. Brandon and Dylan were considered to be the “roughest” students in Ann’s school. Ann said, “Brandon is EBD. Dylan is BD.” A third student, Ryan, had been considered the “roughest” student in his former school.

During my first 15 minutes in Ann’s room, Brandon and Dylan began misbehaving, and Ann immediately removed them from the environment. She walked the two boys to the office, but because Ms. Callaham did not want the two of them there, Ann brought Dylan back into the classroom and had Brandon stay in the hall for a few minutes. When another student said, “Ms. Jones, Brandon is standing out here talking,” Ann walked to the door and spoke to him privately.

Ryan—the “roughest” student in his former school—had attempted suicide in the past, and may have had suicidal ideation at the time of this study. Yet Ann did not discover this part of his history until late September when she noticed some information in his file that alarmed her.

When Ann called Ryan’s former teacher, she could not believe that nothing had been done for him yet. She told Ann that Ryan had had cancer three separate times, that he was depressed, and that he was under the care of a psychiatrist. Ann was especially concerned because at the time of this study, he consistently complained about pain in his

shoulders. She did not know if the pain was from his scars or more cancer. When she tried to talk to Ryan's mother, Ann found her to be very defensive.

Those three students—Brandon, Dylan, and Ryan—were difficult. But they were not the only behavior problems in Ann's class. Michael was extremely slow at completing his work, and he stayed off task most of the time. Alisha constantly talked to anyone who would listen—including herself. Sydney rarely paid attention when Ann gave instructions, so she needed a lot of individual instruction. And Clay seemed to get in trouble regularly. Even with those behavioral issues—and there were others in her class—Ann did not miss anything her students did. She told me, "I don't want to get stabbed."

Although Ann knew how difficult her entire class was, she believed that some brain-based learning techniques would help them. She had several lamps, as well as a sofa and chair that she planned to bring to school when she had the time. Ann said:

> I know at first it's going to be chaotic, but I also know this is *exactly* the group that needs it. More than any I've ever had, probably. Because they need different ways to learn. They don't learn sitting in their desks; they can't sit still. You've seen them. Half my students are not officially diagnosed with ADHD but they're definitely hyperactive. They don't sit still. And studies have been done on especially black boys. They don't learn well sitting down in chairs. They need to move. Most of mine are. So, I know they need something. Like when they draw, "Can we get in the floor?" When they read, "Can I walk around?" Clay just likes to walk around. Sydney stands up while she works. And that's fine. Michael stands up and props his feet. This is exactly the group that needs it.

> It's also the group that'll drive you *crazy* with it. But I'm going to bring it in. I dread it, but I'm going to. And I know it's going to be chaotic. I think it will eventually be O.K. They're coming around. They're never gonna be quiet. They're not going to be a quiet class. I'm going to have to call them down *a lot.* That's just their personality, so we've had to work around it. It doesn't really bother me *that* much. Occasionally it gets on my nerves when you continuously have to do it. But it's just a different make-up. If you tried to put this class in straight rows, I'm sure you could do it if you were mean enough, but I don't see the point in that. I'm not here to change the student. I'm here to change the way I teach so they can learn. So, we're just figuring each other out. And they like to move. They like to talk and that's O.K.

Ann was especially touched at how her students had responded to the tragic events of September 11, 2001. She asked them to reflect on these events and write down their thoughts. Ann told me that this group of difficult students wrote silently for 20 minutes, which was amazing to her. It seemed as if they really understood the horrible devastation of that event.

Conclusion

By the time of my last visit with Ann, she had adjusted well to her situation at Newberry Elementary. She said, "Every day it gets better here. And I'm not miserable here, like I was last year. Last year I was miserable. So, this is a school I can work with."

Ann had encountered some teachers who were miserable at Newberry. She said, "They've been here three years, and they still act like they don't have a clue what's going

on.” Ann continued, “Most people, if you go up and say, ‘Where are the pens?’ they'll tell you where the pens are. You don't have to sit here all year thinking, 'Man, I wish I had a pen.'”

Ann was just the opposite. When she needed something, whether it be a pen or a friend, she would go out and find it. She said:

> You only have two choices. You either have to figure it out and survive, or be miserable all year, and most people don't want to be miserable all year. I know I don't. So you get the answers you need, and you make the friends you need, and you move on. You can't sit in chaos the whole year.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the perspectives of three experienced new teachers—teachers who were new to a school, but who had prior teaching experience. This research was conducted to respond to one primary research question: What are the perspectives of experienced new teachers? In answering this question, I examined three experienced new teachers, discovering some of their thoughts, feelings, actions, successes, challenges, and concerns.

Method

To study the perspectives of experienced new teachers, I employed Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis' (1997) portraiture method. This method is a type of qualitative research in which the researcher produces written "portraits" of participants. Portraits are first-person narratives that describe the experiences and perspectives of the individuals being studied.

This study was conducted in Cyprus County, a county in northeast Georgia that offered teacher induction classes for all new teachers in its system—including experienced new teachers. Three experienced new teachers participated in this study. Each participant was female, each taught in a separate elementary school in Cyprus County, and each had between 6 and 13 years of experience.

During August, September, and October of 2001, I spent three separate school days with each participant. During those three days, I observed these teachers' interactions with their colleagues, students, and administrators. I also interviewed each teacher three times—at the end of each day of observation—specifically asking about their experiences and their perspectives as experienced new teachers.

Findings

Nine themes surfaced as I analyzed data from my interviews and experiences with these teachers. Of these nine themes, four were experienced by all three participants, two were experienced by two of the participants, and three were experienced by only one participant.

All three teachers encountered difficulties related to working in a new school culture, all of them had a difficult time learning where teaching materials were kept, all experienced frustrations related to their induction into the school system and their respective schools, and all three struggled to learn and implement a new curriculum.

Two of the three teachers expressed concerns about issues related to student discipline. Likewise, two teachers commented on the tendency of administrators and other teachers to forget that experienced new teachers are still new teachers who need additional help.

One teacher in this study also had difficulty making friends because of established teacher cliques and another desired more time to meet socially with other teachers in her grade level. The third teacher struggled to meet the additional demands expected of classroom teachers in her new grade.

In addition to these general themes that emerged from this research, I also discovered some underlying factors that seemed to play major roles in determining the types of experiences and perspectives these experienced new teachers had. Each participant's overall satisfaction with her experience at her new school seemed to hinge upon four primary factors: (a) the quality of her previous teaching experiences, (b) the number of years she had been teaching, (c) the strength of any preconceived ideas she had about her new school, and (d) the type of personality she had.

Discussion

Strengths and Weaknesses of This Study

The major strengths of this study stem from its method: portraiture. These strengths include the study's uniquely qualitative nature, its powerfully descriptive methodology, and its level of reliability.

Only three previous studies examined experienced new teachers, and none of those studies took an in-depth look at the perspectives of this group of new teachers. The present study is the first to qualitatively examine experienced new teachers and their struggles, concerns, and successes.

Using the qualitative research method of portraiture, I was able to focus on the participants' experiences and to report those experiences through considerably detailed stories. These finished portraits are rich descriptions that reveal, often in the participants' own words, what it was like for them to be experienced new teachers during the first few months of a school year.

Another strength of this study is its reliability. By implementing a rigorous method of data analysis, I was able to continually focus on participants' words and

feelings rather than my own. Consequently, the portraits that developed out of this research are accurate pictures of the study's participants.

In addition to the strengths of this study, there were two notable weaknesses. First, this research was limited to the perspectives and experiences of three female experienced new elementary school teachers with between 6 and 13 years of experience. Although their stories are rich and descriptive, they only describe the possible perspectives of experienced new teachers who fit the characteristics of these three participants. Also, the scope of this study was limited by its lack of follow-up interviews later in the year to examine the duration of the impact of being an experienced new teacher.

Relationships of Findings to Extant Research and Literature

Nine major themes emerged from a careful review of the portraits of this study's participants. In the following section, each of these themes is discussed in view of its relationship to extant research and literature.

Unfamiliar cultures.

All of the teachers in this study experienced some degree of difficulty interacting with a school culture with which they were not familiar. Ann described her personal experience with this obstacle as having to deal with "the way it's always been done." When she first attended meetings at Newberry, she attempted to make suggestions that were different from "the way things had always been done," and her ideas were disregarded. After some time, however, Ann's colleagues and administrators became more willing to accept and use her input.

Stephanie was not so adept at managing this challenge. Several times she attempted to stand up for what she thought was right—which went against the school culture of "book teaching"—and it only made enemies for her. Those enemies included most of her colleagues, as well as her administrators.

In addition to confirming Brock and Grady's (1997) supposition that experienced new teachers are challenged by unfamiliar cultures in their new schools, the present study also suggests a possible connection between that challenge and self-esteem issues. Stephanie's repeated expressions of hopelessness about her situation demonstrated that relationship.

Brockner (1988) stated that individuals with low self-esteem are more likely to give up after receiving negative feedback. By my second visit with Stephanie, she seemed to have almost reached the point of giving up in the wake of her inability to find acceptance for her preferred teaching method. She told me that she said to God, "If you don't show me what it is that I'm fighting for, it's not worth the battle."

If Stephanie was, in fact, experiencing low self-esteem during the times that I met with her, it appeared that her low self-esteem resulted, at least in part, from her difficulty in adjusting to the culture of her new school. Another possibility is that Stephanie brought existing self-esteem issues into her new school environment, causing her to have a hard time adjusting to her new culture. Either way, the issue of self-esteem emerged as a factor that could easily play a prominent role in the adjustment of experienced new teachers to their new school settings.

Obtaining materials and supplies.

All three of the participants in this study struggled to find teaching materials and instructional supplies. Michelle, for example, needed certain materials in order to conduct the experiments in her science textbook. Although the supplies may have been in the building, or even in her own classroom, she did not have time to find them.

Odell (1986) and Slaughter (1988) stated that experienced new teachers need assistance in obtaining resources. The present study both confirmed and extended this research. These two previous studies focused on the lack of materials in the school building. However, the present findings revealed that although adequate teaching materials might be available on site, they are not necessarily easily accessible to experienced new teachers.

Need for information about the school district and the school.

Another fundamental need that experienced new teachers have is to be provided with what Odell referred to as "fundamental information about the school district" (1986, p. 29). The present study illuminated an important issue dealing with teacher induction: Experienced new teachers and first-year teachers need to have separate induction sessions. Ann referred to Cyprus County's induction meetings as "boring," because they included a sizeable amount of material aimed primarily at first-year teachers.

This study also pointed to the need for school-level teacher induction sessions to supplement system-wide meetings, extending Slaughter's (1988) finding that experienced new teachers need to be informed about the general policies within the school. Ann stated specifically that she would have liked more information about the policies at her school

via an organized, school-level induction program; she believed that she needed more than a cursory introduction to her new school—she needed a structured induction process.

I understood well the participants' frustrations with not having clear direction about school policies and procedures. In my own two experiences as an experienced new teacher, the policies and procedures in both of my new schools were merely glossed over, if stated at all. At the same time, I was expected to perform as though I had been given this information.

Learning the curriculum.

This study is the first to point to curriculum as a potential area of concern for experienced new teachers. As I listened to the participants share their stories, I realized that familiarizing themselves with a new curriculum was an issue for all three of them. Ann was not familiar with the Saxon Math program, Stephanie had never followed such strict Accelerated Reader guidelines, and Michelle had never taught fifth grade. All three participants needed much more intensive support in learning the curriculum.

Although the interaction between experienced new teachers and their new curricula was not mentioned in any previous literature, I was not surprised at the difficulty these participants encountered. I had always struggled as an experienced new teacher to understand how the curricular requirements in one school system could be so much different than those in another. And each change of schools had always required me to invest significant time in learning to teach from a new curriculum.

Handling student discipline.

Although Michelle encountered some problems with managing student discipline, this area was especially troublesome for Ann, who had been given some particularly

difficult students to teach. When I mentioned to Ann that one of my purposes for conducting this study was to observe her interactions with colleagues and administrators, she said, "You'll see me interact a lot with the administration. You know how the new teacher gets the roughest kids? You'll see that for sure."

Slaughter (1988) found that experienced new teachers wanted assistance with motivating students, teaching students at different levels of ability, and handling student discipline. The present study extended Slaughter's finding by highlighting the importance of not giving "the roughest kids" to new teachers—whether they are experienced new teachers or first-year teachers. It may be that experienced new teachers would not need as much assistance in handling disciplinary issues if it were not for the fact that they are often assigned students that other teachers do not want to teach.

"Other teachers forget you're new".

Both Stephanie and Ann continually encountered problems because of a lack of information about school procedures. In Stephanie's situation, she did not know about bus duty and the procedures for lunch. Similarly, Ann had no idea that she was supposed to include a completed modification sheet for each special education student's report card. Ann suggested that the reason none of her colleagues remembered to tell her things was "because they're just used to doing it. It's not that they *mean* to not tell me, they just don't *think* about it."

These teachers' struggles confirmed findings from a study by Slaughter (1988), in which one participant stated, "Teachers have a tendency to forget you are new and assume you know certain procedures" (p. 95). The present study also illuminated frustration with this issue in a way that previous quantitative studies, using different

methodologies, could not do: Rather than simply hearing teachers describe their difficulties, I was able to observe their reactions of stress and embarrassment as they realized they had made mistakes because of their lack of knowledge.

Teacher cliques.

Although Ann did not have trouble making friends and Michelle did not have time to be concerned with building relationships, encountering teacher cliques was one of Stephanie's greatest frustrations. Stephanie's friend, Jackie, commented that although the people on her pod tried to encourage Stephanie, there were teachers at the other end of the building who would not even speak to her. This situation was especially hard for Stephanie because she desperately wanted to find individuals to replace the friends she had at her former school. Because she was unable to find any friends other than Jackie, she began to dread coming to work.

This study confirmed Brock and Grady's (1997) speculation that one of the reasons experienced new teachers struggle is because they encounter cliques in their new schools, which causes them to have difficulty finding new friends. The present study also supported Slaughter's (1988) research, which stated that when experienced new teachers cannot find friends, they might find the new school an especially difficult place to work, particularly when they have left behind close friendships at their previous schools.

More time to talk with other teachers.

Although Stephanie did not get along with the teachers on her grade level, and Michelle did not have time to spend with her colleagues, Ann looked forward to the time she spent with her friends at Newberry—and not only for social reasons. She said, "The more people you know, the more you learn" about the policies of the school.

This study confirmed Slaughter's (1988) finding that experienced new teachers often wanted more time to talk with other teachers, particularly teachers on their grade level. Similarly, Louis, Posner, and Powell (1983) noted that a major contributor to adjustment following a change of employment is communication with colleagues whose status is equal to or higher than the newcomer.

"Extra" requirements of a classroom teacher.

Michelle expressed frustration with all of the "extra stuff" that had nothing to do with actually teaching her class (e.g., D.A.R.E., 4-H). In spending time with Michelle, I found this to be one of her greatest areas of difficulty. Attempting to teach fifth grade for the first time in her career, she found herself struggling just to teach the basic curriculum. She had been totally unprepared for the extra expectations for fifth grade students, and was unsure how to balance those expectations with the academic curriculum.

Michelle's difficulty in this area emerged from the present study as a new discovery in the literature on experienced new teachers. Though not discussed in previous research, this finding may prove useful to administrators of experienced new teachers who are entering a new school and a new grade level simultaneously.

Four Determinants of Teacher Satisfaction

There appeared to be strong correlations between four underlying factors and the level of satisfaction participants felt. These factors were: (a) the quality of her previous teaching experiences, (b) the number of years she had been teaching, (c) the strength of any preconceived ideas she had about her new school, and (d) the type of personality she had. All of these factors except one—preconceived notions about the new school (Hartzell, 1990)—were new additions to the literature on experienced new teachers.

The first determinant, quality of previous teaching experiences, may be linked to research conducted by Jones (1983). Jones stated that experienced new employees might be conditioned by their previous employment. If this is the case, and if the employee's previous experiences were positive, he or she may have been conditioned to expect that the new experience will be positive. If, however, the new experience is not rewarding, that employee might experience great dissatisfaction in his or her new position.

The positive correlation between participants' level of satisfaction and their number of years of experience supports literature on the life cycle of career teachers by Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch, and Enz (2000). These authors stated that as teachers transition away from the novice stage, there is a "shift from personal needs to the needs of students" (p. 63). It is possible that experienced new teachers who had more years of experience found greater levels of satisfaction at their new schools because their focus had moved farther away from themselves and more toward the needs of students.

The presence of preconceived notions about the participants' new schools was the third determinant for satisfaction. In organizational literature, Wanous (1977) stated that when making employment changes, outsiders tend to have an inflated view of the organization, particularly because those who conduct hiring processes attempt to make the position sound better than it is.

Although those who hire new teachers may tend to minimize problems in a school or a school system, experienced new teachers may also feel overconfident in their abilities as a teacher. Thinking they can handle the new position without any difficulties, they may overlook the fact that they are "new" to a situation. Consequently, difficulties in adjusting to a new school may not only be related to a teacher's preconceived ideas about

that school, but also to that teacher's preconceived ideas about how well he or she will function within that new environment.

Finally, it seemed that each participant's personality traits helped determine her level of satisfaction as an experienced new teacher. In psychological literature, Kobasa (1979) noted that hardiness—a personality trait that reflects the degree of a person's resilience in the face of stress—affects how a person approaches and handles challenges. It seems only logical that the more "hardy" an individual is, the more likely he or she will be to smoothly manage a change in job situations.

Following is an overview of how these four factors appeared to influence the level of satisfaction for each participant:

Stephanie had an extremely difficult time as an experienced new teacher. Of the three participants, she had the fewest number of years experience—all at the same school. Additionally, she had high expectations that her new school would be identical to her former school, and her personality was one that did not handle change well.

Michelle enjoyed her experience the most. Of the participants, she had the most years of teaching experience, the largest variety of teaching experiences, very few preconceived notions about her new school, and a personality that could easily handle change.

Although Ann was originally slightly disgruntled with her experience, she eventually became rather pleased with it. Ann had experienced both positive and negative previous teaching experiences, she had only a few expectations for how her new school would be, and she had an extroverted personality.

Practical Implications

Several implications regarding experienced new teachers can be derived from this study. These implications include suggestions for researchers, school system administrators, school building administrators, and mentors and colleagues of experienced new teachers.

Implications for Further Research

This portraiture study should be replicated several times to ensure proper saturation of data. A replication for this purpose would need to be conducted using a similar sample of participants: female teachers with between 6 and 13 years of experience who teach upper elementary grades in a rural area.

Further research of experienced new teachers should examine male participants to understand their specific needs, concerns, issues, and frustrations as experienced new teachers. Future research should also focus on experienced new teachers with more and fewer years of experience, and on those who teach lower elementary, middle school, and high school students. It could also look at teachers in special areas, such as music, P.E., and art, as well as special education teachers and resource personnel. In addition, future researchers could focus on experienced new teachers in urban and suburban areas.

New research might also focus on experienced new teachers who are moving from one grade level to another at the same time they are moving to a new school. Research in this area could help determine the frequency with which teachers who change schools and grade levels at the same time encounter difficulties as an experienced new teacher that are compounded by the unique demands of their new grade level.

Other types of future research may include correlational studies to examine the relationships between experienced new teachers' levels of satisfaction and the four determinants of satisfaction uncovered in the present study—the types and qualities of previous teaching experiences, the number of years of previous teaching experience, teachers' preconceived notions about their new schools, and teachers' personality traits.

Implications for County Administrators

One reason I selected Cyprus County as the site for this study was because they provided an induction program for experienced new teachers. However, all three participants in this study felt that the induction program was too novice-oriented for experienced new teachers, as the majority of the information discussed at the induction meetings was designed to assist first-year teachers. It appears that new teacher induction should be separate for first-year teachers and experienced new teachers, as they understand the teaching profession at varying levels. As Ann stated, "We (teachers) have to modify for our kids all the time. They really should modify it if you're not a new, new teacher."

The outside requirements for teacher induction were also extremely time consuming—especially for experienced new teachers, considering that they tended to have many responsibilities outside of work. Although induction requirements ought not overwhelm either type of new teacher, county administrators must recognize that most experienced new teachers are in different places in their lives than first-year teachers.

Another issue raised by these participants was the hiring process. In Cyprus County, applicants were interviewed in front of a panel consisting of all the elementary school principals and the personnel director. When positions became available, teachers

were hired for those positions. Incoming teachers did not have the opportunity to individually meet the principal, discuss the type of team on which he or she would be placed, or tour the school where he or she would work. This situation was not ideal for these experienced new teachers. The teachers in this study had been teaching long enough to know what type of school and which grade level would best suit their personalities and professional goals; however, they were not given the opportunity to look for the best match. During the hiring process, county administrators must provide an opportunity for applicants to ask specific questions about the school and the position for which they are being interviewed.

Because the teachers in this study had such difficulty learning their respective curricula, county administrators could create curriculum maps and guides for every grade level. When new teachers are hired, they could be given the appropriate curriculum guide(s) to review before the school year begins.

Implications for School Building Administrators

Stephanie stated one implication for school building administrators almost immediately when I met her: She wished that her school could provide her a manual containing all the requirements, duties, and responsibilities for teachers at the school. She said, "Put it in writing somewhere and let teachers read it. You've got a faculty manual. Add those things to it. And if you change the way it's done, then change the manual."

Another way experienced new teachers could learn about the requirements and expectations at their respective schools is through a school-level induction program. Ann said that she would rather have been inducted into her own school than into the Cyprus

County School System. If the schools provided their own induction programs, many of the frustrations that Ann and the others had could have been reduced.

Another issue that arose during this study was the mentoring process. Not one of the experienced new teachers in this study was provided with a mentor who taught on her grade level. In addition, two of the mentors were actually completing the Teacher Support Specialist training program and needed a person on whom to "practice" their mentoring skills. Although experienced new teachers know how to teach, they are still new teachers, and they deserve the best mentor possible. One way to make the most effective use of the mentoring program would be to provide each experienced new teacher with a mentor who not only taught the same grade level, but who also had more years of experience than the experienced new teacher.

Instructional materials and supplies are consistently a problem for new and experienced new teachers. One way to reduce these problems would be to involve the new teacher in the ordering process, if he or she were hired before that process took place. School building administrators could also provide a "materials and supplies closet," as Ann mentioned. Regardless of how the materials are stored, it is essential that the experienced new teachers are oriented to their location.

School-wide staff social events and team building activities would be a positive way to incorporate experienced new teachers into the school. These could be weekend events, after-school socials, or pre-planning gatherings. No matter when they are held, it is important to provide opportunities for teachers to socialize with each other.

One other finding that might be helpful for school building administrators to keep in mind is the set of four determinants that affected teachers' satisfaction levels.

Recognizing these factors could help administrators identify potential problems before they arise. If, for example, a principal hires a teacher who has taught for eight years in the same school, and that teacher was pleased with the quality of his or her experience, the principal might need to offer extra support and encouragement during that teacher's first year.

Finally, principals may benefit greatly from asking an experienced new teacher's opinion about his or her new school, because the new teacher offers not only a new "pair of eyes," but also an experienced "pair of eyes." Experienced new teachers can bring exceptional ideas to their new schools, and would almost certainly be encouraged by being asked for their input.

Implications for Mentors and Colleagues

On a smaller scale, social activities for each grade level or team could prove helpful in incorporating experienced new teachers. In Ann's situation, her teammates were planning a bowling night out, and although it had not occurred by the time of my last visit with Ann, she was really looking forward to it. These types of activities do not have to take a great deal of planning, but they can be very effective.

Mentors and colleagues also need to assist experienced new teachers with procedural information, such as how bus duty and lunch are managed at that particular school. Although some of the information will be given to the experienced new teacher in written form, it is important to be certain that experienced new teachers are aware of all relevant information.

Because experienced new teachers sometimes struggle with student discipline, mentors and colleagues need to make certain that their new co-workers are aware of the

disciplinary procedures in their new school. They can also help experienced new teachers by letting them know where to find information about interventions that have worked well with difficult students when those students were in previous grades.

Continual support and encouragement may be necessary for some experienced new teachers, as they are sometimes leaving behind support systems at their former schools. Occasionally stopping by their classrooms to answer questions or to simply lend an ear could be very helpful to any teacher who is new to a school. This is particularly true of experienced new teachers who might be trying to "prove themselves" to their colleagues, as Stephanie so desperately wanted to do.

More than anything, the key to success for mentors and colleagues who are assisting this group of new teachers is remembering that experienced new teachers are still *new* teachers. Although experienced new teachers have taught before, they are in a school culture that is unfamiliar to them, and they need guides and support systems to help them "learn the ropes," just as any new teacher would.

Final Note

This portraiture study has given me an amazing look into the lives of three wonderful individuals. As I completed these portraits, I realized that I had accomplished my goal: to capture the essence of these experienced new teachers' perspectives during the time of this study. Although you, the reader, are unable to meet these people in person, I hope that through these portraits you are able to see them as you would see friends in a photograph: people of beauty, struggles, and hopes.

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