BETTY SHOCKLEY
Under the Wings of Writers: Reading as a path of Self-Study in Teacher Planning
(Under the Direction of JOBETH ALLEN)

This self-study examines teacher decision making from the perspective of a practicing teacher. In this qualitative action research study, I seek to identify and describe resources that influence my thinking while planning learning experiences in the English language arts for sixth-grade students. I collected data for 1 school year using a self-designed note-to-narrative-to-action process. This method consisted of using a jot journal for tracking daily confusions and insights related to practice, expanding these notes through weekly narrative reflections, and then acting on this record of understanding as a basis for framing daily lesson plans. This reflective approach to planning allowed me to identify reading as an essential aspect of my professional character development. As a result, I propose that self-study is a form of self-dialogue that can be especially supportive for teachers who are experiencing a sense of isolation in their school environments. I suggest that reading for pleasure and information infuses self-dialogue with a form of scholarship that expands thinking and community. Under the wings of writers a teacher can create a virtual peer group and the professional freedom to become the author of her own praxis. This study establishes that reading fiction and non-fiction can sustain and inform the work of teaching and renames planning as a conceptual tool for teaching instead of a minute-by-minute plan for implementation. I was not teaching a plan but acquiring a way of thinking about learning. This study will, therefore, contribute to the knowledge base in teacher thinking and planning in at least three ways: 1) by modeling a method of self-study that supports ongoing scholarship in the definition of teacher as professional; 2) by demonstrating teacher agency in the construction of a

dependable community through association with the words of writers; and 3) by

establishing the need for an approach to planning grounded in the personal/professional

identity and integrity of the teacher.

INDEX WORDS: Teacher planning, Self-study, Reflection, Reading, Narrative,

Journal writing, Middle school

UNDER THE WINGS OF WRITERS: READING AS A PATH OF SELF-STUDY IN

TEACHER PLANNING

by

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DEDICATION

For Bob
"Mr. Wonderful"

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In the future when I find myself enjoying a glass of wine with friends and the conversation turns to tales of dissertation writing, I wonder what aspects of the process will retain their current intensity. Will I remember how fragile I felt when writing proved to be such a tangle of successes and failures? Will I recall how comprehensive the process seemed, how every moment weighed heavy with the potential for pivotal insight to burst forth if only I could be prepared enough or perceptive enough to recognize it? When the day comes that I am able to rely on hindsight to evoke associations for this type of storytelling, I predict that only the support I received from the following people will retain the full measure of current influence:

JoBeth Allen anticipated a special challenge I would face in the process of constructing a dissertation. Years ago when I first voiced a desire to seek this degree and asked if she would chair my committee, she worried with me about the pressures a change in roles from collaborators and friends to student and professor might mean for us. Negotiating these fluctuating identities took time and a few tears, but I treasure the history of experience we've had together. It is a rare and wonderful thing when personal and scholarly connections can be sustained and enriched by stretching beyond established safe zones. Furthermore, recollections of the constant support and thoughtful guidance of the rest of my committee, Joel Taxel, Michelle Commeyras, Randi Stanulis, and Sally Hudson-Ross, will grow even grander with each retelling.

My daughter Carly kept me ever-mindful that family was more important than a dissertation. This, unfortunately, is difficult to remember sometimes. It is an ongoing risk for teachers who tend to get as involved in the learning and lives of their students to the subtle, preoccupied neglect of their own children's needs. Carly always believed in me, and I in her.

I could always depend on my son Jamie and daughter-in-law Rachel to resolutely attribute any and all setbacks in my work to a weakness in others and not my own. They were always first to hear my woes and ever ready to proclaim the world deficient - never me.

Since we met and married at the beginning of my doctoral coursework, Bob and I should have considered including an additional commitment in the traditional wedding vows - a promise to not only offer each other continuous love and support in times of sickness and in health, but also during days of dissertation strife. Fortunately, no such vow was needed, his sensitivity and support just came naturally. Bob never wavered in his encouragement and always managed to insert a little humor just when I needed to laugh at myself the most. No story of this time in my life will ever be complete without including his light-hearted yet persistent plea, "Haven't you finished that thing yet?" Thankfully, I can now exclaim, "Yes!"

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FOREWORD

Dennis had a gift for drama. He could make reciting the Pledge of Allegiance seem like an unfamiliar experience. If I felt a day becoming too predictable, I could think, "Now, what would Dennis do?" Leslie had an enviable capacity for memorizing poetry. If I was tempted to make an assignment that wasn't open enough to accommodate broad interpretation, I could recall Leslie's desire to go beyond assumed expectations. Joseph had a deep interest in history and local politics. He approached me in the hall during class change asking, "Ms. B., do you happen to have the number for the Pentagon?" Then there was Andrea who helpfully offered, "Ms. B., did you know two of your eyelashes are crossed over each other?" I remember that sometimes student focus is not always where you think it is. How is it possible for a teacher to plan for all this specialness?

During writing workshop, one student writes seriously of her heritage:

Bein An African

The whites stole us,

controlled us.

The whites abused us,

confused us.

Man oh man, it's hard bein an African

They thrashed us to our soul,

left us with no goals.

Didn't wanna hide,

1

lookin for our pride.

Man oh man, it's hard bein an African.

The whites still enslaved us,

the underground railroad saved us.

Now we're poor,

goin from door to door.

Man oh man, it's hard being an African.

We escaped from the South,

like food from a mouth.

Still running away,

'cause we needed somewhere to stay.

Man oh man, it's hard being an African.

We went to school to be educated,

so one day we could be dedicated.

You stopped calling us niggas

but guns will always have triggas.

Man oh man, it's hard bein an African.

Now we're using picks,

to keep our hair fixed.

And now - now we look back

and remember what it means

to be BLACK.

while two others play with rhyming words:

Cow Colors

If you wear BLUE,

your cow will MOO.

If you wear GREEN,

your cow might split his SPLEEN.

If you wear RED,

your cow might sleep in your BED.

If you wear BROWN,

your cow might turn into a CLOWN.

If you wear PINK,

maybe your cow needs to THINK.

If you wear PLAID,

your cow will be SAD.

If you wear STRIPES,

your cow will not GRIPE

about all this!

How does a teacher reconcile these realities of individual needs, interests, and skills in one classroom with her goals for literate learning? How is it possible for teachers to keep a productive balance between the pull to support the individual with the push from outside to produce assembly-line reproductions of imagined perfection? The answers in my school setting had a lot to do with planning--planning for instruction and planning to codify a common response. The administration mandated a planning model that simply moved from objective to objective and page to page in pursuit of group

progress. With this kind of instructional guide, a teacher wouldn't need to be so confused by individual performances because range could be eliminated through uniform responses to specific textbook assignments. Also, if students were not talking in the hallways, as was the orderly standard, then I would not need to be concerned that my eyelashes were crossed or a student was trying to access the Pentagon.

When I read Teachers as Curriculum Planners: Narratives of Experience, the authors Connelly and Clandinin (1988) explained,

Situations are pointed into the future towards certain ends. Almost no one lives his or her life at random. Instead, people are going somewhere. So a situation does not merely move into the future simply because time passes but is pulled into the future by the ends we all hold out before us. (p. 9)

School sites represent particular "situations." As Connelly and Clandinin also specified, "A situation is composed of persons, in an immediate environment of things, interacting according to certain processes" (p. 6). In my school "situation," teachers and students were the "people" being pulled into the future by "things" like textbooks linked to objectives representing a "process" of incremental movements toward the "ends" of hoped-for higher standardized test scores. By linking learning with a series of behavioral objectives aligned with textbooks for each grade level and each subject area, the belief prevailed that learning could be neatly managed. From the beginning of my involvement in this situation, I was sure I could not continue to be pulled into the future by such means. I was a constructivist in a behaviorist environment. I wanted to go somewhere as a teacher with my students yet not be led by the chains of lock-step progressions. I wanted us to learn to wave the flag of a fuller potential that lies somewhere in the

relationship between models that matter and space to become something yet to be defined. By holding before us all our potential as readers and writers and thinkers instead of what was specifically sanctioned for sixth grade, I wanted it to be ok for me to learn through thoughtful trial and error and for my students to have the same respect. Here resides a central paradox of the current moment in education: The call for teacher professionalism in the context of a system epitomized by standardized materials placing little faith in the intellectual integrity of individual teachers.

There was the temptation to approach this work as a feminist or critical study. However, hooks (1994) urged me to live more fully as a teacher by embracing and emphasizing the intellectual and the creative sides of the experience, to maintain passion and to be daring. In her view

> Progressive, holistic education, "engaged pedagogy" is more demanding
> than conventional critical or feminist pedagogy. For, unlike these two
> teaching practices, it emphasizes well-being. That means that teachers
> must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes
> their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers
> students. (p. 16)

bell hooks continued with concern for the objectification of teachers and teaching that contributes to the separation of public and private life compartmentalization, "encouraging teachers and students to see no connection between life practices, habits of being, and [their roles]" (p. 16). Staying connected to self and the needs and interests of students through supportive planning decisions was my challenge.

Educational psychologist Christopher Clark (1993) added to my revaluing of the teacher's role in support of an alignment between self-learning and student learning by claiming,

> We cannot hope for good education, from preschool to graduate school, in the absence of good teaching. For better and for worse, the quality of teaching defines the quality of education. And the quality of education, in turn, limits or enables the good that the next generation of teacher is able to do. (p. 184)

Expanding on this premise, I submit that planning to teach in a manner that reconnects life practices and habits of being is an important preliminary step toward the goal of being a good teacher. My struggle to resettle in a new world of middle school education and find a professional self that meshed with my personal self gave me an unexpected focus of study for this school year. Finding my voice through planning was an adventure in teacher research. Through disciplined study of my own situation and attention to developing an engaged pedagogy, I attempted to reconstitute planning as an integral part of teaching, one deserving of deeper understanding and reclamation as central to quality work.

This study is my story of learning about planning as I simultaneously learned about teaching sixth grade language arts. It represents an unfolding of a professional life experience in search of professional well being. I started the year desperate for a way out from under all the controls of a new administrative environment. Only in hindsight could I see the value of my personal and professional reading as the tie that bound self to self and teacher to students. There have been no studies focused on the relationship of reading

and planning to teach. There also are no referenceable studies of teacher planning independently designed and carried out by a classroom teacher.

Teacher planning seems to be one of those topics that we've stepped over and ignored as essential to the work of developing the character of teacher. Somehow we teachers have allowed others to decide for us what those plans will look like and what they will address. Are lesson plans really useful to anyone if they do not fully represent the teacher's actual decision making process?

I invite you to walk with me through a year of thought and action as a teacher character trying to find her way in unfamiliar territory through reading. It is not to be a simple journey. My path toward representative planning is cluttered with challenges to my sense of professional security. A new requirement would jump out of the woods and dare me to find my way around it. I kept trying to disentangle myself from the system supported planning frame, but time and textbooks and tradition kept wearing me down. It was a slow and winding uphill climb. Every now and again, however, I would come to a clearing created by current reading choices or recollections of previous text-based experiences and I would pause to appreciate a new view. Langer (1995) would call this a process of "envisionment building."

Throughout the story of my effort to reenvision teaching through the relationship of planning to the characterization of teacher, the tensions of administrative control, the need to fit in in my new community, the desire to connect life and learning for me and my students, and the destabilizing status of newcomer are intentionally kept in the text. This decision to keep the clutter around the narrative trail of planning to teach was guided by Dressman's (2000) analysis of 61 narratives of teaching and his concern that "for the

sake of clarity and narrative coherence, [these narratives] often leave out the messier bureaucratic, cultural, and political aspects of schooling, which are, quite frequently the aspects that can make or break any innovative effort" (p. 51). He attributes a sense of frustration among teachers reading these tidied up tellings because the message they present is clear: The teachers in the story tried something new and were a great success; try it, and you'll be successful, too." As Dressman confided, "And herein, I believe, lies the source of my own past frustrations as a middle-school teacher who wanted to be as 'good' as the protagonists in the stories I read, and of the preservice teachers with whom I work when their lessons, modeled after such stories, are not immediate or striking successes" (p. 50). Responsive to these concerns, this self-study retains the complexities and confusions of context while trying to advance the relationship of planning and reading in support of professional character.

There are times, I suspect, when a reader may feel uneasy and somewhat lost in the mix of events that continued to challenge my thinking and thus became so necessary in the writing style I needed to re-present the effort. Bissex and Bullock (1987) addressed teacher research as its own genre, one in which the effort is not atheoretical, but that ultimately exhibits theories of teaching as the teacher researcher writes her way into and through an aspect of her work. This text is much like a stream-of-life reporting--a genre of teacher research that gathers more moss as the study progresses but comes to rest with a fuller sense of experience. I urge you to persevere, to stay the path and appreciate the layering effect of insight building upon insight. This work is presented as a kind of knowing constructed from the lived-through experience of the author for the virtual

experience of a reader, a narrative unfolding in the tempo of time and complexity of thought that were so real for me.

Finally, in recognition of the potential for connections that my work might have for other teachers trying to reconsider their teaching, I use pseudonyms for school, administration, faculty, and students throughout my account. As stated, this is a self-study. It takes place in a particular school setting, but I feel my discussion represents planning issues at many schools, not just mine. It is about teacher thinking. It is about the quality of the character of teacher. From my travels and observations as an educational consultant, I understand that schools have some common concerns when they continue to be organized around a power structure in which teachers are at the bottom of a hierarchy. I also understand the challenge we face in trying to be more responsible to a professional self while still being responsible to a community or, if you will, a greater good. With such concerns in mind, I invite you to substitute your self as the subject of this descriptive study when I speak of mine. When my school or my administration is mentioned, imagine your situation. Insert your planning to teach issues for my planning path and consider reading your way toward other "possible worlds" (Bruner, 1986).

CHAPTER 1

READING THE LANDSCAPE

<u>Establishing a Rationale for the Study</u>

For we can do nothing substantial toward changing our course on the

planet . . . without rousing ourselves, individual by individual, and

bringing our small, imperfect stones to the pile. (Walker, 1997, p. xxiii)

<u>Where Am I: The Questioning Begins</u>

So many questions . . . It seemed appropriate that the day began with a filtering

haze of light fog, so like my own state of mind, resistant to starting over again, worried

about what the bright light of this summer day might actually reveal. Driving the back

roads between the big city and the academic atmosphere of a university town, I felt the

pull of possibilities. I paused a moment longer than necessary as I crossed over the main

highway along my route, knowing what a difference a right turn or a left would make. It

actually did seem like I was crossing over to a different time, moving from settings I had

grown accustomed to in my adult life and returning to what I thought might be similar to

the school days of my childhood. As a young adult, I remember deciding that I wanted to

live in a very progressive place, either one associated with a university or a city large

enough where one could expect and appreciate a wide range of choices. As a child, I

spent my days in a small southern town where everyone I knew seemed to think they

knew exactly how everybody else in the world should live their lives. It was an ordered

world. White children went to schools for white children, and black children went to

schools for black children. Gatherings of friends and families often focused on talk about those suspected of not living up to the perceived cultural mores of their group. There were no book clubs, no art shows, no intellectual social commentaries (that I knew about). There were garden clubs, yard sales, and traveling revival preachers.

I have traveled in the back of a city bus warmed by brown-skinned women in stiff white uniforms. I have eaten in restaurants "FOR WHITES ONLY" wearing little white gloves and a hat to match my coat. I attended public schools where custom required that we place our right hands over our hearts as we pledged our belief in "liberty and justice for all," taking for granted that we were the "all" and never questioning why the "colored" children had a school way on the other side of town. In my "childtimes" (Greenfield, 1979) I lived in two cultures, one brought to me by black women early each morning Monday through Friday and one visited me by the family portraits proudly displayed in our hallway.

The women of my early life were Baptist. My natural mother insisted on Sunday school and church every week. My "other-mother" (Collins, 1990), Hazel, sang hymns as she ironed or strolled me to the park. Heaven and hell, right and wrong, black and white were clear as day for them. In this southern place of North Carolina, it seemed everyone had their place, they knew it, and they lived it. As a child of such times, I remain anxious in the presence of such perceived clarity. When behavior becomes too well-defined, success too predictable, or the right way unquestioned, I worry.

As I continued to drive on past the acres of pine trees interspersed with an occasional brick, ranch-style house, I worried more about these things and what life would be like in a small town today. Friends had warned me that church, wrestling, and

race cars would be the primary topics of conversation. During my initial interview, I was informed that the population of Center City Middle School was only 14% black and the rest white. I was also told that even though the school was old and located in the heart of a low-income area, most of the 600 students were bused from other sections of the county, the rationale being that if the students lived nearby and had a bad day at school, they would be more likely to seek revenge by vandalizing the school building. The extension of that argument being—if the students lived far away, the school would be a safer place. I wondered what happened to the hope that a community would embrace its school and center it in their culture in a place of honor? Didn't this busing decision make that virtually impossible? What would a classroom look like and feel like now that was again almost all white? How would I react to district decision making that seemed so counter to an inherent sense of quality and goodness associated with students and their families?

Kudzu began to overrun the landscape, replacing the defining outlines of real objects with the mounding effect of green leaf upon green leaf, so much like the concerns that were overlapping in my brain as I neared the town of Center City. I questioned my decision not to return to Walnut Street Elementary School where I had friends and administrative support during my first years of teaching. The children there were mostly black and poor. There were many single-parent families living nearby the school. They often depended on welfare, but they also seemed to be depending on working with teachers to find innovative ways to reach their children and prepare them for better lives. I had a full-time teaching assistant there and a principal who was a strong leader, staying informed about research and school reform practices. I wondered why I didn't decide to

take a graduate assistantship in the Language Education Department. I loved being at the

University. I worried that if I had just stayed at my previous school, Bailey Drive

Elementary School, just this one more year, I would have at least had the security of a

known school climate, grade level, and a multicultural student population. Why was I fast

approaching a middle school where I only knew one other person, planning to teach

sixth-grade language arts, sharing a classroom with another teacher, and thinking I could

become a part of a school community when I would only be there on Tuesdays,

Wednesdays (only half a day), and Thursdays?

Crossing over the railroad tracks it was difficult to recall how initially pleased I'd

been to be offered the chance to teach half-time and to be able to configure that time so

that I could have full days at school and full days left each week for writing and

consulting. To also be able to focus on the subject area I loved most, language arts,

seemed like a dream come true just a few months ago. Where was my confidence? I'd

certainly managed to make adjustments before—teaching kindergarten, first grade, third

grade, and reading methods classes for preservice teachers, working in two different

elementary schools and the university, and now middle school. Certainly I still

remembered when my own two children were in middle school. I recalled the anxiety

over losing significance in their lives as peer groups would assume more and more of

their allegiances. That was ten years ago, however. Things were different now, so the

newspaper and other popular media forums claimed. Middle schoolers were killing each

other. This was headline news too often. They didn't care about school. It was just their

last required school setting before dropping out. Drugs and sexual promiscuity were out

of control. All this in addition to the fact that these children were going to be able to look me in the eye as my physical equals.

I was in town. The school was only a few blocks away. The landscape changed quickly from trailer homes to tiny wood-frame houses with porches and yards overflowing with stuff—an array of metal and fabric-covered furniture, trash, and plastic things. One house, set off from the rest, across the street from a cement making company, had random things hanging from the eaves of the porch and even in the tree limbs. The door was open and all down the hallway were packages and items of clothing strewn along the way. The sense of disorder, chaos, and poverty was more than unsettling. Just one more block and the one-story brick building with aluminum awnings and rough asphalt front parking lot presented itself. By this time, the heat of a mid-August sun was beginning to feel heavy, and the almost empty parking area challenged me to accept my decision and pick a space from which to begin again.

<u>This Was Going to be Different</u>

Moving forward, I maintained my resolve and pushed the door-bell-like button that signaled the double doors for handicapped access at the side of the building to open. Before me were the gleaming polished tile floors that provided the path down newly painted blue hallways. This was <u>not</u> elementary school. This place was slick and clean and bare. Elementary teachers I've worked with would already have littered such a scene with cut-outs of animal figures, letters of the alphabet larger than life, books and furniture sprawled about for ongoing experimentation of placement. Hallway bulletin boards would already be begging for my attention and certainly not artificially constrained by the standard, wood-framed borders—elementary teachers do not seem to understand that

bulletin boards are pre-defined spaces—shapes spread up, out, and over demanding the eyes of passers by. A right turn down what I later learned was the seventh-grade hall and then a left to my sixth-grade hall . . . there was no turning back.

I was surprised to find my room so done already. My partner teacher, a science teacher, had already arranged two teachers' desks in the back corner of the room and a cabinet at the front for modeling science experiments. There were six rectangular tables settled in a u-shape, large plastic containers of science supplies along one wall, and a low, two-shelf, empty bookcase presumably waiting for my personal library collection. The two bulletin boards were already covered in a green, small-patterned fabric with neat borders of apple cut-outs that coordinated with the green-checked cushion in the teacher's chair at the front of the room and a rug that covered the center floor area. My partner teacher was obviously trying to do all she could to make my transition to this new way of life as easy for me as possible. I was so grateful. I kept telling myself, however, that I needed to be concentrating on more important things than the "Better Homes and Gardens" award for classroom decorating. This was to be the year I would collect data for my dissertation. I had no focus for that as yet, and this new setting of middle school instead of elementary was testing my resiliency. I only allowed myself a moment for such reflections, however. It was time to get busy and use my time wisely. The opening faculty meeting would begin soon, and I wanted to unpack my books before meetings consumed the whole day.

Preplanning

The day was certainly pre-planned. One agenda was replaced by another just moments before we gathered. Though the heading was still "Tentative Agenda," it felt

like anything but. This was the 16th preplanning week of my career, yet it was the first time an agenda was presented that stated specifically when you were to be there (8:30), when you were to have lunch (12:00 - 1:00), and when you were supposed to leave (4:30). There is no teacher's union in Georgia that regulates such events. The faculty meeting was held in the cafeteria. The atmosphere seemed sterile and expectant. Rows of royal blue chairs were set up as if for a formal assembly program—five chairs per row—eight deep—all on either side of a center aisle. "Stress baggies" were pre-placed in each chair before we convened. These tokens of welcome included small balloons filled with flour that presumably could be held and kneaded when the going got tough. All chairs faced a mural of multicultural children representing three stages of growth: On the left there were two very young children playing by a stream. There was a bridge where two older children were positioned, and then on the right side, were another boy and girl carrying books who looked to be high school students. The caption read, "Make the Connection - The Middle Matters."

There appeared to be about eighty faculty and staff members present. All were white women except for one African American female and seven white males. It was a calm and orderly group, only a few bursts of excitement when friends met. Mostly there was a controlled sense of expectancy, adults patiently waiting to be addressed by a leader. A sign-in sheet was passed around the room. The principal came forward and interwove the following comments in her introductory remarks:

Welcome to CCMS. CCMS is a place where great things are happening.

There's not a day that goes by that something great doesn't happen here.

Don't worry if I don't know your name. Some of you I don't recognize

though I know I hired you.

Some of you signed contracts that had no money amount listed. We expect

you to work for nothing in Wayne County. You're here. You're obviously

willing to work for whatever Wayne County is willing to decide to pay

you. [some laughter]

This faculty is so strong. I'm so excited about what's in store for the

students in this school.

We have four language arts specialists on staff this year.

This faculty meeting was followed by a team meeting. In this middle school I

learned that classes were organized around two-member teams. For instance, on our team

there is one teaching position for math and social studies and another for science and

language arts. The teacher responsible for math and social studies has a room adjoining

ours with a doorway between. The science teacher and I fill the other half of the team

and we share the same room. We worked our schedule so that we could meet our

responsibility for five segments in each subject area per week. We just made some days

all science days in our room and some days all language arts. New terms, like

"segments" were coming at me continuously. "Homebase" was the same thing as

homeroom. There were Parent Contact Notebooks to keep. There was a computer

program to learn for recording grades and issuing report cards. There was a literature

anthology and a writing handbook along with a small collection of individual book

selections for enrichment reading. The school embraced the Accelerated Reader program

in which students accumulate points for reading certain selections and passing

comprehension tests that are administered via a computer program. There was a Classroom Connection phone line that required teachers to record and update messages for public access about current "happenings" of the classroom and homework assignments. Each teacher had an extension number that was published in the local newspaper.

The next meeting was just for new teachers. We were given a basket of "goodies" that included the book, The First Days of School (Wong & Wong, 1998). Information sheets had been compiled and distributed to familiarize us with the routines of the system: "Where do I Begin," "A Teacher's Checklist for Opening Day," "Tips for Taking Tests," "Whom do I Ask." We were told about the required observations for evaluation of new teachers: Three were mandated and the first one would be before November 15th. Because I transferred to a new county, I no longer had tenure!

Immediately following this gathering was a meeting for all language arts teachers. This was my first involvement with content area focused teaching. There were four language arts teachers in sixth grade, three for seventh, and only one was present representing eight grade. I had been trying to carefully document the events of this first day. Soon, however, I found myself sitting mouth open, forgetting to write, as I tried to accommodate some of the things I was hearing. The following is from my notes of that meeting:

"The writing process will take you a week and a half to teach."

"You should do a scope and sequence for the first two weeks focusing on a grammar review."

"I'm not going to teach grammar by itself."

An eighth grade teacher shows how everything has already been correlated for us between the Quality Core Curriculum (QCC) objectives issued by the state and the objectives for the district adopted language arts series.

The announcement is made that Daily Oral Language guides were in the library and ready for check out.

One teacher encourages us to share with each other more this year.

There is a remedial teacher who is teaching an SRA Corrective Reading Program and states confidently, "All the fluff is taken out of it.

In the school I came from we did silent reading and used the Accelerated Reading Program based on Nanci Atwell."

"I tried that Atwell approach as a 'sponge' for the ten minutes at the start of each class."

"Is it OK if they sit on the floor?"

I made no comments during this first interchange. I kept wondering how I would be able to create alignments with these teachers when philosophically we seemed so divergent and our interpretations of the work of others, such as Nanci Atwell, appeared to be so different. How could I someday enter into their dialogues as one who understood their perceived pressures and could discuss alternative stances that stood a sincere chance of being considered rather than discounted as simply just too far afield? As a teacher with a holistic and transactional view of language learning, I knew I tried to keep meaning making central and that whole texts formed the core of reading and writing experiences. This did not seem to be an embraced perspective here.

The official first day of preplanning ended with grade level meetings. We were given our student lists and informed that we needed to get our schedules and groupings to the counselor. I was on the racetrack. The pace car was moving fast and my caution flag was waving wildly. I was struggling to make sense of everything I was encountering. This was a different reality and I felt all my prior work as a teacher and researcher slipping away as if the track was crumbling behind me as I moved from one thing to the next. I'd never worked with a principal who didn't remember my name. I'd forgotten what it was like to be considered a "new" teacher and to have my tenure once again in question. How could I be a member of so many different relevant categories at once—school faculty, language arts staff, grade level group, teaching team, and newcomer? How could I work passionately and deeply with students in just two seventy-minute segments twice per day on Tuesdays and Thursdays and only once on Wednesdays? After all, my background has been rich with strategies for generating engagement for learning through integrating the curriculum during full school days of time. How could teachers still think it was acceptable to teach the writing process in a week and a half when writers know it often takes more than a lifetime (Atwell, 1987, 1998; Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983, 1994; Hansen, 1987; Rief, 1992)?

I drove home paying little attention to the landscape as it peeled by. I simply felt my mind exposing more and more of my uncertainties. Though I knew I was moving in the direction of home, I felt lost.

A Need for Self-Study

What soon became apparent was the need for self-study. No one was going to wave a magic wand and make all this confusion suddenly go away or turn it into

significant insight for me. To become strategic and informed about my new situation was up to me. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) urged teachers to take on the work of self study:

> For each of us, the more we understand ourselves and can articulate reasons why we are what we are, do what we do, and are headed where we have chosen, the more meaningful our curriculum will be. The process of making sense and meaning of our curriculum, that is, of the narratives of our experience, is both difficult and rewarding. It, too, has a curriculum in that narratives of experience may be studied, reflected on, and articulated in written form. (p. 11)

In addition, acknowledging the connective influences of personal history, systemic and structural boundedness, and the particular points of division between professional theories and practices, educative research was a concept proposed by Gitlin (1992) as an alternative to traditional forms of research. In <u>Teacher's Voices for School Change</u> he and his colleagues of masters level students, who were also teachers, explained the need for "both experiential knowledge and knowledge produced through systematic inquiry" (p. 2). He cautioned, however, that the process does not stop with understanding achieved through reflection. The educative process receives full life through a recognition of alternatives that are then translated into action. Essentially, others are claiming and I am accepting that "Only if we are present to ourselves can we be open to others" (Greene, 1996). So much of school-based decision making seems to be passed along and passed along.

> The next day I was issued a Teacher Handbook. Reference had been made to this document during the new teachers meeting, but I was not prepared

for just how detailed this outline of responsibilities was going to be. Just a

sampling of the standards to be observed were:

Students must be under the supervision of certified or licensed personnel

at all times during the school day. DO NOT EVER LEAVE STUDENTS

UNSUPERVISED.

It is your duty and responsibility as a teacher to avail yourself to this

communication tool. Your messages should be concise, timely, and clear.

Messages must be changed once a week. [For Classroom Connection

phone line]

Educator's manner of dress speaks very loudly to parents and other

visitors to the school. Teachers and paraprofessionals may dress in any

clothing generally suitable for public display, except for blue jeans, flip

flops (rubber), and dirty sneakers . . . No jeans may be worn on any day

that teachers work with students.

Always remember to sign in daily with correct times...An early

departure/late arrival form must be submitted to the principal one day

prior to request.

The class schedule is to be followed at all times. The only exceptions are

those planned activities which have been approved by an administrator.

Quality "Time on Task" by both students and teachers is a must if students

are to achieve their fullest potential. Changes in daily schedule must be

reported to the office in writing. This includes any activity where the

students are taken from the classrooms. Leave a note on door where you

may be found.

New bulletin boards should be in place by the 30th of each month**.**

Teachers should allow only 1 student (unsupervised) to use the restroom at

a time. Students should not be out of the room more than 3-5 minutes.

Such concrete delineation of expectations had never been a part of any other

teaching situation I had experienced. What actually produced an audible gasp, however,

was coming upon the section about lesson planning. Here before me was the presentation

of a supposedly immutable outline for producing written daily lesson plans that everyone

was to follow and have available for administrative review:

Lesson Plans

Good planning involves anticipation of many student interests, responses,

and contingencies. Lesson plans should be flexible enough to allow for

some on-the-spot decisions, as the lesson progresses. It is also prudent to

plan more activities to support the focal plan of a lesson than the allotted

time will actually take. If some activities do not pique students' interest as

you projected, you should have alternates readily available.

Planning is the key to effective teaching and student achievement. In order

to assist you in effective planning, a planbook is provided for each teacher.

Lesson plans will be checked by the principal/AP in your classroom. Plans

should be written so any person can readily identify where you are in your

lesson. Plans should be readily accessible to any observer. Don't make

people have to hunt your plans or resource materials.

Your plans should:

1.   be legible

2.   reflect active teaching (discussions, oral questioning,

demonstrations, chalkboard illustrations, etc.)

3.   include all assessments, indicating type of assessment (fill-in-the-

blank, short answer, essay project, oral presentation, etc.)

4.   indicate dates and times covered by the plans

5.   be referenced to QCC objectives. Time planned for a test would

not require the writing of an objective. The objective should be written out

and not just #s and letters and be highlighted.

6.   make a general statement in your planbook where Teacher

Manuals are located.

Always try to leave your lesson plans at school. If you have them at home

and have to be out the next day, you must make arrangements to get them

to school. Use the S.T.O.P.E. method for formulating plans.

This method is a simple, but a complete outline of the instructional plan,

materials, and evaluation components. Evaluation indicates how you

arrive at the grades you record, as well as, how you evaluate the lesson,

itself. Evaluation may be an oral response, a written activity, or class

participation. If you choose to do more, you may.

S-ubject - Math

T-opic - Addition

O-bjective - TSW [The Student Will] add numbers to ten

P-rocedure - T.E. pp. 22 & 23 an. pr. #10

E-valuation - #s 1-10 Homework 11-20 p. 23 pp.23; oral response,

checklist, daily test grade (Teacher Handbook, p. 9)

The expectation was officially established that learning can be broken down into subject area topics with behavioral objectives that are specifically correlated with textbook experiences and recall evaluation. To further accent expectations associated with this demand, the process was reinforced in an additional document included in the handbook titled, "Faculty Fundamentals Sheet." Here it was stated that "Lesson plans are a major part of organization. Preparation by the end of the day Friday for next week is preferred, but by 8 a.m. Monday is ok." I was beginning to feel very managed. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) pointed to the insight in which "Zerubavel (1979) has said that things that are so much a part of us that they remain unnoticed are like 'invisible glass walls.' They are noticed only when we walk into them" (p. 10). I felt myself slam into this wall of requirements. Despite the fact that similar versions of technical control have been present in other professional contexts, never before have they been presented as such measured modifiers of my professional competence.

All Teachers Plan in Some Way

Sometimes planning involves a mental image of possible occurrences while other times we need a specific written outline of thought and action. I have been a teacher with three other principals during my tenure at two other schools. Planning has been a central feature of each context. In these situations I planned for each day in a day-to-day manner—always based on what my students were showing me they needed next. I also conceived, planned, and enacted studies of my practice with co-researchers JoBeth Allen

and Barbara Michalove: In Engaging Children: Community and Chaos in the Lives of Young Literacy Learners (1993) we asked, "What are the effects of whole language instruction on the children we worry about the most?" (p. 4). We planned school days to offer students ongoing choice about what they read and what they wrote. We honored reading and writing as reciprocal processes, each feeding the quality of the other. Engaging Families: Connecting Home and School Literacy Communities (Shockley, Michalove, & Allen, 1995) represented our next school-based study. This inquiry grew directly from our understandings of student learners in the first study and how there is often significant literacy support being offered at home for our students. We set out to purposely connect school and home understandings through the establishment of a set of parallel practices that allowed for continuous sharing between these two primary learning sites. We opened every day with an opportunity for oral storytelling, sharing the stories of home and school. Families wrote about their reading time together and I wrote back to them each day maintaining meaningful correspondence between home and school. We purposefully linked beliefs and actions of the school setting with those of the home.

My response to the prescribed lesson planning requirement that I just encountered was a surge of curiosity about the practice of planning as an educative and historical aspect of teaching and to wonder how I should react in the presence of such a mandate. In fact, my guiding question was a broad one: How will I respond responsibly to a mandated planning format? Did this format challenge my beliefs about teaching and learning? How? Could I develop a more meaningful planning process? A new focus for study was now thrust upon me. I could not turn away from such a managed approach and pretend it didn't exist, nor did I feel comfortable challenging directly the administration on just my

second day there. An intentional and systematic self-study with a focus on planning could

provide a way for me to study how I developed practices to support and encourage my

students. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) supported teachers taking actions toward

claiming a more profound place in the development of curriculum. In the process they

established:

> There is no better way to study curriculum than to study ourselves. When
>
> we have a grasp of the difficulties, for example, of figuring out something
>
> simple such as how we think and feel as a component of the personal, we
>
> will understand the really serious difficulties of trying to figure out how
>
> someone else, our students [and our peers], think and feel. (p. 31)

This is how I came to see myself as back on the road to new learning again . . . picking up

pebbles of information to fill my pockets . . . searching for a stone of my own.

A Reason for Research

Fiction writers who discuss their writing process have some meaningful advice

for me as I consider research a focusing tool of engaged practice. For instance, instead of

her intended audience of want-to-be writers, Anne Lamott (1995) could just as easily

have been addressing an audience of teacher researchers when she claimed, "Writing a

first draft is very much like watching a Polaroid develop. You can't—and, in fact, you're

not supposed to—know exactly what the picture is going to look like until it has finished

developing. First you just point at what has your attention and take the picture" (p. 39).

My focusing point had to be teacher planning. There have been moments in my teaching

life that have caught me by surprise, but none more profoundly than encountering the

STOPE planning requirement. It STOPpEd me in my tracks. Fiction writers tell of times

when their characters seem to take over and write their story in spite of the author, and confirm that character leads plot. It was my feeling that without attention to my own professional character through a sense of self as professional decision maker, I would be led by the formulaic plot of this school context instead of being able to define my own way. Accepting what had my attention and having the patience and discipline to do something about it became my Polaroid experience.

Often, getting started on a research path is not so well defined. As teachers, we work in a forest of question marks. Gaining focus by claiming which one of our wonderings we will pursue can feel like a desperate search for the one right question that will hold our interest in the midst of competing demands (Atwell, 1991). Power (1996) suggested, essentially, that we teachers camp out in that forest for a time, honing our skills of observation and note taking as we point our Polaroids at different aspects of our practice. As Anne Lamott (1995) wrote, "If you are a writer [a teacher researcher], or want to be a writer [teacher researcher], this is how you spend your days—listening, observing, storing things away, making your isolation pay off" (p. 66).

I've lived the unsettling series of movements from topic to topic in my own searches for guiding questions and also as the primary facilitator of two communities of teacher researchers. The School Research Consortium (Bisplinghoff & Allen, 1998) represented a primary research strand of the National Reading Research Center at the university. Area teachers were encouraged to study topics of interest as teacher researchers in line with the overall mission of the center to connect theory and practice. In a similar venture (Shockley, 1998, 1999), teachers from ten New Jersey and New York schools were granted financial support by CVS Pharmacy to develop innovative

classroom practices based on independent research efforts. In each situation, teachers began with a deep insecurity about their ability to unite teaching and research, yet many found their way out of the forest with the development of their own field guides based on data from their classrooms. The potential for research to go hand-in-hand with teaching was possible. Those who accepted the challenge of negotiating this unsettled territory proclaimed that the experience transformed their professional thinking. Though it was often said, "There's no turning back," in the sense that teaching hinged with research offers a dramatic new view of the potential for our professionalism, I fear that without support and diligence, the paths so carefully tended will soon be crowded out by the roots of the old oaks—the imposing standards of tradition and systemic order.

Ralph Fletcher (1993) discussed helping students gain a focus in their writing, and I thought about his meaning for me and other teachers who study their own practices:

Focus does not mean writing shorter pieces. The crucial aspect of focus is that getting narrower allows the writer to go deeper, to get under the surface of a story by delving into one particular part of it. Young writers tend to give equal attention to each part of a story. (p. 133)

As teachers trying to manage so much at one time in the course of a day or a school year, consciously choosing a single focus for inquiry seems counterintuitive. Yet, it may actually be the access needed to help us get under the surface of taken-for-granted behaviors in our situations. It is so easy to think we have to solve all our problems in one mighty swing of the packaged-answers ax, when if we allow ourselves the scholarly work of getting at the roots of a focused concern, we may find an intertwining system of impact.

School is often portrayed as a place more about answers than questions. The teacher is presumed to be the guardian of "the" answers. After all, s/he has all those books with the answers to the tests right there on the desk. S/he doesn't have to study. S/he doesn't have to learn any more. In order to monitor the continuing development of my focusing issue about the relationship between planning and teaching, I had to keep learning. Once more, Lamott (1995) surely must have been thinking about me and other teachers when she advised writers

> If there is one door in the castle you have been told not to go through, you
>
> must. Otherwise, you'll just be rearranging furniture in rooms you've
>
> already been in. Most human beings are dedicated to keeping that one
>
> door shut. But the writer's job is to see what's behind it, to see the bleak
>
> unspeakable stuff, and to turn the unspeakable into words—not just into
>
> any words but if we can, into rhythm and blues.
>
> You can't do this without discovering your own true voice, and you can't
>
> find your true voice and peer behind the door and report honestly and
>
> clearly to us if your parents are looking over your shoulder. (pp. 198-199)

For me, it wasn't my parents I was concerned about, it was the administration. What would happen if I opened up the door in the castle that said, DO NOT ENTER— DECISIONS ABOUT PLANNING TO TEACH HAVE ALREADY BEEN MADE FOR YOU—RETURN TO THE MAIN HALLWAY. In today's political, investigative atmosphere, there is a sense of heightened concern for legal challenges. These are exceptionally difficult times for teachers to publicly risk saying they are not sure about their decision making or for deviating from "approved" practices. Is the effort worth the

risk? In the end, Lamott surmised the answer to that question would ultimately rest with me and you because "being enough was going to have to be an inside job" (p. 220).

Over time, through the work of Stenhouse (1973), and Schon (1987) in particular, teacher researchers have been developing a history of support for professional responsibility and change. According to Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993),

> Early in the century, Dewey criticized the nature of educational
>
> development, pointing out that it tended to proceed reactively by jumping
>
> uncritically from one new technique to the next. He argued that the only
>
> remedy for his situation was teachers who had learned to be "adequately
>
> moved by their own ideas and intelligence." (p. 16)

The need to have and establish a personal presence in an effort of study can be a first felt incentive toward a more highly developed professional self. The view of teachers as users of hand-me-down knowing instead of the producers of defensible site-situated knowledge leaves us not only disconnected from the field but also weakened characters in an important educational drama.

Arguably, there is a pivotal difference between research on teaching and teacher research. The angles and aspects of such an emic, inside perspective compared to an outside interpretation are profound for teaching and the foundation of knowledge about teaching (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). Historically, curriculum has most often been imposed on teachers. Teacher research suggests opportunities for us to reconstruct practice through inquiry, to turn reflection and action into intentional and disciplined study. In this way, teacher research becomes our shovel for social change, helping us dig

out from under the layers of top-down decision making. "What teachers bring will alter and not just add to what is know about teaching" (1993, p. 22).

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) also noted

> teachers questions often emerge from discrepancies between what is intended and what occurs. . . . In traditional university-based classroom research, researchers questions reflect careful study of the existing theoretical and empirical literature and sometimes negotiation with the teachers in whose classrooms they collect data. (p. 14)

Goodman and Goodman (1990) contended that despite the fact that teachers in the United States have the most degrees and the most years of education of any country in the world, behavioral curricula, policies, and materials control teachers and make it difficult for them to apply their professional knowledge to decision making in their own classrooms (p. 224). Michael Apple (1982) has also documented the intrusion of such "deskilling" practices as they contribute to a process of technical control that effectively "separate[s] conception from execution" (p. 142). This increased distance between knowledge production, as texts and curricula are designed away from the primary site of action (a teacher's classroom), serves to keep the teacher a worker, not a professional, carrying out the plans of management.

The beginning of a new school year annually places us at the threshold of professional potential. We have many decisions to make, among them could be the identification of a focus for professional study. Deciding to participate in classroom based inquiry can affect the quality of that experience for everyone. Atwell (1993) understood that teacher research can have a profound influence on the students of teacher

researchers. Teachers who reflect upon their daily work with students have a positive impact on student learning (Schon, 1983, 1987). "Professional inquiry clarifies issues for teachers, requires them to analyze their work environment, their students' growth, and their own practices, and then necessitates action that leads to improved teaching and learning" (Shockley, et al., 1993).

Perhaps it's time we take full advantage of this starting-over time to refocus on the gaps in our professional understanding for the benefit of our professional growth and for the betterment of student learning opportunities. For in such moments of promising instability, it is, as Mary Catherine Bateson (1989) recognized, "easy to become blind to alternatives. At the edges [or in this case, the beginning] it is easier to imagine that the world might be different. Vision sometimes arises from confusions" (p. 73). And, Maxine Greene (1996) might add, "Weariness comes at the end of the acts of a mechanical life" (p. 6). I have developed faith in my teacher research over the last ten years to take me beyond the obvious and taken-for-granted into more open fields of learning. Lamott (1995) explained, "Let's think of reverence as awe, as presence in and openness to the world. The alternative is that we stultify, we shut down" (p. 99). Constance Weaver (1996) stated, "Change becomes possible when the unconscious set of operating assumptions is articulated and examined" (p. 155). I will need these voices for continued support.

This space between assumptions and potential can be seen in Dewey's (1933) tenets for the establishment of reflective thought. In his work, Dewey developed a case for the essential importance of uncertainty in teaching. Dewey's argument in support of uncertainty as impetus for reflective thought has much to offer for understanding how we

as teachers negotiate tradition and change. According to Dewey, "Active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends constitutes reflective thought" (p. 9). Teachers who purposefully reflect on their actions in the context of student performance often add new vistas to their field of vision. Within a complex experiential tradition, there still beckons within us the need to reconsider the overlooked (such as teacher planning) and risk the unknown (is there more than STOPE). There is a sense of what could be intertwined with what is. Within this space of what has been previously defined, and the possible, I begin reading the literature on curriculum and planning as a way of exploring new professional territory.

CHAPTER 2:

READING THE RESEARCH

<u>A Review of the Literature</u>

"The struggle to be myself was hard as e.e. cummings said, 'To be

nobody-but-yourself—in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to

make you everybody else—means to fight the hardest battle which any

human being can fight; and never stop fighting'." (Murray, 1994, p. 24)

<u>Where's My Confidence?</u>

Most conversations regarding teaching include some recognition of the teacher as

being either a novice or a veteran. There is a common association between number of

years teaching and security regarding decisions of practice. Few outside the field

understand just how time and place specific teacher confidence is. Teachers, however,

annually face new concerns as they are assigned classrooms and new students. The

beginning of any school year is especially fraught with uncertainties. It is a special period

of coming together—transforming hopes and expectations into the realities of a specific

set of relationships. I can't think of another profession or required experience (from the

student's perspective) where individuals are asked to start over again and again to remake

themselves among others. Recognizing the unsettling aspects of this positioning, and

knowing that teachers cyclically find themselves at this edge year after year, there may be

lessons to learn from this starting-over time.

Back-to-school banners and commercials often include advertisements for Crayola Crayons announcing, "Open a world of imagination with Crayola." That new box of crayons is as much a symbol of new beginnings as pink and blue bows on a mailbox—tradition and promise all in one. They are a start-of-school classic. You fold back the box top and there they stand, perfect, just as you expected. They look the same. They smell the same year after year. Everybody comes to know what you're supposed to do with them—color within the lines. Many of us remember making a silent vow to take care of <u>this</u> box of crayons and not let them end up like the last box, cardboard cover barely together, crayons wrapperless and broken, dulled through routine use.

This image may have much in common with my feelings about starting a new school year in a new school with a new age group. As a teacher, I am supplied with everything I need (according to district policy). Supposedly, my students are protected from any gaps in understanding I might bring with me regarding language arts instruction as each textbook has an accompanying teacher's edition that directs me to organize material in a specific sequence, pose particular questions, and expect particular types of answers. This reliance on teacher-proof materials (Apple, 1993) can also have the effect of passion-proofing the curriculum. The sheer volume of material (795 pages in the literature anthology along with 789 pages in the writing textbook) can deplete a teacher's sense of time to do more—time to be other than the basics. It's easy to think that if I can just keep things orderly enough, remember to put the "red-orange" back next to the "carnation-pink" and color neatly, then I will be on my way to successful learning experiences with my students. Teachers' editions become the box of crayons to draw from—lessons neatly and dependably organized, one skill next to the other. Like

students, most teachers come to expect certain things from a school day—textbooks

that contain the appropriate knowledge slotted in the proper sequence for their grade

level, hands raised for momentary recognition, and tests. It would seem that all effort is

made for school to be a very predictable place where teachers and students are carefully

controlled.

Being a teacher and being a student are boldly outlined roles that also come with

colorful histories. I was issued a literature anthology and a grammar textbook. I was

assigned a certain set of students that I was required to meet with for a certain period of

time, and I was expected to evaluate those students on their accomplishments in meeting

a preordained list of objectives as established by the state, district, and text publishers. In

fact, my plan for the first day of school included a list of state objectives and matching

textbook objectives as required by the STOPE format:

Objective:

Expands speaking vocabulary [LA.6.61]

Communicates effectively through oral expression [LA. 6. 62. - 6.66] Develops

awareness of nonverbal communication such as gestures, body language, and

facial expressions [LA. 6.67]

Uses standards of American English in appropriate settings [LA. 6.68]

Expands writing vocabulary [LA. 6.72]

Experiments with organization, style, purpose, and audience. [LA. 6.73}

Produces various types of writing [LA. 6.74]

Uses descriptive words and phrases [LA. 6.75]

Uses dialogue in writing [LA. 6.76]

Applies grammatical and mechanical conventions in writing [LA. 6.77]

Correctly spells frequently used words and commonly confused words [LA. 6.78]

Writes legibly [LA. 6.79]

It took a very long time for me to read through all the required state objectives for sixth grade and to consider which ones would be appropriate for the experiences I was framing for my students. In my mind, I suppose, I was actually putting the cart before the horse in that I first decided on experience options and then objectives. Perhaps this was the reason identifying relevant objectives was so challenging. I imagine the intent of the objectives-led process is to claim one and then develop an appropriate action designed to focus students on the achievement of mastery of that specific objective. This is part of the mechanistic approach to learning that I have never been able to fully support. My primary impetus for the design of this day was to help each student be seen and heard as a unique person in our class community. There was no state-supported objective for this approach. The P part of the plan explained my intended procedures for promoting a relationship-based beginning:

Procedure: Students will interview the teacher using microphone as in a talk show format. Students will interview a buddy, record the interview by writing notes and exact quotes shared by their partner. Each pair will take turns being the interviewer and the interviewee. Partners will write formal introductions to the class that will be shared orally and revised with feedback from the class. This will be in preparation for public display introducing the students to the current school population.

I felt so uncomfortable letting this planning format stand for my beliefs about teaching and learning. As I studied, I came to understand that social institutions, such as schools, tend to reflect the central qualities of a culture. Originating in response to problems inherent in the concept of universal schooling at the turn of the 20th century, the assembly-line mindset produced educational engineering. "The tenor of the times was mostly in response to a post World War I nationalism, a drive for the 'Americanization' of immigrants, a faith in the methods of science, and a concern for the uplift of the masses" (Kliebard, 1975, p. 40). This techno-engineering attitude was echoed in the response from academia where behavioral objectives emerged as the new technical device for managing the effectiveness of schooling. What becomes painfully obvious is that debates over curriculum decision-making processes may always be in unrest because of the two pivotal and challenging worldviews that are formative to American culture: Capitalism and democracy. Capitalism supports a competitive spirit that urges us to create systems for choosing the most efficient ways to teach and learn. The tenor of my time repeats those of the past in this regard while adding a new level of intensity— standardized testing as a means of measuring and comparing one student, one teacher, one school, to another. Before me was the framework undergirding this tension: Objectives lined up in front of real people with unique contributions to make. Democracy seems to evoke a shared and seemingly slower path to developing understandings about our world and ourselves.

Unsteady Ground

In this very sense of ideological instability I lived my days with my students. The juxtaposition of outside requirements (state and local objectives) alongside my relational

needs to see my students and be seen by them. To be "nobody-but- [our]selves[s]" was indeed a personal and a professional battle. For example, my reflective writing about the first week of school stated:

> I am very concerned that my plans look right. I decided it was best to begin on the right foot and try to do things the way I was supposed to, no sense shutting doors right away in case I am observed or something. It didn't seem appropriate to want to fit in and then start off out of step. Besides, maybe I'll find it helpful—there's always that chance, I guess. I feel like a child that may be rejecting vegetables because they're the wrong color when they're really good for me. Maybe I should at least take a bite. The question is, does the administration think this is a good planning format because they think it is professionally healthy for me and my students or because it fits in with the balanced diet necessary for the school system's health? The thinking might be—if we make sure teachers plan according to this format then we can make sure objectives are tied to evaluation and the means-ends technical approach to teaching lives on . . . I already feel out of control. The first day and I'm required to check attendance and get a lunch count according to an office-distributed form. I am supposed to introduce this year's primary fundraiser which is the sale of a multi-colored icy-type drink called a Vita-pup. Students may buy tickets each morning so they can exchange them for one of these "treats" during lunch period. Different form letters are also to be distributed to students. There are three of them and they must be reviewed so students

will presumably understand their importance. Locker assignments will be made

as these forms are returned signed by an adult family member. Each

student is also issued an agenda book that is to be used for recording

assignments, teacher/parent comments, and as a hall pass, initialed by the

teacher and the exact time recorded for any departure from the classroom.

Of course, textbooks are also supposed to be distributed. Right from the

start I have to determine ways to keep up with these things and incorporate

them into the daily rituals of class time.

The Pledge of Allegiance is broadcast for choral recitation over the

intercom system. School announcements are made and then there is a

school-wide moment of silent reflection. The attendance, lunch report,

Vita-pup tickets, the three sets of forms, agendas authorized for students to

go to the media center, bathroom, or school store. All this takes place

within homebase time (8:30-8:45). Well, so much for a friendly,

personable first meeting between teacher and students. Time for first

segment already . . .

I am so anxious, worried that students won't have enough to keep them

"busy." I have prepared word puzzles, student interest inventories, plans

for students to be able to interview me using a talk-show television model,

complete with microphone and student volunteer host. I'm the "guest."

This ought to be an intriguing way to bring the issue of language as means

of communication into our discussions. This can extend into our second

meeting time of the day after lunch. That would be first and third segments

for this group and second and fourth segments for my other set of students. Hopefully I can do the same thing in the morning with both groups and then another "something" alike in the afternoon. This is broadly speaking, of course. I want to be able to respond to specific personalities and improvisations of each gathering, but I need to begin with some dependable framework. Don't I? In the afternoon segments, the students can begin to interview one another. Students can choose a buddy to interview, hopefully someone they've never met before. They'll record information from the interviews by writing sketch notes and exact quotes. Each pair will be able to take turns being the interviewer and the interviewee. This will begin the process for writing letters of introduction that can be shared with the class and perhaps hang in the hall as a way to greet the rest of the student body.

Not only did I write a formal plan, I found I also needed to include specific times. I had no idea how long seventy minutes felt. It was as if I was just tumbling like Alice into a new wonderland in which I didn't know when to be big and when to be small.

Homework was a good idea. I made the assumption that song lyrics would be engaging texts for my new students. I also made the assumption that they and their parents would somehow view this first day as an incomplete experience if the answer to that traditional question, "Do you have any homework tonight?" was a first-day, "No." Asking students to copy the lyrics of their favorite song (one that did not have any "bad" language in

it) to share in class the next day raised the eyebrows of most of my preteen audience. This would give us a point of entry that would offer everyone an equal start, a way to become aware of others who perhaps shared similar tastes in music, and a way to become aware of the concept of genre. Of course, they also needed to get their parents to do their own form of homework too and get those three forms completed and signed and ready to bring back.

Even with all the talk during preplanning about expectations being clear at CCMS with materials provided to back up an orderly approach, I knew I was already stepping out of line. One comment made by the principal still rings in my ears, "If we're together on it, and everyone is doing the same thing, we'll put the Bulldog bite on it." The inference in this motto is that there is power in joining together. I would agree but only when that power is given and not required. Immediately after this passionate pronouncement for unity, she deposited an armload of "door prizes" on the bandroom stage and began pulling names out of a basket for the lucky winners! Janet Fitch (1999) in her novel, White Oleander had her main character, Astrid, make the following observation about people and families, "And I realized as I walked through the neighborhood how each house could contain a completely different reality. In a single block, there could be fifty separate worlds. Nobody ever really knew what was going on just next door" (p. 129). How could anyone really think it could be different walking down a hallway in a school? Behind each door . . .

I can't relax. So many things are now going on at once. Now I see keeping

them "busy" means keeping me busy trying to keep up with their progress.

Some students finished their interest inventories in class, some didn't.

Some attempted word puzzles, some didn't. Some students completed

their initial interviews with both partners having a chance to be in each

role while some barely got started.

I need to write a letter to parents introducing myself and asking them to

tell me about their child. This has been so helpful in the past. I always feel

like I know the students and their families better when I read these

heartfelt descriptions written by family members who know them best.

That really helps me feel like we are working together as family with

teacher and teacher with family. I've never had so many students before.

The middle school organization doubles the number of students I feel

responsible for. I guess it could be worse. Just last year, teachers worked

on 4-member teams and had 100 students each. I can't imagine.

I'm tired already. So many things are due. I need to write that parent letter.

A grading plan has to be turned in to the principal. Those three forms have

to be accounted for. The textbook list has to be completed along with the

locker number assignments. Thank goodness the first week of school is

only three days long. There goes my weekend . . .

Ideological instability is difficult to live with. My heart, probably the democracy part,

was telling me to drop all these concerns and enjoy the time with the children. My head,

probably the competition part, was too concerned with the minutia—truly the minutes

ticking by and the need to fill them up productively in the sense that evidence of effort was demonstrated. How could I embody so much confusion? I thought maybe I wasn't the first. I decided to read to find out how I came to feel the strings of time pulling so hard on my potential.

Reading as a Form of Resistance: A Personal-Professional Conversation with the History of Curriculum Development

I confess to teaching for these 17 years and never before searching for the origins of objectives-led teaching. Now, questioning the value of my decision making and sensing a lack of fit between my thinking and my world of work, I set my sight on learning how this came to be. I'm reminded of a character description in Kaye Gibbons' (1998) novel On the Occasion of My Last Afternoon, "That is how Clarice lived, with objectives, little missions for her days" (p. 17). For much of the first semester of the school year, I was on a big mission to read to find out how teaching became reduced to attending to so many little objectives. Evidently, early curriculum scholars established precedents that the field has both embraced and rejected throughout this century— basically how to relate little missions with big ideas. It's disconcerting to see myself as just one more cast member in this ongoing struggle.

Moving away from the concept of "mental discipline" (Thorndike, 1901) as an early theme of education, American education experienced a metamorphosis that has been identified as the "progressive education" movement. Dewey (1902) is most often associated with this reform effort; however, Bobbitt (1924) was presenting his engineered scientific efficiency process during this same time period. Dewey's child-centered philosophy was challenged with Bobbitt's bureaucratic effort—"a redesigned curriculum

stripped of the playful and wasteful" (Kliebard, 1975, p. 52). Standardization was the goal. Alas, this sounds very familiar—that capitalism vs. democracy struggle again— acting like two bar magnets—when you try to put them together, you can feel the power of resistance.

Bobbitt (1918, 1924) was a significant pioneer in the development of curriculum studies. His charge that curriculum should begin with the identification of significant goals and that curriculum work should be approached with an eye toward efficiency and the elimination of waste still hovers today. Aha, that's what the language arts teacher in my new school community was drawing on when she said the program she was using for remedial readers was a good choice because all the "fluff" had been taken out of it. I bet she doesn't know she's a Bobbitt protege. Essentially, Bobbitt advocated for a scientific set of procedures that could begin with the identification of specific characteristics of a successful adult. This listing of attributes would become the pool from which appropriate educational objectives could be sequenced. In this manner, students would be systematically prepared to become successful adults themselves. He also embraced the idea of handling wasted instructional time through diagnostic testing as proposed by behavioral psychologists. If it was possible to predict typical student errors, then they could be addressed post haste. Subjects such as literature and history that did not have as discernible a link to utility in adult life were de-emphasized in a system that wished to maximize resources. Bobbitt's two major works, The Curriculum (1918) and How to Make a Curriculum (1924) are credited with establishing the field of curriculum studies as a scientific enterprise complete with its own details and doctrines of development. To date, some consider this delineation of duty to be the missing link to a true professional

status for teachers. Some believe that with a clear code of conduct and conscious, it becomes possible to scientifically define teaching as a set of deliberate and determined acts. Aha, STOPE—the Teacher's Handbook—that competitive edge—the need to be coded, conducted, systematically, scientifically, sure.

Dewey (1902), on the other hand, thought children and their current needs should be the starting point of education; and instead of efficiency, the expansion of experience should be the goal. Curriculum was seen as emanating from the interaction of the student with the materials and the teacher and therefore could not be adequately defined in advance. In this sense, Dewey1 viewed the role of the educator as one of determining educative environments for the child. In "My Pedagogic Creed" (1997) he defined such educative experiences as providing opportunities for the child to be "in complete possession of all his powers" (p. 18). Most specifically, Dewey saw behaviorist theories as impoverished attempts at control. "The psychological and social sides are organically related, and that education cannot be regarded as a compromise between the two, or a superimposition of one upon the other" (p 18). When we separate, "we are left only with an abstraction" (p. 18). And, where Bobbitt (1997) wrote of schools as institutions for promoting nationalistic identities, Dewey considered education a means for extending and reforming our democratic process:

> The teacher's place and work in the school is to be interpreted from this same basis. The teacher is not in the school to impose certain ideas or to form certain habits in the child, but is there as a member of the community to select the influences which shall affect the child and to assist him in properly responding to these influences. (p. 19)

Process and goals are one unit in Dewey's view. He associated waste of time

and energy to the neglect of the child's nature—forcing him into a passive and receptive

role. "Ends arise and function within action. . . . They are terminals of deliberation, and

so turning points in activity" (1929, p. 79)**.** There is no need for a succession of particular

studies. The starting point is not an objective but an activity. In this degree, outcomes

must be considered multidimensional not just effective or ineffective. He saw no stability

in educating a child to take a particular place in society. Since society is changing so

rapidly, it is impossible to predict what the needs and demands will be for an adult 20

years later. "Education, therefore, is a process of living and not a preparation for future

living" (p. 18). With Dewey's response came the foundation for considering teaching

more art than science. Alas, just as literature and history were not regarded very highly

by the theorists of the efficiency brigade because of their lack of definitive utility in life

(a weaker subject matter), regard for the teacher as artist was viewed as a weak link in a

hoped for professional status.

> According to curriculum theorist Herbert Kliebard (1975),
>
> The most persistent theoretical formulation in the field of curriculum has been
>
> Ralph Tyler's (1949) Syllabus for Education 360 at the University of Chicago,
>
> Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction, or, as it is widely known, the
>
> Tyler rationale. . . . Over time, his proposal for rationally developing a curriculum
>
> has been raised almost to the status of revealed doctrine. (p. 70)
>
> This document promoted a four-step process for curriculum development:

Confirming objectives, selecting appropriate experiences, organizing those experiences,

and evaluating the results. His concept of a philosophical screen by which some

objectives were included and others rejected provided the rational base for his means-ends model. Since each step of the design rested on the decision about objectives, this was the most crucial stage. Whereas Bobbitt (1997) attempted to develop as extensive a list of possible objectives as possible and then approached decision making based on an appeal to consensus, Tyler encouraged districts and schools to make their educational objectives consistent with their philosophy. Kliebard (1975) argued that this is also a weak position because it is only the match between objectives and philosophy that matters, not the merits of the philosophy. Tyler saw the role of the teacher as one who manipulates the environment to evoke desired behavior. The Pavlovian response dynamic inherent in this thinking is troubling. Aha, the origins of tracking and standardized testing are revealed. And, alas, as Michael Novak (1975) noted, "What our institutions decide is real is enforced as real" (p. 313).

The interpretive extremes were certainly also present. Professor Lawrence Cremin (1975) reacted to this "Taylorism" by identifying the child as raw material, the teacher as worker, the supervisor as foreman, and the curriculum a process for converting the raw materials into the ideal adult (p. 25). Dewey's work was likewise challenged, but because of resorting to the opposite extreme of being a boundless and vague enterprise. Essentially, as James Macdonald (1975) recognized, "Curriculum designs are value-oriented statements" (p. 11). They "attempt to project a theoretically based pattern of experience as desirable" (p. 11). Designs can be implicit (as in many teacher-written accounts of classroom lifestyles) or explicit (as tends to be the case in the literature for pre-service teachers). Charles W. Eliot (1923), then president emeritus of Harvard University, pointed out that the inevitable result of this industrialization of education

would be "the destruction of the interest of the workman [in this case the teacher] in

his work" (p. 59). Productivity is thus achieved at the expense of individual ingenuity and

power. Aha, this may be why I feel so stressed. I'm trying to enact the vision of others

instead of my own.

In the midst of Cold War politics (the 1950s and 60s) and the successful launch of

Sputnik (1957), an unprecedented era of attention to curriculum development projects

was initiated. Alas, this was all going on while I was a student in public schools and

didn't even know such intrigue was surrounding me. I thought my teachers were

somehow the anointed ones and made all their own decisions. How would my students

view me now if they simply saw me as an agent of the governing agenda? I know when

my students value me as a particular language arts teacher instead of a member of a

cloned body of teaching representatives. It's when they comment, "I never really knew

about writing until I was in your class," or "How many books do you read in a week, Ms.

B.?"

Despite, or perhaps because of this eminent sense of political crisis, the 50s and

60s were a time of optimism—a time to rally and to get America's schools back on track.

Curriculum reformers looked to subject area specialists to lead this effort. As Philip

Phoenix (1975) argued, "The curriculum should consist entirely of knowledge which

comes from the disciplines, for the reason that the disciplines reveal knowledge in its

teachable forms" (p. 305). John Goodlad's (1964) School Curriculum Reform in the

United States critiqued such projects from the perspective of a curriculum generalist who

assumed the central value of academic content. He noted that competition between the

different fields placed serious burdens on instructional time and that most reform projects

believed that new materials were synonymous with curriculum reform. Alas, this is true. Each year there is a new subject area textbook adoption that touts reformed practices. What was missing from the programs Goodlad surveyed was the passion and creativity of the teacher. In Goodlad's summary, the delivery of instruction was not the same as generating instruction, and for that reason most reform efforts show no appreciable gain from students taught in traditional situations.

Also during this time, the objectives debate had moved from identification issues to questions of use. According to Flinders and Thornton (1997) in The Curriculum Studies Reader, James Popham (1997) proposed that

> [P]re-specified, clearly stated, and measurable objectives [were] essential to curriculum planning for at least two reasons. First, educators without such objectives would not know the outcomes they seek to realize, and thus have little basis for deciding how to select or organize classroom activities. Second, without objectives an evaluator would not know what to look for in determining a program's success or failure. Falling under the influence of this logic, almost an entire generation of American teachers learned to write behavioral objectives using standardized and tightly specified formats. (p. 42)

Aha, this is exactly what my partner teacher was saying to me when I confessed that I was struggling to come up with a different way to approach planning based on my discomfort with the objectives-led STOPE format. I recorded the following in my notes for that week:

> I must remember my conversation with my teaching partner and how she reacted when I told her the focus of my dissertation. She seemed surprised that someone

would challenge using behavioral objectives. She stated that teachers needed to be that explicit (as in the STOPE model) because that was how they knew what to teach and how to assess what they taught. Though she admitted that she had never had to plan using this prescriptive a format before (She's been teaching 28 years), she worries that she has seen new teachers fumble without such specific guidelines that force them to address what they want the student to be able to do by the end of a lesson. She says it is a good thing for her to write: "The student will be able to name the parts of a microscope" so by the end of her lesson or unit when she assessed student mastery, she would know who was able to do this and therefore how well she had taught the material. She did admit to having more long-range goals that weren't so easy to address such as developing problem solving skills.

Popham (1997) also introduced the concept of proficiency levels in this planning format. The means-ends, reductionist accounting for teaching and learning could now be estimated in percentages of day-to-day achievements. Alas, I was informed that Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for my special education students were to be kept at the front of my planbook. These IEPs were prepared by the special education teachers. They really do state, "John will complete 6th grade assignments with 80% mastery on 4 of 5 assignments." This one really astounded me: "James will maintain a relationship with the SLD Resource Instructor and be able to ask for help when needed with 75% mastery." So, now in my school, I see signs of a five-step planning model (similar to Tyler's (1949)) that includes objectives written in behavioral terms (like Popham (1997) emphasized) with a continuing concern for the elimination of waste (as Bobbitt (1997)

proposed) through the use of text books that efficiently present all one needs to know in sets of rationally organized material directed toward a prespecified end of percentages of mastery. Is this all there is to professionalism?

Perhaps the most widely adopted framework for classifying and defining objectives, Bloom's Taxonomy (1956), also entered the curriculum scene during this period. Initially designed as an assessment tool, it was soon viewed as a way to provide teachers with needed technical assistance and is touted for its ability to support teachers in encouraging their students to move beyond basic memory tasks to more complex levels of critical thinking. It is, however, continually challenged as another mechanistic approach to curriculum design that places too much emphasis on a means-ends mentality, neglecting the worth of thought and action in between. Philip Jackson's (1968) Life in Classrooms attempted to point out just how the daily routines of classroom practice influence success or failure for many students. This time in between objectives and evaluation, "the hidden curriculum" (Apple, 1975) resides in the ordinary and repetitive acts that set standards for expectations. Alas, this is a significant planning concern for me. What does the STOPE framework say to me and my students about what is valued during our time together? If I outline a day according to such simple markers, I sense the sacrifice of the potential energy of our ingenuity.

Elliot Eisner (1967) challenged the oversimplification and overuse of pre-specified objectives claiming teaching was too dynamic a process to be constrained in this way. In fact, he advocated for a reviewing of the educational process, one that would accept the construction of curricula as an artful task. He saw the activity of organizing and sequencing educational activities as infinite in scope, requiring the artful composition

of teacher, student, and class. He proposed a view of the teacher as art critic, "In short, in the construction of educational means (the curriculum) and the appraisal of its consequences, the teacher would become an artist, for criticism itself when carried to its height is an art" (p. 74). Eisner further developed this concept in terms of connoisseurship in later work (1997). Aha, so are the raw materials still bundles of objectives that the artful teacher uses to create robust learning lessons or could his idea be more related to Dewey's selection of influences? I think this is actually the current concession of state governments that are trying to outline and implement specific objectives as criteria aligned with state tests. The speech givers proclaim: We're not telling you <u>how</u> to teach, just <u>what</u> to teach.

The absence of teachers' voices in curriculum development was acknowledged by Joseph Schwab (1969) when he admonished the field for its heavy reliance on theory to the detriment of practical considerations. He claimed theory was "a process of idealization" that abstracted an ideal case from the irregularities of practice. He called for curriculum developers to inform themselves by actually going into classrooms. Aha, now there's a new idea . . . so telling.

This concern for the practical in the aftermath of the reform movement ushered in the ideas of such notables as Michael Apple (1975, 1982, 1986), Dwayne Huebner (1975), Maxine Greene (1995), Paulo Freire (1997), and Gail McGutcheon (1980, 1997), all of whom challenged the language systems of curriculum development and inserted aspects of reflection and criticism into the discussion. Huebner and Greene returned to Dewey's focus on the significance of the individual in curricular design, while Freire took the issue to another level claiming that knowledge was power, and the power an

individual could achieve in order to liberate himself rested in the opportunities available for the individual to make knowledge his own. In <u>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</u> Freire (1970) rejected the "banking" mentality of most curriculum proposals. "The investigator who, in the name of scientific objectivity, transforms the organic into something inorganic, what is becoming into what is, life into death, is a man who fears change" (p. 157). Planning should be perceived as a sympathetic activity that is a constant state of becoming, similar to Maxine Greene's (1995) existentialist stance with respect to growth and change in the individual. In this respect, Freire (1997) identified dialogue as the point of encounter where people, together, have the capacity to attempt to learn more than they once knew. He elaborated on this concept by positioning the word as the essence of dialogue and "within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action" (p. 150). Interestingly, when the word is deprived of its action dimension, it becomes simply "verbalism" while likewise, if the dimension of reflection is lacking, "the word is converted into activism...[which becomes] action for actions sake—[and] negates the true praxis and makes dialogue impossible" (p. 150).

Alas, this seems so like what I see occurring around me—administrators propelled by verbalism and teachers overcome with action for actions sake. Neither group pauses long enough to reflect on a different potential. The terms of division grow: verbalism vs. activism, competition vs. democracy, science vs. art, objectivity vs. subjectivity. Ideas echo in my head and bounce around the classroom walls. And, we have teachers writing one set of plans for administrative approval and one set to actually use to support their work with students. Is it possible to take a stand? Fortunately, McGutcheon (1980) contended that teachers were the only ones adequately positioned to make curriculum

decisions for their individual classroom settings. She viewed this role of curriculum deliberator as being the core of teacher professionalism. Could our sense of professionalism be dependent on finally claiming this aspect of practice as our own?

William Pinar (1978) claimed that the majority of curricularists could still be termed "traditionalists," resting on the work of Tyler. He added, however, that another reason for being considered a traditionalist was due to a sense of "service to practitioners." E.D.Hirsch (1998) is a current example of a tradionalist who supports a common curriculum of core knowledge to be transmitted to students at each grade level by teachers delivering a preidentified set of knowledge. Pinar also cautioned that the leaders of the reform era were outsiders, subject area specialists, who had no loyalty to the work of curricularists. Conceptual- empiricists evolved from this political ascendancy of disciplines and created research that often took years to reach the point of classroom significance. In contrast, the last group described by Pinar, the Reconceptualists, "saw research as an inescapably political as well as intellectual act [and asserted that] what is necessary is a fundamental reconceptualization of what curriculum is, how it functions, and how it might function in emancipatory ways" (p. 126). Hence, curriculum began to be exposed as a very value-laden process.

Apple (1975) bargained for a transformation of the role of curriculum by changing "the basic direction . . . from a technological to an esthetic mode; from a framework in which the curriculum is input to one in which it is regarded as an environing work of art that conveys meaning" (p. 140). The work of classroom teacher Nanci Atwell (1987, 1991, 1997) exemplified how this "environing" proposal could be lived out in a classroom setting. Apple also advocated for art and an aesthetic awareness

to recapture a more sensitive American consciousness, one that would not flatten human interactions but would offer opportunity for a poetry of experience to emerge. He summoned an educational poetry, a disciplined aesthetic sense. In contrast, Apple referred to "the dominant consciousness in advanced industrial societies [as] centered on a vulgar instrumentality—a logical structure that places at its foundation the search for certainty, order, the co-optation of significant social dissent, process/product reasoning" (p. 90). In this type of controlled environment, political, ethical, and aesthetic issues become or are seen as less important.

There is an epistemological divide between those who objectify education and those who search for an aesthetic response. In the first case, it is possible to gain a sense of certainty, in the other, as Huebner (1975) challenged, "learning is merely a postulated concept, not a reality" (p. 219). Compared to a belief in the absolute rightness of the scientific there is little for those opposed to offer as a concrete substitute. We can see there is less to grab hold of compared to the Bobbitt/ Tyler prescription. What we are left with over and over again are faithful beginning points inspired from afar, not from within.

The origins of curriculum argument is an ongoing search for professional solidarity. A recent article by William Wraga (1999) openly challenged the contributions of "traditionalists" and Reconceptualists. According to Wraga, "reconceptualized curriculum studies have continually sought to distance theory far from practice" (p. 4). Wraga saw Reconceptualists as being more concerned with criticism than the resolution of practical concerns. Interestingly, Wraga considered the traditionalists that Pinar (1999) referred to as actually being progressive curriculum professors. (Is the term

"traditionalist" actually being used by both sides here as a dirty word?) This is in contradiction to my reading of his work which identified traditionalists as those being practical to the point of dictating a prescribed cultural curriculum that institutionalized a given set of knowledge. Furthermore, Wraga wrote,

> Pinar offered a reductionist definition of practice as merely "the provision of practical answers to everyday problems" (p. 230). He implored that Reconceptualists curriculum theorists are under no obligation to engage in such activity. . . . The task of solving practical problems is, in effect, left entirely to teachers; Reconceptualist theorists are absolved from such work and are instead responsible principally for offering teachers opportunities to explore theory. . . . For their part, theorists will provide safe spaces for harried teachers to contemplate wider contexts and meanings of their work. After this experience, teachers will be able to "participate in the daily world with more intensity and intelligence" (p. 231). As reconceptualized curriculum theory emancipates teachers from the oppressive structures that dominate their daily routine, "knowledge and intelligence become wings by which we take flight, visit other worlds, returning to this one to call others to futures more life affirmative than the world we inhabit now" (p. 234). (p. 6)

From my perspective, this is well-stated. It is an appropriate relationship between theory and practice. I have real concerns that Wraga (1999) thinks teachers can't even take on the day-to-day issues in their practice much less delve into the theoretical. What is actually absent from most teacher's professionalism is a continuing association with theory and reflection. What they already do well is solve the daily problems of practice—

but from almost an ever-limiting degree of enlightenment. Eisner's (1997) wisdom
helps my case as he wrote:

> Norms, after all, reflect values. They adumbrate what we care about. Trying to
> convert schools from academic institutions—institutions that attempt to transmit
> what is already known—into intellectual ones—institutions that prize inquiry for
> its own sake—will require a change in what schools prize. (p. 160)

Much of this reconceptualized possibility rests on a reconceived definition of
curriculum that Wraga (1999) translated "as the course of one's life" (p. 5). In this sense,
all phenomena have relevance for curriculum theorizing. From Wraga's perspective,

> Centered on coming to terms with individual life history, frequently tied to
> educational or school experiences but often focused on life experience beyond
> schooling, such personal curriculum theorizing represents one way that
> reconceptualized curriculum theory devalued the primary historic mission to
> improve school experience for all pupils. . . . Improving the quality of education
> in school settings, long the priority of the curriculum field, was relinquished as
> personal awareness was privileged. (p. 5)

Alas, this reminds me of what Dewey (1902) said about the child being given
opportunities to live up to his or her full human potential. How does Wraga think we can
really separate schooling from the rest of life for teachers or students? This also ties in
with many natural language approaches to learning that encourage students to write and
read from a base of personal meaning.

In some ways I have sensed the same absence that Wraga (1999) focused on such
as the lack of any specific plan proposed by the Reconceptualists and others who resist

the engineered practices of the efficiency movement, etc. However, that is the essence

of their stance—there can be no plan—there can only be theoretically grounded

approaches to practical concerns. This is in lieu of atheoretical and thus random

approaches to problem solving. It is this level of intellectualism that is absent from the

professional standing of teaching. Alas, can I substitute a planning model that displays

for me a union of theoretically grounded approaches alongside practical arrangements? It

is a daunting challenge.

It is disturbing to me that Wraga (1999) does not explore more fully the writings

of the named Reconceptualists that he challenged. Certainly Kincheloe (1991) in

Teachers as Researchers: Qualitative Inquiry as a Path to Empowerment has proposed

particular actions that teachers can participate in to research and develop their own

practices. Most discerning was his definition of what curriculum has come to mean in our

time:

> Today it is clear that the curriculum is not only school-district guidelines,
>
> textbooks, and objectives. Today it is now clear that curriculum is that
>
> "complicated conversation" in which teachers and students engage each other as
>
> well as the textbook material in a caring, learning community. (p. 14)

The foundation of Pinar's (1999) resistant argument to the interpretations of

Wraga (1999) rest in what he considers to be a gender encoded professional and

intellectual relationship that privileges men as theorists and women as practitioners. This

university and school split is repaired in Pinar's stance through an acceptance of one

another as "respected colleagues engaged in that complicated conversation with our

children that is the curriculum" (p. 15). Pinar seems more contemplative rather than

directive, scholarly rather than reactive, and open instead of closed to a collaborative approach to curriculum development that lures and embraces the voices of primary stake holders—students with teachers and teachers with university professors.

Paralleling the thinking of Reconceptualists was a growing movement within academia to resist the distancing, context-stripped laboratory research models associated with psychology to more qualitative forms of inquiry (Eisner, 1997; Huebner, 1975; Stenhouse, 1983). In this way, Eisner (1978) explained, participation in a history of knowing older than any of the social sciences (as embraced by the critical empirisists)—literature, history, poetry, and drama could be achieved.

> [By seeking] the creation of qualities that are expressively patterned, that seeks the explication of wholes as a primary aim...[it is possible to] capitalize on the role of emotion in knowing. Far from the ideal of emotional neutrality so often aspired to in the social science, the educational critic exploits the potential of language to further human understanding...the material itself has to be created as an art form. To create such writing, requires a willingness and an ability to pay attention to the form of expression, to the use of metaphor, to the tempo and character of language. One must exploit the potential of language as an artistic medium, not merely as a descriptive one. One seeks, at least in part, the creation of an expressive analog to the qualities of life perceived and appraised within schools and classrooms. (p. 163)

Qualitative work in the universities finally gave credit to process and not product alone. Teachers now had an alternative, more accessible way to understand the antecedents of outcomes. This move also contributed to intellectual equity by initiating a

more public appreciation for varying aptitudes inherent in scientific and artistic forms

of expression. This broadening of ways of knowing led to more current curricular interest

in forms of multicultural educative experiences (Harris, 1993; Wiggington, 1986),

thematic interdisciplinary strategies (Jacobs, 1989), fully integrated approaches (Beane,

1997), and a proposed system of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983, 1993). However,

most appeals and propositions for educational reform have not shown confidence in the

teacher. Nowhere can this be seen more readily than in the great upsurge in curriculum

activity of the 1960s when teacher-proof materials were the norm.

Unfortunately, there seems to be an ever-present "crisis" in education. Too often,

the source of such crises is associated with unskilled or unproductive teaching. Teachers

often feel at risk if they deviate from standard procedures. They feel constrained and

controlled by outside decision-makers. More than ten years ago, Taxel (1988), then editor

of The New Advocate, a journal "for those involved with young people and their

literature," wrote:

Teachers are blamed for most, if not all, of the problems confronting schools; and

it is suggested that if our teachers were smarter, better trained, and held more

strictly accountable for what occurs in their classrooms, things would be better. A

disturbing irony of [such] reports is that while they (commendably) call for

increases in the professionalism of teachers, they seem oblivious to the fact that

the teaching profession has undergone a steady process of "deskilling." (p. 73)

Taxel (1988) continued with a discussion of teacher bashing in the media and by

analyzing the impact of basal reading programs and other "teacher-proof" materials on

this undermining of the significant insight and ability of most teachers. Even today, the

news media continue to highlight stories about low test scores and rare instances of

teacher misconduct. There are calls for national testing for teachers and students. What

can teachers do to change their image? How can we promote the intellectualism of our

profession and reduce this tendency toward depowering?

One thing that comes from this retrospective of curriculum development is just

how unstable the ground actually is in this area. Many have provided models for

consideration: Tyler (1949) identified the four primary issues that have been central to

much curriculum development around the country. Others have added to or subtracted

from this basic model, expanding on one aspect of the sequence or simplifying it even

further, but what attaches these schemas one with the others, quite literally, is this

expectation that we can reduce learning to specific discernible steps. This, of course, is

the same process that establishes common ground for the STOPE format I was given. It is

part of our background that has given us textbooks that present only single views of

history and often strip knowledge of the contexts in which it was conceived. Freire

(1997) helped in this regard by giving the curriculum field a critical conscience. Briefly,

Freire highlighted the need for "critical reflection" on one's own "concrete situation."

Then we have Eisner (1998) again bringing us back to an artful understanding of coming

to know. He sincerely reminds us that we can get lost in our overstimulated need to bring

order in such a way that we lose our very uniqueness and humanity in the process. We

are, after all, subjective learners.

Kliebard (1997) matter-of-factly stated that current American curriculum is

actually a "potpourri" (p. 32):

Finally, in periods when curriculum reform had charged the atmosphere, it was

probably more important for school systems simply to change than to change in a

particular ideological direction. While there have always been particular trends

favoring one approach to curriculum rather than another, the same time that some

proponents of curriculum reform were proclaiming that the curriculum should be

driven from the spontaneous interests of children, others were proposing that the

curriculum should be a direct and specific preparation for adulthood. Still others

saw an urgent need to infuse into the curriculum a strong element of social

criticism. Each doctrine had an appeal and a constituency. And, rather than make

a particular ideological choice among apparently contradictory curriculum

directions, it was perhaps more politically expedient on the part of practical

school administrators to make a potpourri of all of them. This, in fact, is what the

American curriculum has become. (p. 32)

Aha, the system is just as confused as I am! It is interesting, however, that most

school districts continue to purchase materials for teachers and students that claim a clear

path to learning and recognize no alternative views. Leading with objectives and

concluding with an evaluation, with textbook-based assignments filling in the middle,

seems to be a sacred frame.

Reading as a Form of Resistance: Contemplating the History of Planning

Decisions about curriculum have been foundational to decisions about planning

for instruction. Each review of the literature on teacher planning I encounter returns to

Tyler's rational choice model and confirms the divide between curriculum theory and

actual teacher planning practices (Borko, Livingston, & Shavelson, 1990; Clark &

Yinger, 1979; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Eisner, 1976; Glatthorn, 1993; Neely, 1985; Yinger, 1980). Inconsistencies between research on curriculum development and research on teacher planning exposes a gap that needs attention.

As the cornerstone of the field, Tyler's (1949) work stands firm as a reference point for modern curriculum development and instructional planning. For instance, Zahorik (1970) discovered that teachers who planned using the typical planning model of specified objectives with organized learning activities linked to matched evaluation procedures were more rigid in their performance and less sensitive to students. I see this too as teacher friends participate in more conversations about pacing schedules than student engagement. Five years later Zahorik (1975) asked 194 teachers to make lists of the decisions they made prior to teaching and to assign an order to their process. Analyzing the ranked decisions of these teachers, Zahorik concluded that teachers do not restrict themselves to a logical specification of objectives. Instead, Zahorik observed that most often considerations of content were first addressed by the teachers.

Taylor (1970) investigated the planning and teaching practices of teachers in British secondary schools. He designed a study around how 261 different subject area teachers organized their syllabi for courses. Taylor concluded that teachers first attended to considerations of pupils and then to materials and resources, not goals and objectives. Here, contrary to what theorists suggested, teachers showed a higher concern with context than with criteria for accounting for effectiveness.

In a preliminary report of findings from their field study of teacher planning and implementation, Clark and Yinger (1979) specifically noted that "learning objectives are seldom the starting point for planning" and that "planning seems to operate not only as a

means of organizing instruction, but also as a source of psychological benefit for the teacher" (p. 176). Why doesn't my principal know this? Why didn't I know this? Ultimately, Clark and Yinger reported in this study that teachers believed their plans gave them "direction, security, and confidence" (p. 176). The STOPE planning model did not do this for me.

Morine-Dershimer (1979) added to the work that focused on preactive and postactive aspects of planning by contending that written plans were nested in "images" of potential action that teachers were able to keep in their heads while planning, and so planning before, during, and after instruction was in actuality an aspect of one continuous enterprise. I can understand this because my pocket journal that allows me to record ideas off-site and the legal pad that I keep alongside my planbook while I'm working with my students are testament to this continuation of effort related to planning. McCutcheon (1980) introduced the importance of teacher's mental planning in attempts to understand the relationship between actual practice and planning. Obviously, from the work of these researchers, it can be shown that planning is not the simple linear process outlined by Tyler (1949) and perpetuated by policy makers in many settings.

In a study of the mental processes involved in teacher planning before instruction, Yinger (1980) shadowed one elementary school teacher for a 5 month period asking her to think out loud. Acting as a participant observer in this combined fisrt—and second-grade classroom, Yinger also took notes to document as much of the teachers actions as possible. He concluded that two aspects of teacher planning were central, "planning for instructional activities and the use of teaching routines" (p. 111). Yinger also produced a cyclical three stage model of planning from this study that emphasized design and

discovery instead of the simple choice of objectives option in the Tyler model. Stage one involved what Yinger termed, "Problem-Finding" and stage two formulated the problem through a design solution. Stage three involved implementation, evaluation, and routinization. Clark and Peterson (1986) showed teacher thought and action in a reciprocal model that recognized the continuous interactions of students and teachers. Eisner (1979) elaborated "the significance of the absence of aesthetic theory" in education and challenged us to develop a language that would speak to the vicissitudes of classroom experience instead of continuing the business-like language of means to ends.

From the work of these researchers, I can now visualize a complex process of decision making and better appreciate the issues surrounding curriculum developed by outsiders and implemented by the teacher as primary insider. Most recently, Borman and Levine (1997), in their textbook for preservice teachers, presented multiple models for conceptualizing the planning strategies of teachers. Lingering still, however, is the haunting warning of Neely (1985) who cautioned that

> In the age of increasing accountablitly, teachers must be aware of the objectives they have for students. Teacher educators must, therefore, continue to teach the rational choice model, but adapt the instruction to be more applicable to actual planning patterns. (p. 27)

Borko, Livingston, and Shavelson (1990) proposed a psychological framework for use in reexamining existing descriptive studies of teacher thinking and planning and for use in future designs. Their identification of schemata as scenes, scripts, and propositions that are rich for experienced teachers and formative for novices separated the needs of these two groups of professionals.

Beginning with a typology based on research-based conceptions of reading, Duffy (1977) sampled the impressions of 350 teachers of beginning reading to discern the distribution of these reading conceptions and to compare the identified beliefs of teachers with their actions. Only 37 of the 350 teachers were defined by Duffy as having "pure" instructional beliefs regarding reading. Of these 37, Duffy observed only 8 were consistent between beliefs and behavior. The results of his study suggest that teacher behavior may be more controlled by system influences such as mandated curriculum, resources, and time than individual beliefs. Amen to that—just what I'm experiencing. Responding to the prevalence and power of curriculum materials, Ben-Peretz (1990) advanced methods for training teachers to discover the potential in these resources; for as Shulman wrote in the introduction to this work, "In principle, no curriculum is adequate because it cannot anticipate the infinite variations of students, teachers and contexts. Yet teachers cannot be expected to produce curriculum by themselves as they encounter these situations" (p. viii). Why not? Is this really so?

I am left wondering more about connections between Dewey's (1902) contention that educative experiences occur when the child can be "in complete possession of all his powers" (p. 18), and what would happen if this same respect for potential were accorded teachers? I also reflect again on the response of Eliot (1923) that "the destruction of the interest of the workman [in this case the teacher] in his work" (p. 59) is sacrificed when productivity is achieved at the expense of individual ingenuity and power. I relate again to Hoffman's (1998) worry that teachers "have been asked to change so often in so many different directions that they have succumbed to a controlled existence" (p. 109). What would happen to the gap between curriculum theory and teacher planning if teachers

were "adequately moved by their own ideas and intelligence" (Dewey, 1904, p. 16)?

Even if a second look is accorded to models offered to assist teachers in their planning, I

am struck by the 'hand-holding' mentality that seems to guide so many views of

instruction. For instance, Borman and Levine (1997) described the PAR (Preparation,

Assistance, Reflection) model as one that "fosters creativity and the teacher's ability to

respond to the specific needs of his or her students" (p. 165). Looking more closely at this

proposition, however, it seems to be based on a triad of assumptions that do not recognize

varying competencies of students. The emphatic use of "must" within each basic

statement is unsettling.

> 1) Students must have some background knowledge of the concepts of ideas
>
> being presented in the reading.
>
> 2) Students must be guided through their reading of new, unfamiliar material.
>
> 3) Students must reflect on newly learned material so it can be internalized,
>
> retained, and applied in future learning situations. (p. 165)

Is learning really this linear and constant?

A well-known and often used lesson planning format for daily planning was

detailed by Madeline Hunter (1982). Based on teaching techniques aimed toward mastery

learning the model presented a series of sequential steps to be accomplished within each

daily lesson of approximately an hour's duration. Each step is foundational for the next

and objectives are prescribed to be measurable and shared with students so there is

certainty regarding the goals and intent of each lesson. Hunter explained,

> We have labeled these techniques [those of effective teaching] and explained the
>
> psychological theory behind why they work. As a result, from now on you

[teacher] will know what you are doing when you teach, why you are doing what you do, and do that consciously and deliberately to increase your students' learning." (p. ix)

As Hunter elaborated, her program is based on causal relationships between teaching and learning so that if sound psychological theory is followed, it is possible to increase the probability of student learning. She makes no guarantees but leaves the reader to feel that if goals for higher achievement are not met then there was an error in the interpretation and delivery of the program. This persistent belief that people can create a measurable connection between teaching and significant student learning is the scientific way. Any detected level of ineffectiveness is blamed on the inadequate training of the teacher. Teacher training is the answer, implementation is the goal, and scholarliness is the sacrifice. I, on the other hand, wonder, is the teacher really to blame if a student is not learning to the standard of the measurable objective? Could the designated objective be inappropriate for the students at the time? In the concern for waste within curriculum planning, is it not possible to consider the wasted potential of passive teachers who only implement instead of design and passive students who merely receive rather than construct?

In keeping with these sampled outlines for planning, Glathorn (1993) advised that novice teachers "should be provided with a very structured process and form" (p. 6). Kagan and Tippins (1992) challenged this pervasive viewpoint and encouraged 12 student teachers to construct personally relevant lesson plans during their supervised teaching experience. Instead of promoting this practice as one more salient to the backgrounds and needs of individual teachers, however, the researchers closed with a

simple proposal suggesting that lesson planning might best be considered an outline of

activities to accompany prepared curriculum materials. Bea Naff Cain (1989) studied

> the impact of prescriptive planning models on preservice teacher thought" and

> discerned that such models have an impact on

> 1) the quantity, quality and content of the planners' preactive and postactive

> thought, 2) the quantity of unplanned decisions that the planners made while

> teaching, 3) the overall organizing principle of their classroom environments, and

> 4) the way preservice teachers defined and practiced planning.

> Planning is central and models that reject and limit the professionalism of teachers

> continue to pervade programs for teacher training.

Models of teacher planning have been offered to describe and order the practices

of teachers. Do teachers abandon and disregard the efforts of such outside researcher to

set forth best practice information because they are unskilled workers or is it because

they are professionals trying to make their own best practice decisions in the midst of

complex circumstances? May (1986) questioned why schools of education so often rely

on the dominant rational model and requested "intensive action research in one setting"

so that elements of particular contexts could be understood in relation to planning

decisions. I self-volunteer for this exposure.

As a starting point, I need to establish my professional support for a more holistic

and transactional approach to language learning. It continues to trouble me that most

often in my readings about curriculum and planning, there flourishes a faith in behavioral

objectives. The need to depict human process in incremental terms excerpted from the

more complex, naturalized enactments of whole readings and writings seems so strong.

Reading as Resistance: Transactional Teaching and Learning

Paralleling the curriculum development history in the United States, Russian psychologist, L.S. Vygotsky (1978) was developing his understandings of the relationship between thought and language and learning. The 1978 publication in this country of Mind in oSociety: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes along with the growing acceptance of naturalistic studies at the university level provided the underpinnings for a more transactional approach to learning than had heretofore been conceived and expressed. The 1980s became a time of filling in the gaps between our means-ends curriculum models.

Goodman and Goodman (1990) traced this connection. In their analysis, they included the comparison that,

In Australia, drawing on European and North American sources, whole-language policies, methods, and materials have become dominant. New Zealand, however, has the longest continuous tradition of progressive, holistic education. Since the 1930s New Zealand educators have developed learner-centered curricula and school practices. This small country, perhaps the world's most literate according to multinational studies, never abandoned Dewey's progressive education concepts, and it has provided models of application for the rest of the world. The development of whole language in the United States has been held back by the strong influence of behavioral psychology in American schools. This influence has been felt through textbooks, particularly those used in reading instruction, through mandated norm-referenced tests, and through curricula organized around testable, behavioral objectives. (p. 224)

Dewey's (1938) learning by doing approach is also captured in whole language contexts through the belief that children learn to read by reading and to write by writing. In this sense, Vygotsky (1978) helps us make the connection between experience and instruction. Vygotsky and Dewey concluded that learning occurs as purposeful and whole acts and that language learning involves interpretation of convention that is highly dependent on prior experience and use. Vygotsky's social theory of language learning explained that learning is transactional in that first it is experienced among others (interpsychological) and then within (intrapsychological). As the Goodmans' (1990) explained it, "The language is generated by the child, but it is changed in transactions with others by their comprehension or lack of comprehension and by their responses" (p. 232). It is alarming that despite such understandings, we so often continue to perpetuate the logical yet problematic assumption that each act of teaching is followed by an associated act of learning. It is a bigger thing than we think—this idea of learning—not a meager morsel of information served one bite at a time. I often wondered at the exponential learning I observed with my kindergarten students when they constructed block worlds. They didn't simply learn to lean one block next to another they spread their ideas and their conversation all over each other.

Particularly prolific during this time, was research in generating revised understandings of the potential within real school settings for more engaged and purposeful language learning (Calkins, 1983, 1986, 1991; Graves, 1989, 1983, 1984; Hansen, 1987). Their explication of process writing and the connections between writing and reading, written in language accessible to teachers, supported a grassroots effort among teachers to review their practices.

These process practices are the essence of transactional learning that Weaver (1990) explored in <u>Understanding Whole Language: From Principles to Practice</u>. Weaver explained that "Classroom teachers themselves define and redefine whole language as they increasingly manifest their philosophy in their teaching" (p. 8). Whole language is a belief system that grounds a particular philosophy of learning that can be termed transactional. It is a model supporting a more active concept of learning where the learner transcends her or his environment through relationships with texts or people (Cambourne, 1988; Holdaway, 1979; Smith, 1988). Weaver wrote,

> When district-adopted materials for assessment and instruction are examined, an alternate model, transmission, is most often present. This philosophy of learning likens to the banking system Freire referred to as making deposits of knowledge in the minds of learners. Patrick Shannon (1989) images this concept in his comparison to a "philanthropic" model of instruction—a type of "instructional philanthropy" that direct instruction advocates would provide for students during reading lessons. First, the advocates decide which knowledge is worth knowing, which just so happens to be what the advocates know. Second, they see direct instruction as their obligation as participants in reading lessons because of their previous success in school literacy matters. Finally, the advocates believe that, were it not for direct instruction, students would not learn to use literacy wisely. (p. 626)

This need to be directive often extends to relationships with parents. Many schools set up parent nights to directly instruct parents in how to best work with their children at home. As I journaled with my students and their families to learn more about

how they were learning together at home, developing parallel practices that helped us all honor our roles in the support of student literacy development, there was no question that the transaction with texts was enhanced by the transaction with each other (Shockley, Michalove, & Allen, 1995). I've often thought what a different study it would have been if I had told the students what to read and the families what to say and do instead of responding in their journals as one other caring voice in their support system. I could not deface the potential of our relationship-based learning (instead of a power-based form) with this kind of one-right-way imposition.

Traditional American basals created similar rationales by convincing teachers that their compilations were not there to control them but to save them time by doing the time-consuming planning for them, leaving them time to actually teach (even though most were heavily scripted as to what the teacher should do and say while doing that "teaching"). In this model, teachers continued in their technical delivery roles. Neither teachers nor students were often involved beyond the scripted model with students displaying the required responses. Control is maintained by ordered materials and direct teaching by the teacher transmitting the prescribed information. Correctness is valued and learned through habitual acts of practice and mastery is expected within a specific time frame.

By contrast, teachers involved in transactional learning opportunities with their students adopt an attitude of experience similar to the one Calkins' (1986) felt during her project-oriented childhood. She wrote, "I learn best when I am deeply absorbed by a topic and when this involvement is guided by well-timed tips from experts" (p. 167). For her, this childhood sense of accomplishment is also present in whole language

classrooms where it is required that teachers and students be highly engaged in literate activities of their own construction and where teachers can use mini lessons to share insights. Here, curriculum is broad and open-ended.

Control is transformed into facilitation in transactional learning models. Parts are not disconnected from the whole of an experience and errors are seen as essential aspects of developing new understandings. Risk taking is necessary and nurtured. Control is central to transmission methods of instruction and is operationalized through a "skills" acquisition process. By practicing correct skill responses on worksheets, this effort has been termed a "skill and drill" method. In <u>Becoming a Nation of Readers</u> (Anderson, et al., 1985, p. 74) the authors establish that students spend 70% of their designated reading time on such practice protocols. Decoding is the essence of the effort and phonics the battle cry.

Engagement is central in transactional learning experiences and is operationalized by "seeing yourself as a reader and writer" (Weaver, 1990, p. 39) and using your literacy to understand yourself and others in thoughtful and creative ways. New Zealand literacy researcher Cambourne (1988) expressed this perspective in <u>The Whole Story: Natural Learning and the Acquisition of Literacy in the Classroom</u>. In this text he proposed that language learning is a "struggle/pleasure relationship" perhaps born out of the "brain's apparent need to be continually constructing meaning, to be continually imposing sense and order on chaos" (p. 5). In the process of trying to minimize complexity, Cambourne argued that we often maximize the likelihood that struggle will turn into suffering through nonsense learning that translates into joyless learning. Cambourne supported the view that "sustained engagement" with print forms will increase the probability that

registers of literacy "will be ultimately internalized and brought under control," (p. 3),

and as a result, students will think the process so worthwhile that they will be willing and

eager to continue reading and writing beyond the classroom. In Cambourne's words,

"literacy manifests itself in sustained reading, writing, talking, listening, thinking,

remembering, selecting, organizing, inferencing, and other cognitive behaviours" (p. 4).

The Whole Story challenged the perpetuation of a belief system that has held teachers

"prisoners of a model of learning" (p.16). Cambourne explicitly stated,

> My thesis is quite simple: The majority of teachers have accepted,
>
> unquestioningly, a set of beliefs about learning which had its origins in what
>
> Arthur Koestler once called "the dark ages of psychology" (Koestler, 1975), and
>
> while they continue to hold these beliefs, they will continue to organise their
>
> teaching behaviour in ways which reflect them. True, they may from time to time
>
> purchase a new reading scheme which they will assert is different or they may
>
> buy a new spelling laboratory or writing kit, but the way they use these materials
>
> will not really be very different from the way in which they used the schemes,
>
> laboratories and kits which preceded them. Just as prisoners are locked into a
>
> context which permits a very limited range of behavioural options, so they are
>
> locked into a range of teaching behaviours which, while they may vary in
>
> emphasis from time to time, will not vary in substance. (p.18)

When teachers talk about issues of control, they are not likely to be examining the

beliefs that are controlling them, and they are not seeking ways for students to be in

control of their own learning in ways that might maximize engagement and a sense of

worthwhile learning—two aspects of school time that so often seem to be missing. Not

only do we need to review what we're offering our students, but we also need to review what we're offering ourselves. Cambourne (1988) claimed we are too often victims of learning viewed as "habit formation" (p.18):

> Effective learning is the establishment of good or desirable habits and the prevention of and/or elimination of bad or undesirable habits. Habits are formed through association between stimuli and responses. The degree to which something is learned is a function of the strength of the association between stimulus and response. Repetition strengthens the associative bond between stimulus and response. (p. 18)

Cambourne worried that this system of learning at best produced students who were often "a-literate" or "alienated from" reading (p. 23).

Whole language roots also reach back to the work of Clay (1975) and Teale and Sulzby (1986) who clarified our understandings about writing as a developmental process. Stepping in and out of the historical descriptions of this movement are language experience-based practices and literature-based instruction. The link between these aspects of practice and whole language is the organic use of language which Sylvia Ashton Warner's (1963) Teacher exemplified. Jeannette Veatch (1968) appealed for the use of a core curriculum of real books with time allotted within the school day for reading such books. Atwell (1987, 1997) showed us through example how a classroom with a whole language process orientation could look like a workshop. She modeled holistic assessment strategies and organized her thinking and her room to accommodate the unique literacy needs of each of her students. However, external assessment practices remained tied to specific objectives. What eventually transpired is historically predictable

in that just as the writing process was translated into a Monday through Friday prewrite-to-publish process, literature received a similar treatment. Whole language basals were introduced. The basalization of literature was once again an economic and political response (Apple, 1993) to the vague personal appeals for engagement and participation in "the literacy club" (Smith, 1988) of yet another progressive learner-centered vs. objectives-centered movement.

According to Polanyi (as documented in Macdonald & Wolfson, 1970), "higher functions control more specific, or lower, functions even though the higher functions are made up of the specific particulars of the lower functions and are limited by them" (p. 121). This is an important consideration in terms of approach to the establishment of learning environments for students. As Polanyi further explained, "It is impossible to represent the organizing principles of a higher level by the laws governing its isolated particulars" (p. 121). If reading and writing are more than the sum of their individual skills or parts, then approaching this higher-order process in a step-by-step manner may not be as helpful as it may rationally appear. Macdonald and Wolfson also argue that "In each case the higher-level function, though dependent on the lower level, has its own organizing power" (p. 121). Donmoyer and Kidd (1984) add to this explication that, "Initial research on language development was grounded in a behaviorist framework in which language was viewed as a serial chain of associations learned through imitation" (p. 3). Approaching curriculum design from this perspective was compatible with the Bobbitt/Tyler tradition. The situation, however, is quite different given more recent studies of language development: "On the contrary, the view of learning emerging from language research is a constructivist one in which language learning is itself a process of

structuring engaged in by the learners themselves" (Donmoyer & Kidd, 1984, p. 6).

This is more like what I have seen with learners in my classrooms. This is why I think

teachers are often frustrated when they review student-authored stories, etc. and don't see

all the skills they have so thoroughly "taught" applied.

In a recent article, Hoffman (1998) pointed out that throughout our educational

history of proposed reforms, teachers have been treated as pawns in a system (p. 108).

Hoffman worried that

> in a world in which there is so much pressure to change, teachers may become
>
> soured and negative on the change process itself. How often we hear teachers say,
>
> "Oh, just wait long enough and it will pass." These are teachers who have been
>
> asked to change so often in so many different directions that they have succumbed
>
> to a controlled existence. (p. 109)

I share Hoffman's (1998) concern but recognize too that for constructivist

teachers participating in transactional events with students in workshop classrooms

guided by a whole language philosophy, a few things became too obvious for them to

ignore despite the overlay of this controlled existence: First, it was obvious that teachers

were still learners and students had many things to teach. Second, it became quite clear

that a teaching act is not necessarily followed by a direct and discernible act of learning.

It was evident that students brought with them to their desks and tables the "cultural

capital" espoused by Friere (1970) in the forms of language, life experience, and cultural

history, Whole language teachers experienced the inspiration of uncertainty and learned

to notice their own cultural capital as insiders. Uncertainties can turn into "wonderings to

pursue" (Atwell, 1991) and reform can reject systemic interpretations and start one

teacher at a time. Short and Burke (1991) proposed an overarching reconceptualization of curriculum development in <u>Creating Curriculum: Teachers and Students as a Community of Learners</u>*,* one that started within the classroom as the thought collective of greatest significance in curriculum development. They identified the model as "the Authoring Cycle," a process that "is reflective of [their] belief that empowered learners become authors of their own lives" (p. 34). As a teacher researcher, I seek this status of empowered learner.

<u>Teacher Research: Preparing a Path for Continued Resistance</u>

Historically, as has been presented, curriculum has most often been imposed on teachers, yet transactional learning theory as lived in whole language classrooms has encouraged teachers to take notice of the idiosyncratic, non-standard, student engagements with language learning. Teacher researchers develop voice in the reconstruction of practice through inquiry. Britton (1970) shared a childhood recollection of spending summers in the country. At the age of fourteen, he and his brother championed a self-imposed responsibility to map "this precious bit of countryside" (p. 11). He explains:

> The map was a record of our wanderings, and each time we returned we added to it or corrected it. It was, though, a crude one, a representation of the area; we valued it as a cumulative record of our activities there. Furthermore, looking forward instead of back, the map set forth our expectations concerning this area as we approached it afresh each time. By means of it we might hope to move around more purposefully, more intelligently; and this would be particularly true if we

had returned to the place after a long absence, or if a stranger had gone to it and

used our expectations to guide his movements. (p. 11)

I think again of how starting this school year with a self-imposed focus of

mapping my countryside through lesson planning became my personal professional

cause. Like Britton, I wanted a representation of my expectations to help me "move

around more purposefully, [and] more intelligently." I had a plan for mapping my

wanderings. I termed it my note-to-narrative process. My planbook was to become the

valued cumulative record of my activities that I could return to again and again for

guidance and adjustments.

An organic form. Over time, I have developed a studied sensitivity to planning

research that is as organic to practice as possible (Baumann, Shockley, & Allen, 1996;

Shockley, Michalove, & Allen, 1995). When confronted with the STOPE requirement, I

immediately tried to assess my options. There were some things I knew about sustaining

research in my classroom and some things I knew about myself personally that had to be

addressed. I knew whatever I designed would need to be doable, true to my current

professional needs, and capable of enhancing student learning (Baumann, Shockley, &

Allen, 1996). I knew my learning habits did not include keeping a journal of narrative

explications of my experience. I did, however, routinely keep a quote journal and Book

Lovers journals. Nestled within my reading habit was the tendency to mark quotes and

then when I finished a book, copy my favorite lines in my quote journal. My Book

Lovers journals were treasured records of my readings and included cues to characters

and setting to help me recall the experience when I took time to savor my ever-expanding

literate connections. Accepting these things about my situation and my self, I decided to

keep a pocket journal with me at all times to jot down quotes, descriptive observations, and those all too fleeting ideas that come to mind when least expected. This little leather-bound book could fit in my purse or bookbag and travel with me from place to place, always handy for the capture of a new insight or line of thought.

These notes could then become my primary probes for composing weekly narratives. These narratives would be the seedbeds for reflective exploration of all that caught my attention during any given week. I decided that doing this more expansive writing once per week would fit in with my family's lifestyle since my husband had a standing commitment on Thursday nights. This would become my night to commit to reflective writing and planning. I could set aside this time to build a straightforward link between reflection and action because I would use my writing to ground my decisions about planning to teach. There it was—a patterned plan—from notes to narratives to action. By keeping consistent notes in a pocket journal about issues and observations that seemed pertinent to my decision making, I could track my planning influences across time. By bringing my concerns to a higher level of awareness through narrative writing, I could work to understand the origins of my decision making on behalf of students. These daily outlines of proposed experience could then accrue as a disciplined record—a trail. In such a manner, data could be collected, reflected upon, and translated into practice continuously. In this very pragmatic sense, planning evolved into both method and praxis—an organic endeavor. I thought I had found a way to be both reasonable and rigorous—to make productive use of the rhythms of teaching and the realities of a personal lifestyle. My planbook, a common tool for teachers, could now be viewed as a

primary research document and perhaps could assume a renewed and regenerative

position in my life of teaching and learning. As Britton (1970) concluded,

> we construct a representation of the world as we experience it, and from this
>
> representation, this cumulative record of our own past, we generate expectations
>
> concerning the future: expectations which, as moment by moment the future
>
> becomes the present, enable us to interpret the present. (p. 12)

Stenhouse (1985) wrote, "research is systematic self-critical enquiry [and] as an

enquiry, it is founded in curiosity and a desire to understand; but it is a stable, not a

fleeting, curiosity, systematic in the sense of being sustained by a strategy" (p. 24). It was

important work to take the tradition of lesson planning and subject it to a specific strategy

and form that allowed me to pay attention to my classroom life, the critical moments

when new insights lead to revised practice or when habit proceeds unchecked. By using

my planning process to develop my interpretive skills as a teacher and knowledge as a

researcher, I felt better prepared to challenge or incorporate the ideas of others. And, as

Stenhouse projected,

> A teacher lays the foundation of his capacity for research by developing self-
>
> monitoring strategies. The effect is not unlike that of making the transition from
>
> amateur to professional actor. Through self-monitoring the teacher becomes a
>
> conscious artist. Through conscious art he is able to use himself as an instrument
>
> of his research. (pp. 15-16)

Now a support structure was taking shape for me. I could see how self-study

could become my way of creating personal order amidst a context of political and

philosophical confusions. I could now begin to gather up the ideas that were hanging

haphazardly from the eaves of my mind and often as not, strewn about carelessly along my paths. The pocket journal could serve as the primary collection site for recycling ideas that would insert themselves among observations and quotations to become reformed through reflective writing into possible actions and curriculum materials. I could collect the "stuff" and "things" as a form of organized resistance to the slick and clean STOPE planning model. I had a path.

A borrowed form. Reading the work of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) was as astounding in an opposite way as encountering the STOPE format. Their explanation of the methodology of portraiture filled me with hope for teacher researchers. I thought, "Finally, an accepted method that teachers can borrow." What specifically caught my attention was their commitment "to combine systematic, empirical description with aesthetic expression, blending art and science, humanistic sensibilities and scientific rigor" (p. 3). They stated, "portraits are designed to capture the richness, complexity, and dimensionality of human experience in social and cultural context, conveying the perspectives of the people who are negotiating those experiences" (p.3). Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) contended that portraiture was "an intentionally generous and eclectic process that began with a search for what is good and healthy" (p.9). At the same time, an awareness is maintained that any "expression of goodness will always be laced with imperfections. . . . In examining the dimensionality and complexity of goodness there will, of course, be ample evidence of vulnerability and weakness" (p.9). It was presented as an effort to resist what has become a tradition-laden process of documenting failure. For as many have come to see, "the relentless scrutiny of failure has many unfortunate and distorting results . . . the locus of blame tends to rest on the

shoulders of those most victimized and least powerful in defining their identity or shaping their fate" (pp. 8, 9). In educational research, teachers and students most often carry the burden and the scars of such reporting. In this sense, portraiture encouraged and supported teachers as researchers to take control of the analyzing and reporting of their own efforts.

The ability to get close to life and to appropriate a particular angle on experience is integral to the relational knowing that teachers experience. As with novelists, it seemed that portraitists were also "seeking to capture the texture and nuance of human experience" (p. 5). Believing that classroom teachers need more than the dispassionate design and delivery of scope and sequence charts, and a form of qualitative inquiry that could provide an expressive rendering of classroom involvements, I thought I'd finally discovered a match. I considered how teachers often feel at the mercy of politically charged curricular decisions, how their planning decisions have been researched from a distance, and how I found myself in a position about which I was particularly worried— required to prepare written plans for the scrutiny of administrators. Through the years, I've often worried that one reason teachers may resist broader participation in the issues of their practice could be the lack of a sympathetic method for proceeding. I was interested in working within this methodology to see if portraiture could provide an accessible process for teachers to use in their classroom-based studies. Since it was respectful of the goodness of the profession, values context, voice, relationships, and the whole of experiences in developing knowledge, the methodology seemed promising. My next step was to see if what I was designing could align itself with portraiture and if so, in what ways.

The methodological plan of portraiture according to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) consisted of three stages. The first involved preparations for the site visit. This stage would not be an issue for me or other teacher researchers interested in studying their own classroom-based concerns. Access is lived. However, prior to involvement in a particular setting, the portraitist, according to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, should have achieved a current understanding of the particular field of inquiry through a review of relevant literature. The portraitist should analyze her own background of experience for connections to the work at hand and she should identify guiding research questions. Such preparation allows the researcher to enter the site with a strong understanding of what she brings with her and what previous work associated with the intellectual themes of this study have uncovered. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis asserted that this foregrounding would allow researchers to understand their work in relation to others and help identify "relevant dimensions" of the study that would serve as an initiating scaffolding for the process. Basically, this stage of the plan is used to identify "areas of mattering" as "embodied in the expertise and lens of the portraitist" (p. 219).

Certainly one aspect of bringing to light these "areas of mattering" for my work was reading the relevant literature. It is important to know the history of a thing or an idea in order to achieve a deep sense of understanding about it. In academia the standard has been set that a comprehensive review of the literature on a focal topic is a necessary prerequisite for funding or committee support. Teacher researchers are developing their own habits of discovery and many have found that reviewing the literature is a part of study that comes much later in the process (Bisplinghoff & Allen, 1998). As a teacher

researcher who is also attempting to meet the requirements of a doctoral program, I have dual reasons to read the research early in my process. First, as a teacher confronted with a mandate that troubled me, I needed the reinforcement of a sense of history in order to understand what I was really up against. Second, as a doctoral student, I knew this kind of background knowledge would be anticipated by my committee members as I defended my reasons for pursuing such a focus. In past studies, I have been so interested in the work underway in my classroom that I wanted to watch the work unfold before me and not be influenced by the findings of others until I found more strength in my own situational understandings (Shockley, Michalove, & Allen, 1995). It is not so much when the reading is done, in my opinion, it is simply that it is done. I spent a lot of time during the first half of my first year at CCMS reading the literature on curriculum and planning and comparing what I was learning in books to what I was learning in practice.

The second area of the portraiture process according to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) was data collection. Once in the field the portraitist should begin by being open to first impressions—what's familiar here, what's different. At the end of each day, she tries to make sense of her data by shaping an "Impressionistic Record" of what she observed. This act of writing is a purposeful effort "to move thinking to a deeper level and connect field notes to conceptual ideas" (p. 189). She then confirms an action plan for the next day. Emergent themes begin to develop from these daily reviews. These become "instances of mattering" that are "embodied in the language of the subjects or the site" (p. 219).

The portraitist's job of identifying the emergent themes that structure interpretation is akin to the artist's efforts at grasping the essential traits that

define forms and thereby make an object visible. To make an object visible

means to grasp its essential traits. (p. 232)

The process of portraiture seemed to fit nicely with my notes-to-narratives plan. My notes and my narratives were my impressionistic records. My action plan would be based on what I observed and read to form my daily lesson plans. I did purposefully make the decision not to try and identify themes as I was collecting this data. I was very concerned that if I started to name themes while still immersed in the work of the study, I might be tempted to plan toward them. This was an obvious difference between portraiture and self-portraiture.

The third and final stage of portraiture Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) defined was the final writing. Here the portraitist weaves together the following elements of process: Context, voice, relationship, emergent themes, and aesthetic whole. It is meant to have a distinct beginning, middle, and end as in the literary frame of a story. It is not just competent; it is also creative. The goal is resonance with the reader and the standard is what the authors' term, "sufficiency." The portraitist aims to achieve "authenticity, capturing the essence and resonance of the actor's experience and perspective through the details of action and thought revealed in context" (p. 12). This was my goal in preparing a self-portrait of my planning work. Similar to novelist Anita Shreve's (1997) view, "I have been thinking this morning upon the subjects of storytelling and truth, and how it is with the utmost trust that we receive the tales of those who would give them to us" (p. 95). It seemed that the process and goals of portraiture in alignment with my own organic form would allow me to tell my tale in a way that would earn the trust of fellow teachers looking for ways to storytell their truths.

CHAPTER 3

THE REACH OF READING

<u>Texts as Lifelines</u>

Like moonlight stealing under a window shade an idea insinuated itself.

(Morrison, 1982)

It was like moonlight stealing under a window shade the way my reading for information slowly gave shape and depth to the shadows of possibility around me. Reaching for reading was an act of survival. It allowed me to "run the past [and the present] through a sieve of judgment in my head" (Alvarez, 1998, p. 293) and eventually allowed me to "hear some major changes just in the way [my] voice [stood] up for itself" (Alvarez, 1998, p. 219). There were, of course, episodes, too, similar to how Alvarez's Doug character analyzed Yo: "Doug has a feeling that these enthusiasms Yo picks up are momentary inspirations she eventually deletes from the rough draft of her life" (p. 272). The relationship I found between reading and planning became the glue that eventually sealed beliefs with practices—keeping me from being swept along by a school culture that privileged textbooks and objectives-driven instruction. My continued reading gave me a way to revive, rehearse, and revise enthusiasms, keeping my mind active. With reading I was unable to coast along on a dangerously comfortable path. This voice I now share also reminds me that when I again find myself in professional turmoil, I can reach for the lifelines of text. I can fly again under the wings of writers.

In this chapter, I share my appreciation for the reach of reading, for ideas and insights to spread across the path of my considerations like a buttery full moon melting its way into a room. By continuing to track the path of my moonlit moments with texts during this school year, I show how such experience gave needed definition to my planning decisions. I anticipate that my analysis of weekly reflective writings and daily lesson plans generated during this year-long study of planning to teach will highlight the reciprocal relationship between teaching and learning with texts as a language arts teacher. I argue that for a teacher to reach for a book is an action of raising the shade—a chance for more light to shine on the situation.

Attending to the Self of Teacher

My needs during my first year of teaching middle school seemed perpetual. My pocket journal, the ever-ready repository of daily jottings used to key my more elaborate weekly reflective narratives, was testament to the uncertainties that contributed to my languishing confidence and need for support. My first recordings in that journal were quotes from the novel I was involved with at the time, Julia Alvarez's (1997), iyo!. Alvarez's were lines to hold on to. I can see now that even in the beginning I tried to balance the chaos of my situation with a search for security through reading. I could hold tight to time and ideas set down in the pages of a book. I could not do that in real liff— actual events of promise and despair slipped through my mind and formed a mottle of experience that reading helped me sort and address. It was as Alvarez noted about her professor character's world, "These days, it seemed, the glue of language was coming undone; the world as [I] had known it was falling apart" (p. 82). My glue of experience teaching kindergarten, first grade, and third grade was not strong enough in this new

place where the weight of 70 minute segments instead of a whole school day, 50 students instead of 22 (as in my last elementary group), and the requirement of numerical grades (which I had successfully managed to avoid while teaching primary-aged students), were factors that consistently pulled at my beliefs and practices.

Arendt (1995) wrote, "it is in the nature of beginning that something new is started which cannot be expected from whatever may have happened before. This character of startling unexpectedness is inherent in all beginnings" (in Greene, 1995, p. 21). As a teacher in this setting, I was not expected to read broadly or think broadly. The Teacher Handbook outlined how I was supposed to dress and act. I was provided an additional notebook of state mandated objectives prealigned with the objectives of the literature series. There was an accompanying textbook for grammar and composition lessons keyed to the state's listed objectives. I was supplied with a set of approximately 20 trade books for supplemental reading for students who either wanted or needed to read beyond the selections in the literature book. Reading for students and teachers was a bounded offering. It was clear that lists of isolated objectives were the core of this process and that there was a one-way approach to meeting those objectives and that was through the approved text materials. There should have been no confusion. All the reading and thinking had been done for me. I, however, did not feel security from all these iconic offerings. Much to the contrary, I took a big bite out of that shiny red apple that so often accompanies the image of teacher. I named this apple Teacher Research and kept it polished by reading the research and reading for pleasure, giving me an expansion of experience so needed to keep a little light shining through.

The lens I use to study my planning is reading. There were, of course, other influences. I learned from my students, their families, and the community of education staff that populated our shared space at CCMS, but it is specifically the reading that I place before us for closer examination. For it is reading that is the novel aspect of developing my praxis.

A Question of Faith

It was quite obvious from the intensely managed environment that there was a lack of faith in teachers as decision makers. I'm sure some would be surprised to learn how little faith I had in what I was mandated to do. In fact, I'd almost completed the first month of school before I actually took the time to read through all the official materials. I'd been storing the boxes of teachers' editions and supplemental materials in the trunk of my car—an intentionally hidden curriculum. I tend to approach such documents as suspect. I think this is primarily because watching my own children go through similarly structured sequences of instruction like little soldiers—no, more like prisoners—trapped by well-meaning but restrictive methods of teaching was so difficult. Beginning in kindergarten, both my son and my daughter encountered a system that slowly took the joy out of learning and withered their will to read and write. I remember when my son's kindergarten teacher was so upset with him because he claimed he had read the first preprimer and he had not. As it turned out, he had successfully completed the accompanying workbook exercises despite the fact that he could not actually read the vocabulary-controlled basal reader. My daughter, on the other hand, entered kindergarten reading and was punished by having to go through the book and practice work twice because a kindergarten student was not allowed to read the books assigned to first grade

until they were actually in first grade. That was how real reading was represented to her during that initiating school experience. Her words of frustration continue to echo in my mind as I work with other people's children, "Mom, if kindergarten is this hard, I won't make it through college." Her tearful assessment of school as routines of endless drill and practice registered my resolve not to perpetuate such practices.

My daughter attended school, but she did not thrive there. She graduated from high school early and then went to college on academic scholarship. She will be a junior in the fall. She is a poet and a photographer who traveled independently in Europe this summer. She is an adventurer with words and images, as a young adult doing on her own what school days subtracted rather than added to her life. My son is a self-taught electrician. He reads to learn how to do things. He is a skilled woodworker and seems to be able to make corners fit and detail designs with sure movements. He told me in elementary school, "Mom, you don't have to actually read the stories, you just have to be able to answer the questions at the end." He continues to search texts for the "do this" parts whereas my daughter wants to feel each word. We all have professionally shaping stories, but for me, the events of my children's school years continue to guide my decision making. I knew from personal experience that children needed words for different reasons. Assigning age-mate children to particular grade levels does not undo this need and make them the package deal that was planned for in the books in my trunk.

Finally, a day came when I could not turn my back on these professional rations any longer. Quite by chance, while attempting to rid the front and back seats of my car of items obstructing the path of the vacuum at the carwash, I lifted the lid to the trunk surprised to see the boxes of materials Central City had entrusted to me to honor and

obey until the school year did us part. I reluctantly extracted the thickest volumes from the pile thinking there would be no better time to at least see what I was supposed to be doing. I confess now to being surprised to find anything of value within those voluminous pages. There before me in the writing textbook, <u>The Elements of Writing</u>, stood Donald Murray (1993)—a friendly photograph of a man I had leaned on in the past for writing wisdom. I read his words eagerly anticipating more helpful insights. I was not disappointed. I was particularly intrigued by his advice to help students identify promising lines in their writing that they could build on through multiple genres. Specifically, he suggested that students speed write about a particular episode and look for a word or line that "has a tension and mystery the writer needs to understand by writing" (p. T44). I immediately recalled prior writing group experiences with child and adult writers. I noted how I had grown as a practiced listener for the power of particular lines. I understood how confirming and supportive it was for a writer to hear from a listener/reader—"Your words are promising." Writers with hope in their hearts approach their word work with more confidence. Now, I found myself wondering what would happen if students were given the opportunity to "tell" about happenings in their lives before they started to write and the class learned over time to listen with me for those especially "good" lines to understand better by writing. His advice seemed contrary to the usual progression of assigned topic followed by assigned topic or lesson one followed by lesson two, etc. Embedded in Murray's approach was a respect for the author and the power of his and her words—things worth spending time with and worrying over.

Additionally, Murray's (1993) invitation to experiment with the generative powers of genre fit with the organization of the literature anthology and most

unexpectedly with my own budding search for routines. Miraculously, the first

question I asked myself at the start of the year, How can I get their attention?,

corresponded directly with my decision to reach past school culture into student culture

through music as an engaging genre. I tried to attract their attention and build a shared

base of understanding about literacy work and its rewards by connecting their interest in

popular music with the concept of genre as denoting particular categories of writing. The

first week of school the students shared favorite songs. We examined the lyrics for

qualities of language that we especially appreciated and sorted our choices according to

possible category designations that we might actually find in a music store. From the

common experience of looking for CD selections in music stores, we talked about

organizing writing according to similar kinds of categories; and the organizing theme of

genres was born for us.

Now I sensed we could nestle in among literate options that actually included the

assigned textbook. I was pleased to realize that our class work was not going to be so at

odds with the official curriculum. Now, rather than relegating the literature anthology to

nine months of seclusion in student lockers or the trunk of my car, I could see these texts

as supplementals, offering additional information regarding elements of the genres we

experienced in reading and writing. They could provide more options for student choice

in reading within each category since everyone would have a copy. It's just that these

excerpted selections would not be the main course for our literary diet—we could read

widely and develop our connoisseurship (Eisner, 1998). For me, as well, I would not

become professionally anorexic from too lean a diet of monitored tidbits of information

as supplied by the publishing industry, state, and district decision making. As Alvarez (1998) wrote in her collection of autobiographical essays,

> Had I had a family, I would no doubt have learned how to cook persuasive, tasty meals my children would eat. I would have worried about nutrition. I would have learned to knit the family together with food and talk. (p. 81)

> I so wanted to knit us together with literary glue that would stick.

Reading the district mandated materials was not as tasteless as I had anticipated. I achieved some renewed faith in what was at hand; yet if I had done no other reading during the year, this is where I would have ended up—just a step beyond where I started (thanks to Donald Murray). My plan now included looking for lines in our lives, using genre as a primary organizing strategy for connecting reading and writing, reading self-selected examples in the literature anthology and beyond, and learning how to integrate what we come to understand about the appetizing mix of ingredients of genre, life, and literacy.

Attending to the Selves of Students

Linking my sensitivity to the differences in my own biological children and the potential mismatch between the curriculum and the children I teach, I tried to find specific ways to remind myself that each of my fifty students is real and not imagined (as is the case for textbook authors). For several years, I began the school year with a letter to families inviting them to "Tell Me About Your Child" (Shockley, Michalove, Allen, 1995). Would this work in middle school? Would these students even share my invitation with their families? As in past years, all but two families replied to my request and again I was inspired by the emotion and insight family members were willing to share with me.

A sampling of these responses showing the range of student backgrounds and personalities follows:

Dominique

Dominique is a sweet and very sensitive girl. She is shy when first meeting someone, but is pretty friendly after that. She worries alot about what others think or may say about her. She lives with me (her mother), her little brother, older sister, niece and nephew. Dominique wears glasses to help her focus better when reading. (She supposed to wear them anyway.)

She had reading difficulties when she was in the 2nd and 3rd grade and may have problems at times.

She may not speak up when needing help.

She likes to play the flute and go to church.

Blake

Blake was diagnosed ADD in the 4th grade. We always knew he was smart, but he would get so confused and could never stay focused on anything. When he began the 5th grade he began taking Ritalin and has made all A's since. He is very shy, very sweet. Just in the last year, his self-esteem and self-confidence has improved alot. Blake can be a loner. Please encourage him to participate. He loves golf and fishing. He is a "collector." He collects everything, marbles, stamps, coins. He loves animals, especially bugs and lizards. He has an aquarium in his room and he always has something "alive" in it! Blake is very interesting, has a great memory, very smart; just very shy. Blake lives in his brother's shadow! Russell is an extrovert, plays football and basketball and is popular with the girls! But, they

learn from each other. Blake has a sister, Lucy. She is a 1st grader at Simpson

Street School. I am a receptionist at FSHS and George is an engineer at Smith's

Race Shop. He builds race cars. He also is on a race team. We spend alot of time

in the mountains. My parents own a home there and we go as often as possible.

We enjoy movies and music and traveling and we still have supper together every

night together even if it's 9:00.

A goal for Blake would be to read more on his own. I have always read to the

kids, but outloud. Blake wants me to always read outloud, when sometimes I feel

he should read to himself.

We enjoyed your letter and we appreciate you taking the time to get to know

Blake. If you ever need us, please don't hesitate to call us.

Robert

Robert is generally a well-behaved and polite twelve year old, he is very sensitive

and emotional person, he gets emotional if he does not understand his school

work but is overall a A,B student. He does have Sensory Integration Disorder,

which affects some of his motor skills, and has a difficult time with writing in

cursive writing. He is a good reader but has a hard time with the comprehension

part of reading.

Robert also has alot of allergies and asthma, and sometimes he needs to have a

extra restroom privilege because some of his medicine gives him diarrhea or

frequent urination. I know this is a interruption at class time. This should be in his

file, from his meeting in 5th grade for him to have Special Ed Math. The teachers

did mention that sometimes they only have a certain number of extra restroom visits.

Please send note or feel free to call or send note home with and questions or concerns.

<u>Anthony</u>

My grandson names is Anthony. He lives with his grandparents John and Cindy Mansford because his father died in 1993 and his mother left and went in Texas. Anthony likes is play Basketball, and the play station and all other games. He likes to take care of little kids and he is very good at this. Anthony has a real brother and sister, and one half brother. Anthony is very shy. We have all rights is Anthony, Danny, and Elizabeth. If you have any question about Anthony, Please feel free is call me <u>anytime.</u>

<u>Janet</u>

I just wanted to tell you a little about myself & family. I am separated going through divorce. I am the mother of 3 children. I work at Simpsonville Wal-Mart as assistant Mgr. I have worked with Wal-Mart 111/2 yrs. (9 yrs. Center City, 2 yrs. Athens, 6 mon. Simpsonville)

Janet is a 1st degree Black belt in Karate. She is on team at Spencer's gymnastics. She played basketball last yr. She is easy going and quite a happy child. Her favorite subject is social studies and her least favorite is math. She has a brother with severe medical problems (facing 3rd surgery) She is very loving & mothering because of helping to deal with his needs since she was 5 yrs. old. I think you will find her easy to work with & eager to learn. Her feelings are more

easily hurt if negative attention is directed at her. More results are achieved if discipline is private rather than called down.

Thank you for your interest in my child!!

Invariably, when I read these letters, I relearn lessons about working with other people's children that I assume are set, but, in fact, are in need of constant reawakening. I read these letters, these texts composed by the primary teachers of these children, the parents, and I remember how different the needs were for my two children as literacy learners and users. I read these letters and I see myself trying to let my children's teachers see them as unique characters, not simply as members of particular reading groups (At the time, that seemed to be the lowest common denominator of child identity in operation). I read these letters, and I see special situations. I read and recalled the work of Jonathan Kozol (1991, 1995). I listen again to his cautions about assuming that all children have an equal start. I reread these life texts of students and their families, and I recommit to finding ways for personality and life situation to be useful to my students as readers and writers.

Chasing a Dream

I walked the halls of school each morning dragging my too heavy canvas bag along behind me as I made my way to room 107. I wondered what the realities would be for the teachers and students behind each door. I longed to be part of a setting like the one Voss (1996) described in her dissertation study, Hidden Literacies:

Along with announcements about schedules, lunch prices, new procedures, committees, and union negotiations, the principal made an informal speech that first day about dreams and belief. I was impressed that he carried his talk off

effectively without seeming trite. He concluded by saying, "I'll stand behind

you 100 percent and everyone in this room will do the same. We don't all have to

be the same. We're all different and that's okay." Then he reiterated his major

point: "If you don't believe, it's not gonna happen."

Most of the faculty come to school early and stay late, most supervise student

teachers, and several lead workshops or teach courses at the college. In the staff

room, as in staff rooms everywhere, teachers complain that the wider community

expects them to solve all of society's problems, and they bemoan the lack of time

to accomplish all they're expected to do. But unlike some staff rooms I've visited,

conversations are apt to shift into idea-sharing sessions. Over lunch, someone

shares a new game she learned at a workshop while a classroom teacher and a

specialist share strategies for dealing with a special needs child. "Do you ever

hand back work and make kids do it over?" I heard a young teacher ask Beth

Worth. She continued, "I worry that I'll take away ownership, but..." Beth's

answer was unequivocal: "Sure, I sometimes make kids do things over." She said

it's important to set high expectations, and the two teachers talked some more.

Once I asked Beth about the positive atmosphere in the school, the faculty's

commitment. She said, "It's when teachers know they own their work. That's

what makes the difference. They own it." (p. 18)

Unfortunately, in my setting, it was quite clear that teachers did not have

professional authority. Time together was of just two sorts. One was the casual, once-a-

day brief snippet of insight gained during a 20-minute lunch. As we chewed and chatted,

we remained responsible for our students and learned to accommodate all the

interruptions in our thinking this ongoing awareness required. Teachers would also come and go in 5-minute staccato sequences as counted minutes further interrupted our desire for professional relationships. The other time for interchange was during monthly faculty meetings and grade level meetings where once again time was at a premium and was carefully monitored with the aid of preprinted, non-interactive agendas allowing for no departure points. This was not good for nurturing an intellectual community. It simply modeled the kinds of associations we seemed to also be promoting with our students— days planned like our faculty meetings with brief moments of casual conversation achieved during hallway discussions as students changed classes. There was one time when an administrator leading the meeting began by saying, "If ya'll don't have anything to say, we can be out of here by 3:00."

Despite yearning for a more relational environment, I can say there were days when all I really wanted was time alone. I needed time to think, to ponder possibilities. I saw that space as necessary for refueling. I did long for study groups with other teachers, but it was just not going to happen this year in this school. The knowledge that there were places where this was not the case as Voss 1996) confirmed, gave me hope that one day I could merge the two—time alone and time with professional others who also respected and learned from each others work. Even if meaningful gatherings had been occurring in my place, I would still need time and space without interruption to gather my thoughts and materials for next moves, to be reflective and feel prepared. Without this time alone, I would be taking more and more of my work day into my home life. That did not seem fair to my family. Family time and professional time are hard things to guard. Again, I was wary, too, of being overly influenced by the culture of this school community before

I had a chance to judge for myself how my students would respond to alternative options. I'm beginning to wonder if this reluctance to appreciate a teacher's need to work independently is another manifestation of the fear of difference in many education circles. I mean if we actually have time to develop firm philosophies, we could be originals instead of mass-produced replicas. Teachers and students are traditionally issued like materials in each grade level and are expected to perform in a like manner in relation to that material.

Time with your own thoughts is particularly important during a year of change. A principal friend of mine from another county told me that the reason she had stayed in her current position for so long was because she didn't have another first year in her. She knew what I was going through. Just as I was attempting to establish routines, someone would come along and demand something new of me. I was informed early in the year that I was to use a computer assisted learning program for vocabulary development. I was required to attend a training session during my planning time. It was disturbing to see my time slipping away for such an activity, but it was even more disturbing to think of my students having to do these workbook exercises on computer when they could be reading real books and writing for authentic purposes. I knew from experience (and the research) there was no better substitute for building vocabulary than reading as an engaged reader and using a thesaurus as a writer. The vocabulary words in the "expensive"computer program were very difficult. The only context for each word was a single sentence. The expectation was that vocabulary scores would improve on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills when it was administered in the spring. A few days later, there was another training session for another computer assisted learning program that essentially transformed the

grammar exercises in the textbook to grammar exercises on a computer screen. It just seemed more and more like I was in an alien world where I spoke a different language, and the mortar that was holding it together was slowly and consistently being chipped away. There was no discussion in these meetings about whether this information was useful or not—just demands to find time to incorporate computer lab time for these exercises in our schedules. In fact, on September 17th I wrote in my notes, "I wish people would just leave me alone and let me work with kids, moving from one day to the next, making decisions that seem to match what students are showing me they need."

I searched my shelves at home for help. I was clearly expected to show specific attention to vocabulary and grammar. To fit in with my peers in this community, I needed to find a way to honor my employers' current vision of teachers teaching and students learning by explicitly addressing vocabulary and grammar. I simply knew I could not do it exactly their way. I found a little book titled In a Word (McNamara, 1998). In this book, vocabulary was approached from the standpoint of word families, giving students insight into word origins and patterns of meaning they could build on instead of a word-by-word approach. I used this text as a resource for getting our brains working together in class toward a deeper appreciation for the magic of words. We built charts of word families and used prefixes and suffixes to help us generate our lists. This was a group challenge rather than an individual burden. Giving these students ways to move forward at a geometric rather than arithmetic rate was much more my focus for vocabulary study than managing a computer program.

I also rediscovered Strunk and White's (1959) The Elements of Style. It is widely accepted that this little volume wraps up issues of grammar and spreads them out for

authentic use by writers. I thought to myself, "Now, which would seem more doable to my students, the 85 pages of Strunk and White or the 791 pages of their writing textbook?" I wrote to the principal:

September 16

Dear Ms. Smith,

I am writing to request your approval for seeking outside funding sources for the purchase of class sets of Strunk and White's (1959) The Elements of Style. Each student will use their copy of this reference book to edit their writing. Students will also be participating in a class project to rewrite this resource text in sixth grade language. I feel confident that regular opportunities to use such a well-respected text in such a meaningful manner will greatly benefit the literacy development of these students.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal. I will look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Betty Shockley Bisplinghoff

I received a quick reply that consisted of penciled comments in the margin of my original letter that read: "Go for it. I highly support this resource. I may have a copy to contribute. Approved." Soon I had fifty books for students to use. Use of these books became part of our homework plan whereby students attempted to rewrite one rule of usage for their classmates and give at least one example of the rule in a sentence.

The principal's ready reply and support were counter to the tales told of her lack of respect for teachers, yet here I was encountering a requirement, searching for more

meaningful alternatives through reading, and reforming my beliefs in the process. Facing a barrier, I was able to articulate an alternative path that actually resulted in the administration clearing my way—just my way, however. Similar options for others were never offered.

A Language of Doubt

Thankfully I had discovered some security in the district provided materials. Through Donald Murray (1993) specifically, I could consider new ways to support students as individual writers. Still, what seemed like the constant bombardment and negotiating of additional requirements continued to wear me down. Some of these requirements were administratively introduced, others, I understand, came from my own fumblings to find my way through people and materials. In the beginning, my reflective writings displayed many words of worry that fed a language of doubt:

I am still nervous because I see myself doing things and saying things in front of the students that don't really match my beliefs.

I am truly burdened by the process of grade collecting and so much time spent learning a specific computer assisted grading program.

I'm having some guilt feelings about working through things as a process.

It took the first month for me to begin to get my bearings and to feel stable enough to devote time to writing through the issues of planning. I kept written records in my pocket journal of what I felt were pivotal moments in my thinking and development. I tried to comply with the S (subject), T (topic), O (objectives), P (procedures) E (evaluation) process. I wasn't able to do this in the purest form, however. By the second day of school, I felt I had to include a self-written primary goal because the objectives

listed in the state sanctioned Quality Core Curriculum (QCC) simply isolated

elements of what I hoped we were doing together, but they did not capture the "big idea."

I needed to establish for myself the rationale for the choices I was making to get us

started. The <u>O</u> part (Objectives) of my plan looked like this:

> My Goals: To increase motivation for language learning by using texts that are
>
> engaging for students. To establish the concept of genre by classifying different
>
> kinds of music. To appreciate the power of language to describe emotions and
>
> experiences.
>
> LA. 6.27 Recognizes writer's purpose
>
> LA 6.28 Recognizes cultures and values represented in language
>
> LA 6.29 Recognizes that language reflects human experiences
>
> LA 6.31 Identifies and chooses literature according to personal interests
>
> LA 6.32 Reads for a variety of purposes to obtain meaning from different kinds
>
> of materials
>
> LA 6.36 Expands reading vocabulary

The STOPE model was manageable as an outline, despite the inordinate amount

of time it took to identify and write all the objectives that might be part of a day.

Certainly, it was never intended that teachers try to really <u>think</u> about the broad

implications of their planning decisions regarding the potential for student learning in this

way. Recording objectives in my setting meant to write <u>the</u> objective the class would be

attempting to master that day. I guess that's what is so troubling to me. I kept thinking, if

I can create a learning community in which students are truly engaged by reading and

writing then we would be addressing all (certainly most) of those objectives every day quite naturally.

The real problem with the STOPE way of planning is that it does affect my thinking about how students should be involved in language learning. If I write <u>TSWBAT</u> (The student will be able to), I start to believe that I or the students have failed if <u>T</u>he <u>S</u>tudent <u>I</u>s <u>Not Able To</u>. I thought again about Jamie and Carly, my children, in such a situation, Can I see through these lists of objectives so Blake and the rest can participate equally? I don't expect certain percentages of mastery. In fact, I can't even think that way. I understand from experience as a parent and a long-time teacher that once we begin we are all on our way, in our own ways. It is not really possible to manage what any one person knows**.** Basically, no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't look out at my students and look down at a STOPE plan and see a resemblance to real days with real children.

Another school-wide requirement was that objectives for each day be written on the board so that students could see what the intentions were behind actions. I'm sure they were also required as another administrative management strategy and for observation by visitors. This is a display place. We purposefully call the eye to the established order. Remember, the well-planned teacher also has her planbook at her desk for review. A written morning report notice was attached to our door each morning so teachers can be up-to-date on requirements, deadlines, and announcements.

My written reflections one month into the school year displayed mounting concerns:

> Our reading time went well today. I was disturbed, however, that I had to take up
>
> class time to tell students about homework and a test tomorrow. I have been truly

burdened by the process of grade collecting. Using this computer-assisted grading program takes so much time, and I find myself grading things that I don't think need to be graded just so I can show a grade for progress reports that go out Tuesday. Trying to teach a process of thinking and doing (reading like a writer and writing like a reader) seems threatened by a reporting system that is based on mastery. I'm not sure what to do about this. We also had a PTO meeting last night. I didn't get home until 8:30. There always seems to be so much to do. Tomorrow I have to give some kind of test so I can have a reading grade. I'm purposefully making it very open-ended so hopefully everyone will do well. That will be the first part of segments 1 and 2. The second half of our time in the morning segments will be devoted to having our first Author's Chair experience. When I asked the students today if they had ever done such a thing before, a few (only 3 or 4 in each group) said they had done it episodically in elementary school, "usually when they finished some big project" according to Susan. I'm looking forward to finally getting to that point with these students. It is taking so long to develop routines. 70 minute segments go by so quickly. I was impressed with some of their writing when I read through the autobiography chapters last night. I feel good about my decision to share The House on Mango Street with the students. One student used fingernails to describe the people in her family like Sandra Cisneros did in her chapter, "Hair." I thought that was a really great borrowing. What time do I have left if on Wednesdays we check out books and read and on Thursday mornings we do Author Chair, and every afternoon we have writing workshop in the computer lab? That means Tuesday morning is the only

time to offer new information. Is that enough? I'm supposed to be teaching analogies and vocabulary every day, and using the literature book. There's a writing textbook too. I also wonder if it will be possible to scan the photographs the students have been taking to include in their autobiographies—another thing to learn about . . .

Ms. Smith had yet to come by to see if things were going well for me as a new staff member. I suppose I could interpret this to mean she had a high level of confidence in my ability. She made a proclamation, however, that if she saw anything displayed in the hallways with misspelled words she would take them down. My teammate said she had seen her take things off bulletin boards and actually throw them in the trash. I promptly relocated the student-authored letters of introduction that I was putting up in the hallway, just in case. I decided not to put anything else up in the halls. She also requires that teacher letters sent home to families be approved by her with at least two days notice before it needs to go out. I have just not done this. I send what I want to when I want to. There are so many comments of concern. Teachers who have worked here for some time say things like: "Ms. Smith will get after me if I . . ." "She puts notes of noncompliance in your personnel file if you are not where you're supposed to be in the curriculum or if you are not doing things according to directives." This is very disconcerting for me. We have all been assigned an evaluator this year. I was assigned Ms. Smith, the principal. Since I am new to the system, I must have three formal evaluations this year even though I am a veteran teacher.

Routine Decisions

Constantly in the process of interrogating mandates, my see-sawing confidence alternately bounced on the ground of impending peril, then soared for a time by reading. Reading about standards as conceived by the major organizations of my discipline gave me a little more confidence; however, I asked, "What will happen to me if I don't do that?" It was part of a process of a shifting of control—an admittedly slow process—but present and significant nonetheless. My fiction reading also encouraged me to think beyond the ordinary and at-hand.

The decision to focus on photoautobiographies as our first quarter genre for reading and writing was the result of my own reading to put down roots, and to allow my self-questioning and desire for personal meaning making to also make sense for my students. If this self-work was so valuable to me, perhaps it would also be significant for my students. As mentioned, the literature anthology (Kinneavy & Warriner, 1993) was organized by genre. "Collection Two" was a focus on elements of biography and autobiography as forms of personal history writing. Here was an opportunity for me to unite my need for attention to the personal with the tradition of using a textbook. A selection from Lincoln: A Photo-biography led our forays into autobiographical writing and provided the idea to include photographs in our work.

My fiction connections also inspired our devotion to the tasks of representing ourselves through text and photography. Fitch's (1999) novel, White Oleander (mentioned earlier), helped support my recognition and use of the varied translation of family that occurred behind each door as the photoautobiographies gave our class a way to look beyond the classroom and reenter our homes. We encouraged ourselves by

walking down the streets of our neighborhoods on the arms of several authorial escorts. Authors I had befriended as models for my own writing and thinking were introduced to my students. Sandra Cisneros (1984) was an especially good writerly neighbor. We borrowed from her often. Her autobiographical writing in the form of <u>The House on Mango Street</u> gave us the courage to knock on the doors of our own living and see what we could find there. Her book with its short chapters made the task seem doable for these young writers. I was pleasantly surprised by the quality of student writing when such an accessible guide was made available. In her first paragraph, Cisneros wrote,

> The House on Mango Street
>
> We didn't always live on Mango Street. Before that we lived on Loomis on the third floor, and before that we lived on Keeler. Before Keeler it was Paulina, and before that I can't remember. But what I remember most is moving a lot. Each time it seemed there'd be one more or us. By the time we got to Mango Street we were six—Mama, Papa, Carlos, Kike, my sister Nenny and me. (p. 3)

This opening chapter was not even three pages long. After I read this chapter aloud to my students, many worked on similar openings to their own home-based stories (edited). Stephanie wrote:

> The House on Johnson Road
>
> I haven't always lived on Johnson Road. I used to live on Dave Circle. I lived on Dave Circle for two years, then I moved to Johnson Road, and have been living there for nine and a half years.
>
> My house is grayish-blue with dark blue shutters and white trim. My house is a rectangle. The chimney looks like a hat sticking up, and the windows are like the

eyes, and the porch is the mouth. My old house was small and white with green shutters. It was like a little box on a dirt road.

John wrote:

The House on Smith and River Street

My house was built by my great, great, great grandfather. It is one of the oldest homes in Central City. My house was actually built during the time of slavery. Also, my house has been through many wars, such as World War 1, World War 2, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. It has stayed in my family the whole time. Before we lived in this house, which is located in downtown Central City, we lived on Sandy Street, also in downtown Central City. My favorite part about this house is the wooden floors.

And Benson showed us he was writing from a place he knew. I could think of myself as a passenger in his go cart,

The House in the Wood

Our house is about a year old. It's the house my mom and dad always wanted. We always wanted a bigger house so one day we decided we weren't going to live in the middle of everything in town any longer. I've always wanted chickens. At this time we had one cat, and two dogs. We started building. Before we even knew it, we had moved in.

Our new house is long and narrow like a toothpick. The tin roof shines in the sun and the moonlight. The wooden parts of the house are painted a deep gray-green color. There is a front porch and an island filled with flowers. The porch rails are

filled with chickens at night. They do their job well. They wake us up at the crack of dawn like an alarm. My real alarm clock doesn't even have time to go off!

I like living on the farm because of all the adventures I can get into—like waking up early and going fishing or just walking through the woods. I love riding my go cart through the wet, cold mud after it's rained. It feels like I'm riding through a swamp—fighting briars as I run through the woods with not a worry in mind. Looking at deer bounce through the fields on a sunny day with their cotton-ball tails waving behind them. Watching rabbits scatter when you ride by. Seeing squirrels disappear up trees like streaks of lightening.

Last summer we camped out with our uncle and mom several nights. I have a tree out deep in our woods where I go and watch deer in the evenings. The thing about living out in the woods is no one else is there to watch every step you take.

Each student now was in the process of escorting me and their classmates into their lives by stepping over their thresholds as writers. Though the openings were similar in form, they were unique and meaningful when you entered in.

Cisneros (1984) also helped us meet the people in our families as she introduced her family members in her second chapter by the kinds of hair they had. This is one of my all-time favorite pieces of writing. I shared with my students how her use of simile to enhance an ordinary experience was a skill I found fascinating and one I tried to work on in my own writing. My passion for this style was evident in my voice as I read to them. I knew they could tell the deep appreciation I had for this writer. I was very pleased and surprised by the rather rapid applications the students were able to make from this one

reading. As was our routine, we began writing workshop with text models intended to help us build an ever-expanding base of options as writers. There was no requirement to write like Cisneros, but many seemed to want to try out the option. Many chose to enter their next autobiography chapters by writing in a similar fashion about the people they loved. Cisneros wrote:

> Hairs
>
> Everybody in our family has different hair. My Papa's hair is like a broom, all up in the air. And me, my hair is lazy. It never obeys barrettes or bands. Carlos' hair is thick and straight. He doesn't need to comb it. Nenny's hair is slippery—slides out of your hand. And Kiki, who is the youngest, has hair like fur.
>
> But my mother's hair, my mother's hair, like little rosettes, like little candy circles all curly and pretty because she pinned it in pincurls all day, sweet to put your nose into when she is holding you, holding you and you feel safe, is the warm smell of bread before you bake it, is the smell when she makes room for you on her side of the bed still warm with her skin, and you sleep near her, the rain outside falling and Papa snoring. The snoring, the rain, and Mama's hair that smells like bread.

Students' personal use of this type of modeling included:

> Eyes
>
> By Allyssa
>
> My mom's eyes are blue. Her eyes are as blue as the sky on a crisp fall morning. My dad's eyes are brown like a tree trunk. My eyes are bluer than a blue jay wafting through the air. My brother's eyes are a deep brown, almost pitch black

like a Halloween cat. My cat's eyes are emerald green, like newborn grass.

My dog's eyes are browner than brown itself.

Eyes

By Lindsey

Everyone in my family has different colored eyes. My mom's eyes are brown like a thrasher flying through the pale moonlight during the evening. My sister Tina's eyes are hazel. When I see them, I think of fragile leaves that descend in the fall. Daniel is my step-dad. His eyes are green like the crisp grass after the dew hits it. My eyes are a velvety warm winter-sweet color. There is beauty in our eyes.

Hands

By Tyler

The hands in my family are very different. My mom's hands are frail like a silk blanket. They are also caring, loving, and nourishing. They're perfect for hugging me when I am hurt or just feeling down.

My dad's hands are tough and strong from working on tractors on hot summer days. They are also gentle when he is hugging me or just giving me a pat on the back.

My sister Nancy has hands that are skilled at feeding and dressing her young daughter. They are also soft and agile for computer work.

My other sister Lee has hands that are soft and moist from the lotion she is always putting on them. They are also gentle and strong because they help care for older people in the nursing home and the people that are home-health patients.

My brother Wayne has hands that are like my dad's hands. They are rough from working on farm equipment and from holding wires and putting things together at his job.

My hands are strong from playing sports and from putting the saddle on my horse. They are also kind when holding a child and helping her learn to do things. They can be mean when a horse is acting very badly. But they are also very fine like the leather on my boots.

When we all hold hands we are like a brick wall.

Skin

By Thomas

Skin can be smooth, rough like sandpaper, and cold like the North Wind, even warm like the dirt in the summer. My skin is pale and now and then becoming bumpy. My dad's skin looks like he's been working hard with all the wrinkles and lines. His skin is dark brown because he's part Indian. My mother's skin is always warm around you. When I come home from school, I like to tell people about my day and get all the negative stuff out of my system. That's where my mom comes in, since her skin is so warm it relaxes me until her closeness helps me stop worrying about the bad things that happened throughout the day. I think skin is a good thing to remember.

Breathing

By Kendall

When I was young, I spent the night with my grandparents. I used sleep with

my grandmother and we always woke up at five in the morning. I would still be

sleepy so I would hop into bed with my grandfather. I cuddled up next to him and

always fell back asleep.

When I finally woke up to the smell of breakfast, I could feel his warm breath

hitting my face like the sun on a July evening. It made me feel safe and secure.

I still spend the night with them almost every other weekend, but now when my

grandmother gets up, I stay up and help cook. I still feel safe just when I'm

around them.

Since we were so involved in writing autobiographies, I searched for more

support for the possibilities within the genre. During one of my Barnes and Noble

excursions, I came across Jerry Spinelli's (1998) Knots in My Yo-yo String: The

Autobiography of a Kid—Perfect! Spinelli, or rather his character, Maniac Magee, was a

long-time fiction friend, one I had introduced to other groups of students. I trusted his

voice and was not disappointed. His new work could be our class read-aloud selection

giving us a shared experience with how a writer can find things to write about from the

real events of life. In fact, Spinelli made consistent use of anecdote to organize his

chapters. Each chapter was an elaboration of a particular childhood event. We discussed

his process in class and tried to move along in our writings by picking out memorable

anecdotes from our childhood and crafting them into chapter stories. I was learning that

reading for me and for my students could grant us entry points to new ways of thinking

and doing. It was so helpful to have another author to stand beside us while we tried to

stand up for our selves in writing. The following is an anecdote Lonnie developed that

describes a familiar part of childhood—the backyard battlefield scene that draws us all to remember when:

The Attack

Ow! Jeez! Man! !*$&!@! !#%$^*! #@%$^*! These were the sounds of the battlefield. Suddenly, Whack! I fell, my leg hurt. I was hit! I stood back up, eager to get revenge for my leg, Cody was covering me. "Whoa," I dove behind a tree as a huge chestnut flew through the space my face had just occupied a second earlier. Movement, a target! I had seen Sam's head bob up, my chestnut was in hand instantly. Sam came up again, ready to fire. I threw my chestnut, Wham! I hit the tree. I took a dive, desperate to get more chestnuts before my enemy reorganized for another attack. I then saw Randy behind the fence. He was sneaking up on them! I grabbed a handful of chestnuts and threw them all at once. Wham! Wham! Whap! Bang! Boom! I saw Sam again, I chucked my chestnut, Bop! I got Sam in the shin! He went down hard. Randy came up, chestnuts ready, then all heck broke loose. Wham! Wham! Wham! Hit again and again and again. I crawled back to my battle station, stocked up with ammo. I retreated to get more chestnuts. When I returned my ammo was gone! Wham! Ow! I was hit in the back, it was a trap! No way out! None but surrender, the sensible way, but not I wasn't in a sensible mood. Throwing while I ran, I dove over to the other side of the field. Sam was lying on the ground, I walked over to him and, Pow! a chestnut in the stomach! I crawled back to the other side and propped up against the tree. Bam—Bam- Bam! Chestnuts hit my tree. I grabbed a rock and cut loose. Boom!!!

The rock hit Simpson in the eye. "OW! ! !@@$%@&" We were in real trouble now.

Sandy wrote a similar recollection titled "Clay War" in which each team created a flag and a storehouse of mud balls. The object of the war was to capture another team's flag using your arsenal of clay as weapons. By the time they were done, Sandy said they looked like "swamp monsters" covered with all the mud.

I especially enjoyed reading Jessie's anecdote about the struggle for "The Front Seat." I could hear my own children at that age racing to the car for the battle royal. Soon my son developed a strategy whereby his first words to the family on the morning of a car trip would be "co-pilot," in his mind giving him the right to the front seat since he had called it first. We eventually had to develop a calendar that recorded who had the next turn as "co-pilot." Jessie's version was:

"Hey, Susie, I'll race you to the front seat!" My sister and I are always racing to the front seat of the car.

"I get front seat."

"No, I do."

"No, I do." Slam!

"Let me in. No." Click!

"Mom, she locked all the doors! Mom, she will not let me in the car!"

"Susie, let your brother in the car."

"Ok, but he's not getting in the front seat."

I get in the back. My sister is mad. Toys are flying. Seats are moving and arms are flinging. My sister hits me. I hit her back. She throws a toy at me and I throw it back. It hits her in the arm. She screams and yells.

"Mom!"

She runs in the house. I get in the front seat. She comes back out the door. I lock the doors. She beats on the windows and she screams out, "Mom, he locked me out of the car!"

Seeing the benefits of approachable models in terms of writing styles and life-based topics, I reread some of the books in my home library written by writers about writing. Rereading Anne Lamont (1994) I got the vote of encouragement that I needed to hold onto regarding the benefits of this kind of modeling, "It helped me to see that it is natural to take on someone else's style, that it's a prop that you use for a while until you have to give it back. And it just might take you to the thing that is not on loan, the thing that is real and true: You own voice" (p. 195).

Murray's (1993) words encountered in my teacher's edition of the literature anthology continued to whisper the wisdom that guided me to encourage these students to re-view their writing for ideas and wonderful lines that might transition their writing into new genres. We decided that since many of the autobiographies included chapters about pets, maybe we could use these as animal characters for shaping picture books. Picture books also could encompass a broad range of storytelling formats leading us to sample from the genres of folklore, myth, etc. from our literature book and the shelves of bookstores and libraries. In this way, Murray showed us how to borrow from our own selves to explore beyond our neighborhoods and enter new worlds of writing. It was my

reading life, not my induction into this school culture, that guided, sustained,

informed, and comforted me as a teacher planning for student learning.

<u>Accountability in Planning</u>

In this school, it was clear that teacher lesson plans were a stage in the

progression of teacher accountability for all things great and small, or in other words,

from daily objectives to state testing. While I was straining to understand both how this

had come to be and my role in the perpetuation or interruption of this process, I read

about the history of curriculum development, as mentioned earlier. I was perplexed by

what I concluded to be an unsettled field compared to the precision and absolute faith so

many seemed to have placed in this assembly-line system of attention to minutia. No one

ever spoke specifically in my school about the origins of our preoccupation with the

details of learning to the exclusion of deep experience. Every minute I could squeeze out

of my harried effort to do "right" here, I tried to understand how I could find myself in

such a precariously prescribed position. As I read and discovered the multiplicity of

views related to philosophically endorsed approaches to curriculum construction, I

experimented with my own planning decisions. It was a complicated affair (I choose this

word purposefully, because at times I felt adulterous in my pursuit of a better match

between my beliefs and a planning process).

From the first day of school, my own unsettled approaches to planning were

obvious. I experimented with many types of plans. First, I tried to dutifully represent my

decision making according to the STOPE format. To this mandated guide, I found that I

needed to also include specific times for each part of the process. I think of this version of

planning as my "strictly" STOPE plan.

My second modification came when I felt compelled to consider the big idea behind all those details of experience listed in the sequence of objectives. As I explained, I had to find a way to articulate for myself what was foundational about the list I had identified. For August 18th, my overriding concerns, as added to my plan for the day were: "To increase motivation for language learning by using texts that are engaging for students. To establish the concept of genre by classifying different kinds of music. To appreciate the power of language to describe emotions and experiences." These invigorating concepts were not included in the state QCC objectives. This form of planning was still similar to my strict version in its adherence to the STOPE framework, I just added to it. I think of this version as a strictly enhanced STOPE.

Next, I was bold and totally abandoned the required framework. Instead, I divided the planning page into three sections: The top half of the page was devoted to events to be arranged for the morning segments. The bottom half was for the afternoon segments. The margin on the right side of the page was for what I termed "Critical Influences." Here I could write notes to myself about specific materials needed, student issues, and meetings scheduled for the day. There were no listed objectives. I used this space to envision experiences I wanted the students and me to have together. Notably, in the morning segment during day 4 with the students, I was planning to share song writer/singer Judy Collins's (1989) picture book, My Father, based on her lyrics of the same title. I played an audiotape of Collins singing the book. It was another attempt to engage students in the work and potential of music as a literate experience. That morning we also wrote reflectively about our first days of middle school, hoping to capture these still fresh fears and fantasies for use at the end of the year when we would retrieve them

for letters of welcome to the next crop of new middle schoolers. That afternoon we devoted time for students to continue working their way toward completion of their letters of introduction and accompanying artistic profiles. This style of planning was more like prior years of planning in my other schools when I was expected to show what I considered to be appropriate next steps for student learning without the burden of a mandated format. Still, this type of planning fell short of my revised professional goal to address planning in a way that would provide a reviewable record for me of my decision making about teaching and learning and be accountable in the sense that I could genuinely track my thinking and doing. Just jotting down a progression of events did not help me in this venture. I also felt very nervous about deviating in such a blasphemous way from what I was told to do. I abandoned this experimental form after only one attempt. Visually, however, the new arrangement did better reflect the organization of my teaching life with two distinct groups of students, a morning and afternoon time with each, and the recognition that varying issues would also come into play.

The next day I wrote a plan that followed the simple outline of "Goals" and "Procedures." I then retreated back to my safety zone of "strictly enhanced " STOPE planning thinking if I couldn't yet find a healthy substitute, I should continue to play the game according to the rules just for safety's sake.

September 13th I tried writing narrative lesson plans. Certainly this style of planning would provide that access to thinking behind actions that I wanted to have available. It was a therapeutic process (writing almost always is in some way or another), but it offered little support when it came time to use the plan in the classroom. I couldn't just glance over at my planbook and remember potential next steps.

My next planning arrangement displayed how breaking the language barrier of the tight and tedious STOPE format could offer some new possibilities:

Daily Business for morning segments

Students will have an opportunity to review their portfolios and their current grades.

Students will be informed that there will be a midquarter test on Thursday.

Personal Story

I will share my personal story about the flower ladies in Chapel Hill and show my poster.

Project

Students will be given the opportunity to make paper flowers so they might experience what it is like in order to build a connection with the poem of the day.

Shared Reading

The students will read silently the poem, "Petals" by Pat Mora (page 123 in their literature book).

Mini-Lesson

I will point out the importance of the literary element—imagery—for strong writing. I will read aloud to the students "Meet the Writer" as a way to highlight the importance of this literary technique and to help students build a connection with the author.

Constructing Understandings

I will ask the students to read the poem again with this information in mind and to prepare themselves for the discussion: Are anecdote and imagery the same thing?

We will also discuss how such skills could be used to make their photo autobiographies more interesting. Each student will be asked to make a mental plan for use during the afternoon writing workshop.

Expanding the Concepts

I will introduce Jewel's book of poetry and share some examples on the overhead projector.

Daily Business for afternoon segments

Students will be informed that when they finish a chapter they should print that chapter and revise/edit for homework.

Read Aloud

I will continue reading from Jerry Spinelli's autobiography, Knots in My Yo-Yo String: An autobiography of a kid, I have chosen this book to read as an example of how to tell a life story because the author is one that we will have the opportunity to read with a class set of Maniac Magee. Also, his chapters are short and seem doable in style and form by the students. It seems to be a good model for now, and it will give us a strong foundation for later work with this author.

Writing Workshop

The students will return to their autobiographical writing in the computer lab. I will conference with students and look for examples of strong imagery to bring into Thursday's discussion by conducting our first author's chair time. Students who have completed one or more chapters will be asked to print two copies—one for me to keep and one for them to take home and revise/edit.

This new approach acknowledged some key aspects of practice that I could now name. The "Daily Business" portion of the plan was turning up as a necessary modification. My past teaching life had been all about building relationships by sharing stories of life, addressing particular skills, procedural needs, and strategies through mini-lessons and reading workshop, each interconnected through shared reading. What had worked so well before for me kept slipping away in this new place of tight controls and strictly managed care.

Once again I reverted to the standard and then tried a modification that involved a similar outline of: Subject, Topic, Goals, and Process as in the September 17th plan. My thinking at this time was that at least I could include the innocuous aspects of the STOPE format such as Subject and Topic so my plan would contain some semblance of the official word; but maybe it is worse to let on that you know what is expected, and you're choosing to ignore it. That was basically all this framing would accent.

Subject: Language Arts

Topic: Reading - Assessment

Goals: To understand how students are thinking about their reading and their writing so far this quarter.

Process: The students will take a reflective test asking them to consider the work of the writers we have been reading this quarter and asking them to apply that thinking to their own writing work.

The students will also take turns sharing with the class their writing. Students will sit in our Author's Chair and read to the class sections of their autobiographical writing. Students will then receive feedback from their peers about things that

seemed to work well in their writing and areas that they might consider

improving.

Segments 3 and 4:

Subject: Language Arts

Topic: Writing - Autobiographies

Goals: The students will develop a range of styles for autobiographical writing.

The students will continue writing their autobiographies using word processing in

the computer lab.

Process: I will read aloud the next chapter in Jerry Spinelli's autobiography as an

example of good writing.

Students will write and I will conference with individual students about their

writing.

I was all over the place trying to craft a truly representative design of process. I

had taken the risk to write some experimental lesson plans that challenged the required

STOPE behaviorist format, holding my breath each time that this would not be the day

Ms. Smith came to evaluate me. I still was determined to make a plan that looked more

like process. It was a haunting dilemma. In other school settings I used to write plans that

were something like this:

Mini-lesson:

Shared Reading or writing:

Independent Reading or writing:

Conferences:

However, these lessons were based on the dependability of day-to-day togetherness. This year I only met with my students in the middle of the week—two times on Tuesdays—once on Wednesday afternoons- and two times on Thursdays. I was also required to isolate vocabulary and analogies as aspects of instruction. This meant the students needed to be inspired and or required to read and write independently for the five days in between class meetings (Thursday evening to Monday night). As reflected in my journal, I continued to worry: "I must develop routines that meet requirements and model and motivate literacy practices that are generative for my students."

Along the way to this goal, I also engaged in a type of planning I termed the grocery-list variety. Embedded in my weekly reflective writings were reminder lists inserted as a form of self-acknowledgement that slowly but surely I was making headway. These lists kept me mindful of what I was asking of myself and my students. I include a couple of examples to show how planning was not confined to the official outline and that prior rehearsals were part of the process for me as well. I needed to repeatedly reaffirm for myself that I was actually building something here. Mid-September my listings were:

How things look now:

Tuesday Mornings:

Playing with words through vocabulary and analogies while looking for patterns to build on.

Pointing out features of grammar in The Elements of Style (Strunk & White, 1979) that will assist us as editors of our own writing.

Using the literature book as models of important elements of literature

Tuesday Afternoons:

Writing Workshop

Read aloud an example of good writing that is connected to student writing genres

Mini-lesson connecting read aloud with goals of students as writers

Independent writing in the computer lab

Conference with students

Wednesday Afternoons:

Reading Workshop

Mini-Lesson

Independent Reading

Conference with students

Thursday Mornings:

Author's Chair Day

Plus reflective review of personal writings

Thursday Afternoons

(same as Tuesday afternoons)

Students have reading logs for recording their independent reading over the weekend and writer's notebooks for keeping ideas for writing and developing drafts of writing to use in writing workshop times.

On September 22nd I enlisted a similar recheck on my thinking:

Now, what does this mean for my actual next plan for establishing routines? I re-considered again by writing my way into decision making:

For the first twenty minutes on Tuesdays, we could review analogies and vocabulary. The next fifty minutes could be used for discussion groups and response options to shared reading. This would serve as a time to create dialogues about the reading that could be accomplished during the days I'm not with them. Is that too much to ask of a 6th grader?

On Tuesday afternoons, we could use all our time for writing in the computer lab. Wednesday could be our day for me to do book talks and for students to make new reading choices.

Thursday mornings would be our time to focus on author's chair giving students an opportunity to present their work to a class audience for feedback.

Thursday afternoon we could return to the computer lab for writing time. This would provide a nice connection between author's chair and word processing times.

There's still no time for reading aloud!

Homework Possibilities:

Tuesday night: textbook - analogies - vocabulary work

Wednesday night: editing their own writing or developing writing in notebooks

Thursday through Monday - Read and respond in response journals in preparation for Tuesday book clubs.

I kept wondering why it seemed to take me so long to find those promising routines that could turn five 70 minute segments with each group of students per week into literate experiences that felt like they had no time boundaries. What could I offer in

those precious minutes that students could and would take with them into their lives and bring back to another day with me?

I felt so unsteady. All this trial-and-error thinking and doing was adding to my sense of instability instead of providing strength. I reached for my copy of <u>Standards for the English Language Arts</u> (NCTE & IRA, 1996). My self-questioning was something like this: "If I don't fit in here, does my thinking mesh with any of the views of my chosen discipline?" I hoped for a connection with the field that I could use to justify my alternative efforts to approach planning in my school. What struck me was the support offered for the importance of "adaptability and creativity" and for the development of competencies "through meaningful activities and settings" (p. 7). The authors made the helpful statement that

> English language arts teachers must also identify and remove the barriers that prevent that vision from being translated into practice. For example, teachers often receive conflicting messages about what they should be doing. They may be told they should respond to the need for reforms and innovations while at the same time being discouraged from making their instructional practices look too different from those of the past. (p. 7)

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and International Reading Association (IRA) listed machine-scored tests, particular textbooks, and separate class periods as systemic barriers that can impede the development of the shared vision they propose school people could achieve through acceptance of the twelve standards. I certainly was feeling those barriers. They felt huge. It's one thing to recognize such things exist as obstacles and yet another to actually hurtle over them. Additionally, the

authors professed, "Although we do not believe it is productive to dictate a specific

English language arts curriculum that should be enacted in every classroom or every

school, it is important to define broadly the content that students need to know in order to

become informed, confident, and competent users of language" (p. 14). My state

sponsored and district supported list of 80 decontextualized QCC objectives with their

accompanying expectations of mastery seemed the antithesis of these recommendations.

IRA and NCTE also supported learning language "by using it purposefully and

negotiating with others" and claimed that "language cannot be divorced from the social

context in which it occurs" (p. 19). They elaborate with the following image:

> Perhaps one of the most influential aspects of context is the social dimension.
>
> Many illustrations of reading and writing show one person alone, looking intently
>
> downward at a text or a paper, deeply immersed in thought. But we are coming to
>
> realize how fundamentally social the process of becoming literate is. (p. 22)

I resolved to make opportunities for shared learning continue despite my struggles

to incorporate time for author's chair and book clubs where writing and reading are part

of the social and intellectual fabric of our times together.

 Another helpful rethinking at this time came from reading Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot

(1997). I particularly reconsidered the section of the text devoted to the elaboration of her

experiences as the subject of a portrait artist. She established that a portrait is a display of

the essence of someone or something. She wrote:

> I learned, for example, that these portraits did not capture me as I saw myself; that
>
> they were not like looking in the mirror at my reflection. Instead they seemed to
>
> capture my essence—qualities of character and history some of which I was

unaware of, some of which I resisted mightily, some of which felt deeply

familiar. But the translation of image was anything but literal. It was probing,

layered, and interpretive. In addition to portraying my image, the piece expressed

the perspective of the artist and was shaped by the evolving relationship between

the artist and me. (p. 4)

In my case, I was the one trying to capture the qualities of my character and

history that were developing in relationship to the character and history of the setting in

which I found myself teaching. Could lesson plans be the reflection of that essence on a

daily basis? Can they be developed as more than a literal interpretation? How could

lesson plans be probing, layered, and interpretive so that daily portraits of experience

were constructed that could be used for the full-view expression of a year in the life of

one teacher and her students in one place in time?

Finally Some Muscle

Prowling the university library shelves once again, I came across a little book by

Ruddick and Hopkins (1985), Readings from the Work of Lawrence Stenhouse. I

recognized the Stenhouse name as one of support for the teacher as researcher but did not

yet know how radically helpful his beliefs would be to me in developing an alternative

defense for decision making. He actually articulated that there was another way to

organize thinking and doing beyond the gated communities of grade levels and

predetermined outcomes gained through strict adherence to keycodes of numbered

objectives. Stenhouse (1985) wrote:

Knowing cannot be reduced to behaviours. As a medium of thinking it's

characteristic is that it is supportive of creative thinking and thus indeterminate of

behaviours. Pre-specified behavioural objectives necessarily falsify the nature

of knowledge. But the falsification is in the pre-specification implied in the term

objective. It does not imply that knowledge is not an outcome of education.

Indeed, I am arguing that we can judge outcomes without anticipating them.

Standards in education, and in curriculum planning, do not depend upon a pre-

specification of behavioural outcomes, at any rate in areas of knowledge.

I have made as clear as I can within the confines of this brief outline my

conception of the educational process as one governed by standards or criteria

which depend upon the judgment of the teacher and my contention that the

judgment of the teacher cannot be guided in areas of knowledge by a pre-

specification of outcomes. Whence can one derive standards for the selection of

content and the criticism of performance? Only, I argue, from the teacher's grasp

of the nature and standards of the knowledge being taught. That is why teachers

learn subjects.

And now I think we are coming to the heart of the matter. I believe that

the objectives model actually rests on an acceptance of the school teacher as a

kind of intellectual navy. An objectives-based curriculum is like a site plan

simplified so that people know exactly where to dig their trenches without having

to know why.

At first I was stunned by these ideas—not because they challenged my beliefs—

but because finally I didn't feel alone in thinking them. Stenhouse affirmed so much of

what I had come to expect about teaching and learning but hadn't been able to articulate

so precisely. I had been building my professional muscle by reading to resist digging

STOPE trenches without knowing why. I was trying to build a stronger sense of professional self by taking responsibility for my own decision making and purposefully connecting beliefs with actions. I searched for strength in teaching by trying to recognize that each student was unique and owned her or his work. I stretched for ideas and models beyond the standard issue increasing our authority through selective use of tradition and innovation. As one who reads and writes and studies the ways of literate life, I felt the strength of new support.

I was ready to exercise my mind as a reader and build more professional muscle in pursuit of the "whys" of my situation. I felt poised for a new beginning. The social aspect of learning teacher with teacher was not available to me yet in this setting, but I was developing an understanding that the process of intellectual discovery requires that we are also quiet enough to capture the apparitions of new potential that float within us. Reading was my kind of socially quiet time. I no longer felt alone. My mind could dance with another through text—reader with writer. As I recast these visions into written form in my planbook, I saw my voice begin to stand up for itself and I was pleased to see the beginnings of something new come from my mind to my hand and into a living literacy for my students.

And so it happens as Greene (1995) and Dewey (1997) knew it would,
It is this kind of realization, Dewey believed, that renders experience conscious and aware of itself. Without such realization, 'there is only recurrence, complete uniformity; the resulting experience is routine and mechanical.' Consciousness always has an imaginative phase, and imagination, more than any other capacity, breaks through the 'inertia of habit. (Greene, 1995, p. 21)

CHAPTER 4

GAINING PROFESSIONAL STRENGTH

<u>There's "Muscle" in Developing Understandings</u>

What Aunt Tess loved to say was: "Sugar, it's no parade but you'll get down the

street one way or another, so you'd just as well throw your shoulders back and

pick up the pace." (Kingsolver, 1998, p. 193)

More convinced than ever that reading was my hope for recovering professional

strength, I determined to hold my head up, throw my shoulders back, and pick up my

pace toward planning from a position of strength, I read. Feeling a loss of spirit, I read. If

I worried, I read. Whenever I felt a lack of confidence, I read. If I sought inspiration, I

read. In order to offer my students authentic opportunities, I continued to read. All along

there was this history of the significance of reading in my teaching and learning that I

leaned on without fully accepting how fundamental it was as a source of professional

authority. I spent years as a teacher trying to display for my students how reading and

writing could improve quality of experience, yet somehow this was different from

claiming it as the essence of who I was as a teacher.

When I was teaching third grade, Sharon's mother came in for her spring parent-

teacher conference. Interestingly, it was not her daughter's academic progress that

focused our discussion but rather information about my adult book club. Would I please

tell her more about our procedures and the books we had been reading? It seems that

Sharon had been most intent on sharing with her mother news from my book club. I had

recently shared with the class tales of meeting with my friends Karen Hankins and Michelle Commeyras. Janet, Sharon's mom, reminded her daughter that they knew other adults who had been in book clubs, but Sharon countered, "No, Mom, you don't understand. Ms. Bisplinghoff reads books with her friends and then they go out to DePalma's and eat and talk about their book together!" To Janet's surprise and mine, it was the explicitness of my actually choosing to read away from school that so intrigued Sharon. You would think that this concept of teacher as reader had already been well established since I expressed almost daily the pleasures I found in reading. I often bought books for the class and told of great lines or ideas I'd just discovered in a new book. There was something about this book club of mine, however, that produced a different level of inspiration for Sharon and others. Janet additionally explained that Sharon was insistent about having a book club of her own during the summer and she wanted my suggestions for books that might be particularly engaging for such an experience. Sharon and her friends were going to have a book club just like mine. They were going to read the same book and go to DePalmas and eat and talk just like their teacher did.

Shortly thereafter, Heide's mom came in one morning before school and shared her daughter's request to have a summer book club. I suggested she contact Sharon's mother so that they might plan together. After her mom left, Heide announced to me that whatever books they chose to read during the summer, they would have to buy them so they could mark in them. This had been another aspect of my reading that I had recently explained to the class during a mini-lesson on descriptive language. I showed the students places in the book I was reading where I had underlined phrases that I thought were

particularly well written so that I might return to them for rereading, remember to talk about them with my book club, or add to my quote journal.

I'd started to notice, too, a different level of attentiveness from the group when we were gathered on our library rug for book discussion time, and I talked about the book I was reading, <u>Bound Feet and Western Dress</u> (Chang, 1997)—so many questions, such obvious shock that a culture could think it beautiful to bind the feet of young girls. Comments ensued for days that let me know they were talking about what I shared with them about this book with their friends and their families. Su-Min, our student from South Korea, told us that her mother said it was true, "People in China long time ago bound feet." Students seemed genuinely surprised that such information could be contained in a book.

A turning point for me, in the sense that my valuing of reading was making a significant mark on the children's views of reading, came when I overheard Mitchell and Heide arguing over ownership of the beanbag chair during our morning reading workshop. Evidently Mitchell had gotten up for a minute to get something and when he returned, Heide had gotten in his place. After explaining to Heide that he had the chair first and that it was still rightfully his place, Heide moved away reluctantly and I heard her proclaim, "You don't even know how to play baseball. Your team lost last night twenty two to nothing!" Mitchell had an unexpected comeback, "So, you don't even know how to choose a good book to read!" Now I knew, and they knew that Mitchell could, indeed, play baseball and Heide certainly knew how to choose appropriate books, but the idea that such a skill could be on the same level as baseball in the minds of third

graders was a moment to remember. I wanted this connection again with my sixth

graders.

Reading to Renew My Spirit

After spending so much of my reading time during the first few months of this

school year reading the literature on curriculum development and the history of teacher

planning, in order to better understand the why of my current planning struggle and

develop some informed resistance to counter all the impositions I was facing from

"above," I realized that much of my former feelings of strength and confidence came

from reading fiction and the writings of other classroom studies. Once again I looked at

the realities of time and situation and decided that listening to books on tape would be a

fine way for me to use my commute to and from school for reading. Language could fill

the space in my little car as I now whizzed past the sights that had so captured my

attention on the day of my first drive to school. The words of writers could start my days

and end my days preparing me emotionally and intellectually for literate encounters with

my students. As I drove along that first morning after I had made my decision to wrap my

days with students around language, I fed my body the predictable bagel and coffee and

fed my mind the giggles of the girls in the Ya-ya Sisterhood club, as they floated in the

town water tower on a warm summer evening and recalled the innocence of adolescent

adventures (Wells, 1996). Reliving life themes through words shaped by talented authors

put me in a different frame of mind for working with words with my students. I began the

day less nervous about a particular line of time and more eager to share the energy

created when you "rub one word against another" (Stegner, 1987, p. 260). I was ready to

spark that "live circuit" Rosenblatt (1978) identified between reader and text that happens

in a particular moment in time. My reflective writing for the first week of November

documented my thinking:

> I tried a new way to get "reading" for pleasure back into my life. I started
>
> listening to books on tape again this week. Now when I drive the thirty minutes to
>
> school , I can recharge myself en route. I chose a collection of short stories by
>
> Eudora Welty and Rebecca Wells's (1996) Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya
>
> Sisterhood. It continues to astound me just how important my reading is to my
>
> teaching. I showed my students the audiotape boxes and told them a bit about
>
> each one. I encouraged them to go to the library and check out cassettes to listen
>
> to and count them on their reading logs.
>
> After listening to Welty, I discovered an excellent short story that focuses on
>
> character development and race issues. This will go so well with our writing as
>
> we continue to consider character development in our reading of Maniac Magee
>
> where there's a line down the middle of the street separating the white -populated
>
> side of town from the black. I rushed to the bookstore to find a print copy of "The
>
> Worn Path." Because I was able once again to reconnect so strongly with features
>
> of my southern heritage while listening to these books, I wanted to honor my
>
> student's needs as readers in a similar way and try to search for recommendations
>
> that might help them see themselves in print.

The plan I created based on this thinking was certainly a departure from the

STOPE requirement. This new arrangement reminded me of the philosophical

underpinnings of my choices to use powerful text models and attempt to build an

emotional as well as a skill link between the models and student work. I reclaimed my

workshop approach and rejected the notion that objectives lead each day's work and that evaluation should always close the process. We were not becoming a means-ends place but instead an experiment-create community. I registered another approach as I wrote to develop my understanding:

Daily Routines

Complete Agendas

Collect Homework

Distribute Homework

Check on books students borrowed

Text Model: Eudora Welty, "The Worn Path"

Mini Lesson: To show how a strong character can hold a story together. I'll make transparencies of some of the faces of strong black women in Eudora Welty Photographs (1989) so the students can look them in the eye as I read the short story aloud to them. I need to build a connection between the racism in Maniac Magee and that in Welty's story. I'll also do a book talk showing and telling about my favorite southern authors. I will encourage students to write from their place. To write what they know about. I will especially highlight published authors that live or have lived right down the road: Terry Kay (Watkinsville), Alice Walker (Eatonton), Raymond Andrews (Morgan County), Joel Chandler Harris (Eatonton), Pat Conroy (Atlanta)...

Writing Workshop: Students continue writing picture books based on characters identified from their real-life relationships.

It was reading that recharged me. I used my reading habit to establish a peer group of authors from whom I could develop new views—novel insights to lure me to a place of strength and not weakness. Like Rick Bragg (1997) stated in <u>All Over but the Shoutin'</u>, "I know a good bit. But one of the best men I have ever known told me once that to tell a story right you have to lean the words against each other so that they don't fall down" (p. xix). I needed writers and sometimes their characters to lean against so I didn't fall down and lose my way. There was a path provided for me by the system through approved behaviors and materials, but it was so well worn it felt more like a rut. Welty's (1994) short story about Phoenix Jackson and her struggle to make her way to the town clinic from her isolated mountain home to get the medicine her grandson needed was inspiration for me as a teacher character plotting a path of literacy understanding and appreciation for my students. Phoenix wobbled and wrestled herself free from the thorns that would tear at the superficial visages of her character but not her resolve to make her way forward. She even fell, but she got back up and trudged on. As it turned out for me, I made a professional decision that reading was an important healing and nurturing feature of my professionalism—it renewed my spirit. Listening to Welty (1994) helped me read my situation with the help of a new friend also struggling to make her way, Phoenix Jackson:

> It was December, a bright frozen day in the early morning. Far out in the country there was an old Negro woman with her head tied in a red rag, coming along a path through the pinewoods. Her name was Phoenix Jackson. She was very old and small and she walked slowly in the dark pine shadows, moving a little from side to side in her steps, with the balanced heaviness and lightness of a pendulum

in a grandfather clock. She carried a thin, small cane made from an umbrella,

and with this she kept tapping the frozen earth in front of her. This made a grave

and persistent noise in the still air, that seemed meditative like the chirping of a

solitary bird. (p. 142)

Phoenix let me lean on her as I tapped my way along a path of change leading to a deeper

sense of professional authority.

<u>Reading to Dispel Some of the Worry</u>

In this new setting, I often felt like Phoenix must have felt making her way

through the woods trying not to stray too far off course. A friend of mine asked,

"Where's <u>your</u> past?" when I shared with her my ongoing paranoia about decision

making and finding a planning format that would work for me. She was amazed that a

teacher she had known to feel so secure at other periods was so insecure now. Though the

landmarks may remain the same—the subject areas, the classroom as primary work site,

etc.—what happens within each microstructure is unique for each grade level. Like

Welty's (1994) character Phoenix Jackson, there were things you could expect to

encounter along the way to help you stay the course and gain some footing, but as Welty

explained, "Old Phoenix would have been lost if she had not distrusted her eyesight and

depended on her feet to know where to take her" (p. 146). I had to reground myself, try to

make my feet feel like they were again on steady ground each time I changed grade

levels, especially if the grade level change was also accompanied by a change in school

site. Just like Phoenix's grandson depended on her to return with medicine for some

relief, I often felt a similar responsibility for my students as I struggled to reestablish my

sense of professional self by trying to read my way into and out of my current situation. I

kept tap, tap, tapping along trying to gauge the influence of particular people and programs. As with Phoenix's situation, "Now and then there was a quivering in the thicket. Old Phoenix said, "Out of my way, all you foxes, owls, beetles, jack rabbits, coons and wild animals! . . . Keep out from under these feet, little bob-whites. . . . Keep the big wild hogs out of my path. Don't let none of those come running my direction. I got a long way" (p. 142).

As I traveled, things continued to get in my way. I felt like I was constantly troubling the thickets of feedback trying to identify the good from the bad. What were the potential threats in my path? I was shocked when printed comparisons of the grades all sixth-grade teachers had assigned to their students at the end of the first quarter of school were given to the faculty. The number of students who received each letter grade was printed alongside each teacher's name. I wondered how this helped anyone. What was I supposed to do with this information?

Imposed deadlines were also deadly for instruction. I understood that stressed- out teachers were not good teachers. It took a great deal of patience in the first place to listen and attend to the needs of 50 students and if that patience was mostly sucked up adapting to administrative mandates, it left less energy for student needs.

A fellow teacher announced during our team meeting, "We have a school climate problem." Our school secretary was in tears because of all the pressure she was feeling along with a lack of recognition for all she tried to do for people. My partner teacher marched in to show me all the sticky notes tabbing pages in the parent conference notebook marking points of concern from administrative review. I noted in my reflective writings on October 27th:

It's a shame all these things are happening. This is really the greatest group of

students and teachers I've ever worked with. I rarely write about them in my

reflections but that's because I have few issues there. It is all that comes at me

from the outside that I continue to try to reconcile with what's inside my head and

heart about teachers and students and learning together.

As Welty (1994) had Phoenix explain,

The path ran up a hill. 'Seems like there is chains about my feet, time I get this

far,' she said, in the voice of argument old people keep to use with themselves.

'Something always take a hold of me on this hill—pleads I should stay.' (p. 143)

Like climbing a similar hill, I knew I was making progress, but it was so slow.

Sometimes I would find myself pausing, drifting back into actions that seemed to spring

from some primal teaching gene. I'd suddenly realize how I was standing in front of the

class doing most of the talking and directing. I felt as guilty as if I'd been caught

smoking.

Reading to Find My Confidence

In my quest for more support to charge the hills and make stronger progress, a

friend gave me a dissertation to read. James Paul Gee's words in an unpublished

dissertation titled, Curriculum Guidelines for the Education of Literate Citizens

encouraged me to keep working for a surer footing because it was the teacher's belief in

what she held dear that mattered most for student engagement with learning

opportunities:

The success of a curriculum has less to do with its nature than with whether the

people teaching it believe in it, advocate it, and see themselves as innovating it.

Such people are reflective and involved when they teach...student engagement in literacy depends, more than anything else, on the momentum, support, and expectations created by the teacher (as quoted in Kanawati, 1992, p. 120).

Finding recognition for the pivotal role of the teacher in relation to curriculum was as invigorating to my sense of authority as the discovery of Stenhouse's (Ruddick & Hopkins, 1985) push to continue to dig for rationales and reason rather than blind faith. During the second half of the school year, I found out that even the administration was more or less responding to an entrenched system of behaviors rather than attempting to pursue a more purposeful route.

During the second semester of school the administration and several teachers were required to participate in a staff development class, The Middle School Learner, which the state department required for renewing certification. The district had announced that this class would be a requirement for being rehired. This was another major time commitment that appeared quite unexpectedly. As we entered the class, I felt we should have each been given little white flags to wave as we once more surrendered to an institutional monster that had grown too big to resist. I included a conversation during one of these classes in my reflective writings for February 18th:

I found out in my Middle School as Learner class this week that this district follows a dictum that all three middle schools should be doing the same things— same book—same unit—same time.

Person 1: "Curriculum decisions are made at a system level. It is not school-based [NO mention was made of classroom based]. We're staying within the lines. We're coloring within the lines." This approach is supposedly based on the

"high rate of mobility" of this population. [I have only had two students leave

this year] Also, "I get the impression that it's the expectation of this community.

I know the decision makers believe that."

Person 2: "The lobbying groups don't want this to come down. It's been nice and

tidy and tied up." [Another metaphor for me to consider. Doesn't tied up mean

you can't move]

Person 1: "This is an extreme traditional community."

Class Instructor: "We don't do PR well."

Person 2: "I think we as a school do an exceptional job at reaching out to

parents."

Person 1: "When we did our SACS study, we looked at some of this data. There

is a high transient rate. A lot of people live in mobile homes and are not home

owners which affects our tax base. A low percentage of our population has a high

school diploma . Low percentage also of post secondary educated people. We are

dealing with a mindset—a population that's behind the times. We're going to

have a rigid curriculum. We do our best to co-ordinate with state and national

requirements."

Class Instructor: "We've got some considerable obstacles, so what do you do

about them?"

Person 1: "Take risks. I think I've become a better risk taker. I wait to see if

there's any fall out instead of asking first." [Sounds familiar to me!]

Class Instructor: "So all three middle schools have to do it or nobody does it?"

Person 2: "I keep talking about varying assessment. If we can't vary the curriculum, at least we can vary our assessment procedures. Then when curriculum development happens, people on those committees need to be risk takers. It's got to start with teachers. It can't start from the curriculum office." [This somehow doesn't sound right. It's interesting to consider all of this happening around me after reading Michael Apple's (1993) Teachers and Texts and the closed door politics of teachers that he highlights—a strategy with historical roots for women—maids, etc.—Wanting to take a more open stand but through the intellectual deskilling that occurs through the process of intensification (p. 41) teacher's have no time to keep up with their field and become more dependent on "experts" and getting it done or covering the curriculum becomes the norm. "Teachers are both class actors and gendered actors" (p. 32).]

There was a long discussion between AP and P about how teachers are not trained to be "true middle school teachers." According to this administrative team, teachers are either coming from the elementary perspective or the subject-centered realm of high school. This is another reason given for inaction. Teachers aren't prepared to deal with the practices outlined in the book we read in class—This we Believe (1995).

Person 2: "On the whole, our faculty is a young faculty. I think they have to test the waters . . . I think everybody has abandoned the "T-Formation" in arranging their desks. We do know noise is not a bad thing now"

When someone mentioned how significant it was this year that teachers were allowed to place students in classes instead of the administration, AP said, "The tradition was that that's the way it's always been done and no one questioned it. The reality is that maybe we've become complacent." [Wow, is that ever true!]

Person 2: "It'll wear you down."" [Woe, is that ever true!]

Person 1: "It takes creativity and it takes energy."

Class Instructor: "You only have so much."

Person 1: "It's the way it's always been done. That's hard to overcome."'

It was consoling, in a weird sort of way, to know that the administrators too were grappling still with issues that were as challenging for them in the goals of their work as having an imposed planning format was for me. It reminded me of when my reading the literature on curriculum and planning showed me that the field was not as clear on goals and pathways as textbooks and state and district publications would have us believe. I cautiously continued walking with Phoenix (Welty, 1994):

> Her eyes opened their widest, and she started down gently. But before she got to the bottom of the hill a bush caught her dress. Her fingers were busy and intent, but her skirts were full and long, so that before she could pull them free in one place they were caught in another. It was not possible to allow the dress to tear. "I in the thorny bush," she said. "Thorns, you doing your appointed work. Never want to let folks pass, no sir. Old eyes thought you was pretty little green bush. (p. 143)

Yes, those objectives look like pretty little things all groomed and ready for easy use. They never want to let folks pass, however. Seems like before I can pull myself free in one place, I'm caught in another.

<u>Reading for the New Insight</u>

It is interesting that our profession shares an understanding that reading is an essential skill for students to acquire, but once again, it's most often used as a tool of preparation and not one of sustenance. The sixth-grade teachers with whom I work say they don't have time to read. In my discussions with these teachers, only one said she had read a book during the whole school year.

Under the wings of writers, I think, we could begin to escape the customary, create a calm within the chaos, and, perhaps best of all, find company to keep which would help us feel not so disconnected from the broader conversation and thus not so infirmed through subordinate behaviors fueled by an overreliance on distilled information and incapacious insight. When I pick up a novel, a collection of poetry, or a nonfiction text of university or school-based origin, I have this initial excitement that something unpredictable may happen. I give myself to the reading experience trusting that the author will lead me somewhere—either someplace totally new or back to remembering when. I savor the potential for the unintended connection to my teaching practice that through some textual alchemy may be fused.

With this in mind, I sat down with my Heinemann catalogues and ordered up a new peer group for myself. I chose: <u>The Kind of Schools We Need</u> (Eisner, 1998), <u>Best Practice</u> (Zemelman, Daniels & Hyde, 1998), <u>Awakening the Heart</u> (Heard, 1999), <u>Crafting a Life in Essay, Story, and Poem</u> (Murray, 1996), and <u>Sentence Composing for</u>

Middle School (Killgallon, 1997). I also ordered a book recommended by a friend,

Anna Quindlen's (1998) How Reading Changed My Life and from my Stenhouse

catalogues, Craft Lessons: Teaching Writing K-8 (1998). As Phoenix (Welty, 1994) said:

>"Now comes the trial." Putting her right foot out, she mounted the log and shut
>
>her eyes. Lifting her skirt, leveling her cane fiercely before her, like a festival
>
>figure in some parade, she began to march across. Then she opened her eyes and
>
>she was safe on the other side. (p. 143)

I wanted to be on that other side. I wanted to live up to Gee's (Kanawati, 1996)

belief in me. I wanted more muscle. I hoped my new friends would help me up and over

with their multiple views. I read, and I wrote:

>I just returned from a weekend at the mountain house. I read three books while I
>
>was in the mountains—much new food for thought. I also read an article,
>
>"Teaching students how to plan: The dominant model and alternatives" by Wanda
>
>May (1986). Directly related to my actions this weekend as a teacher planning for
>
>and reflecting on her work, May noted that "beginning teachers 'shop' for
>
>curriculum ideas, activities, or content that will better ensure their survival. This
>
>leads to a kind of uncritical, impulsive, consumerism" (p. 9). This would be a
>
>form of uninsightful decision making. Surely I am not participating in such a
>
>loosely conceived process when I choose to read .
>
>From Quindlen's (1998) book, I found support for having book clubs with my
>
>students during class time. She helped me feel more comfortable encouraging a
>
>more natural approach to meaning making. She also gave me a not-in-education
>
>perspective of the role and promise of experiences with text. I considered her

statement, "I had no critical judgment at the time; I think children who have critical judgment are as dreadful and unnatural as dogs who wear coats" (p. 26). Also, she wrote, "Show me a writer who says she was inspired to try by the great masters, and I'll show you someone who is remembering it wrong" (p. 53). And, "In fact one of the most pernicious phenomena in assigned reading is the force-feeding of serious work at an age when the reader will feel pushed away" (p. 55). Most especially she highlights the importance of finding that just right writing model—the one you can point your finger to and say, "That was the book that made me say, 'I can do that'" (p. 56). This will be one of my BIG questions: What book will make my students say they can do that ? Since these quotes mean so much to me, I thought it would be nice to incorporate a quote for the day related to developing appreciation for living a literate life.

Quindlen also helped me face a need for helping students keep meaningful records. I shared with my students my quote journal, and my "Book Lovers" journals. Now I also need to find a way to show how I pay attention to new words. Quindlen used several words in her book that I have never encountered before. How will I use this to help myself and help my students appreciate keeping a record of new words? Isn't this a more meaningful way to attend to vocabulary than anything we can abstractly substitute? The reading logs I created aren't great. They look like assessment forms. I can see now that I need aesthetically appealing and meaningful formats for recording as well as for planning. I need to revisit record keeping and find ways for students to keep authentic documentation of these language features:

- Books read

- New Vocabulary

- Quotes to remember

- Spelling concerns

- Writing

- Response to Literature

Reading Killgallon's (1997) book about supporting students in the use of more complex sentence development by using the works of published authors gave me a way to address language use at the sentence level. There was no time left in our schedule to add one more exercise-type experience. I tried to incorporate his goal for supporting student awareness and skill in sentence construction options into my writing and reading conferences. The book In a Word (McNamara, 1998) had already provided me with a format for focusing on word development through word families. Fletcher and Portalupi's (1998) mini-lesson advise gave me expanded options as I worked with students on developing the aesthetic whole of their writing. This all reminded me of Mari Clay's (1993) work and advice to attend to all aspects of language.

Things I have reconsidered as a result of reading these authors this weekend:

- Core to my philosophy of teaching writing is parallel to Fletcher—writing is a craft.

- Core to my philosophy of teaching reading is like Quindlen—I see reading as an essential aspect of a good life. I now have a list of questions to guide me in

thinking about what I'm offering students each day as I plan for their literate encounters:

How does that writer get you to care?

How have I supported my students as crafters of writing?

How have I modeled behaviors of real readers and writers?

How can I translate these real behaviors into real practices for my students?

What models to draw from am I providing for my students?

Fletcher advised me to try to teach one thing in each piece of writing. How do I deal with this in grading student autobiography projects? He also suggested that we focus on only two or three things in a year. What would I choose? Why? Can I address these issues through co-developed rubrics with my students?

A very important piece of guiding advice for me comes from Fletcher and Portalupi,

We believe that a strong classroom environment includes a great deal of student choice. This includes the decision about what writing strategy to use, and when to use it. There may be occasions when you want all students to try out a particular strategy. But in general, these craft lessons should be presented as options for students to use if and when they see fit. Ideally, your classroom has the kind of environment where you put forth lots of rich writing ideas and your students are willing to try them out. Not all children will be ready to try each new element of craft the day you present it. But there are ways to keep the idea alive so that when they are ready, they'll be reminded to give it a try. (p. 107)

This wisdom is so counter to the STOPE approach.

This reading was so helpful. All the ideas I considered based on these newly

formed literate friendships did not make it to full bloom, however. After trying to

identify inspirational quotes for my students to add to the overview of the day that

I wrote on the whiteboard each morning, I confessed to myself, "The quote of the

day did not work." Like listing objectives, coming up with a quote each day took

much more time than the added value it placed on our experience. The wisdom of

these authors did appreciably help me steady myself. They helped me find my

way back to what I believed. Now it was beginning to feel more like there was

some good soil under my feet that I could grow in more easily along with an

occasional flowering insight rooting in around me. It's just amazing how tentative

one can feel in the woods with voices in the wind demanding "Do it this way." I

suppose that's why there is continuing support for teachers to claim an eclectic

approach to decision making. It is really hard work to acquire insight into what

you believe and to understand how it came to be important to you and how to

grow with it.

Phoenix was knocked down along her way by a black dog coming up out of a

ditch at her.

A white man finally came along and found her—a hunter, a young man, with his

dog on a chain.

"Well, granny!" he laughed. "What are you doing there?"

"Lying on my back like a June-bug waiting to be turned over, mister," she said,

reaching up her hand" (Welty, 1994, p. 145).

Oh, it would have been much easier to just lie on my back like a June-bug and wait to be moved into action by the next mandate intended to lift me to acceptable standards. Most thankfully, I kept looking behind the bushes and the trees for promises of my own vision as influenced by my writer friends.

Fletcher and Portalupi were freeing me with their studied insight about the needs of writers in tandem with Quindlen's views on supporting reading. I didn't feel alone in my professional decision making to offer students models that were accessible in terms of their transportability to student writing and reading needs. I felt myself opening up once more to the capacity building environment of literate decision making based on the two-fold authority structure of teacher and student choice about what to read, what to write, and how to identify what matters in that shared work. It was more important to me to have the kind of classroom where everyone put forth lots of rich ideas and were willing to try them out. Adhering to Fletcher and Portalupi's basic <u>principle</u> that keeping ideas alive for authentic use was much more enabling for us all than the <u>principal's</u> rule to connect specific daily objectives with specific daily evaluations. Therein lies the most basic touchstone for teacher authority—What rules decision making, principles or principals?

As always there are complicating factors. One of the puzzles I have always had to face as a teacher is the low priority of trade book purchases in local funding formulae. This year was no exception. I was given, as mentioned, a small set of 20 books as token offerings to the range of interest and needs of readers in my classroom. Yet again I worried about having to spend a significant amount of my own money trying to be true to my beliefs as principles of practice. I've always dreamed that one day I would be able to teach in a place that would say, "You have a choice. You have this amount of money to

spend for reading materials for your class. You may choose to spend this money on textbooks or trade books." Recognizing that professional choice and student choice make such a nice pairing, each leading to richer levels of engagement with the work at hand, my choice to spend such funds on trade books would be an easy one. As an elementary teacher, I had managed to build quite a class library of choices from my own family resources; however, most of my books are picture books and beginning level chapter books. Here I needed to entice more mature readers. I wanted to offer picture books as ready resources for continuing to develop student understandings of the structure of story and for the sheer joy of reading them, but also needed books in front of middle school students like literate candy. Hence, an added worry became the expense of really being able to sweeten the options for twice as many students as I'd had in my elementary situations.

I began to scavenge the media center for enticing selections. Not much luck. As had been the case in other settings, this media center had mostly single copies of books I thought had the most potential to be the book that Quindlen urged me to help my students find. Scavenge was the appropriate word for me to use in the context of this effort for, quite by accident, I found boxes in a storeroom at the back of the stage area in the cafetorium containing class sets of Permabound books. At first I felt like a kid set free in a candy store. I was so pleased to have found this cache of treats for my students. I chose Katherine Paterson's (1977) Bridge to Terabithia, thinking this would surely capture the hearts and minds of many of my students. It met my growing criteria that students be able to see themselves in what they read as had been so important in my own identification of great books for me. Also important was the ability to read with others, something I had

modeled and found so valuable as a reader in my own book club. There needed to be

multiple copies of texts for this to be possible and as Quindlen advised, there needed to

be time for these young people to talk naturally about what they were reading. Book

clubs that have been so important in my reading life could be important for my students

to look forward to within the school day once a week.

Reading for Inspiration

After this momentous discovery and decision, I noticed on my bookshelf at home

another book by Paterson (1989), The Spying Heart: More Thoughts on Reading and

Writing Books for Children. I read. Her words about the origin of ideas for her writing

dovetailed with my current search to understand the origins and influences of my

decision making as a planner. She helped me see that my rejection of the STOPE model

and scripted teacher's guides had a lot to do with feeling closed off from the potential in

this profession to have wonderful ideas (Duckworth, 1996). Paterson wrote:

> I kept searching for what I thought an idea was, and came upon it eventually,
>
> buried in the fourth inch [of the sixteen and a half inch dictionary definition]. And
>
> I quote: "In weakened sense: a conception or notion of something to be done or
>
> carried out; an intention, plan of action."
>
> It's sad to think that when I use the word idea I am using it in the weakened sense,
>
> but there you are. I do, however, have one advantage over some people. If a
>
> definition doesn't satisfy me in English, I can look it up in Japanese. And in
>
> Japanese, the word is i, which is made up of two characters—the character for
>
> sound and the character for heart.- so an idea is something that makes a sound in

the heart (the heart in Japanese, as in Hebrew, being the seat of intelligence as well as the seat of feeling). (p. 27)

This reading marked another pivotal moment in my search for professional muscle/strength. Finally, there was some recognition for the connection between thinking and feeling. Paterson continued by asking what this reconceptualization meant for her fiction writing. She followed by recognizing the need to release herself from "the concept of idea as ideal form or archetype" and instead look for those ideas for her writing that "are truly sounds from my heart" (p. 28). At the moment I read her words, I could almost see Katherine Paterson pointing and wagging her finger at me saying, "You are a teacher as I am a writer. Release yourself from the plan as ideal form or archetype. Let your head and your heart work together. Be the informed and inspired teacher that you've spent so many years trying to develop." Paterson actually continued telling herself and her readers:

The power of the imagination—the sound of the heart. What can we do? I think one thing we can do is to share with children works of the imagination—those sounds deepest in the human heart, often couched in symbol and metaphor. These don't give children packaged answers. They invite children to go within themselves to listen to the sounds of their own hearts. . . . Someone—I think it was Goethe—once said, "The beginning and end of all literary activity is the reproduction of the world that surrounds me by means of the world that is in me" . . . the world that is in me is the only world I have by which to grasp the world outside, and, as I write fiction, it is the chart by which I must steer. I must never forget how limited my own experience is and how partial my vision of truth must

be, but nonetheless, it is the only vision I have right now, and I must be as faithful to it as I can. (p. 35)

Relief is not an adequate way to describe how profound this wisdom was for me at this time. Paterson helped me come to terms with my sense of inadequacy and pushed me to claim: As I plan, the chart by which I steer must be guided by what is in me along with a commitment to diligently attempt to broaden the limits of my own experience by reading and studying my practices. What I have to draw from at any particular point in time has to be accepted as enough. I must desire to be as faithful to that reality as I can and resist the disabling need to be "there" before I am fully "here." She knows it. My quest is to maximize the potential for "the deepest sound going forth from my heart [to meet] the deepest sound coming forth from [my students]—it is only in this encounter that the true music begins" (p. 37). This is inspired teaching.

Given what Paterson (1989), Stenhouse (Ruddick & Hopkins,1985), Gee (Kanawati, 1997), and Eisner (1998) have said, the literate energy I am looking to flow between teacher and students, ideas to ideas, from day to day, cannot be prepackaged. It was up to me and my professional authority to release myself and move toward a more wide-awake (Greene, 1995) literate life. Paterson's wisdom also helped me reevaluate my professional thinking, gaining strength enough to await the breakthrough of a "sound in the heart."

Paterson (1989) also said,

But I'm growing more and more to believe that our fundamental task as human beings is to seek out connections—to exercise our imaginations. . . . It follows, then, that the basic task of education is the care and feeding of the imagination.

We used to know this. Indeed, the earliest form of education was the telling of
stories. But nowadays stories have been relegated to the realm of the frivolous.
Education has chosen to emphasize decoding and computation rather than the
cultivation of the imagination. We like, you see, what we can manage. WE can
decide which year we're going to teach which fact, function, or word, and we can
give a child a multiple-choice test at the end to see if he has got it. We want our
mathematics and our mythology strictly compartmentalized, for we know
instinctively that the imagination is a wild, hardly tamable commodity. There is
no way to measure it objectively, so anything in the curriculum that has to do with
the growth of the inner life of a child we tend to classify as a frill [or "fluff' as in
my situation] and either shove it to the periphery or eliminate it from the
curriculum altogether. (p. 60)

I consider her words and applaud so much her willingness to state them. It has been my
experience that even when students are given the time to connect with story and their
imaginations, there is always a price tag—that E on the end of the STOPE format.
Somehow we have difficulty in education feeling comfortable allowing children to value
reading as experience instead of evaluation. Referencing a tour she took of a newly
constructed school building, Paterson was appalled that the facility was built without
windows so children would not be tempted to waste their time staring out of them. I
sensed her banner flying emblazoned with her statement, "The growth of the imagination
demands windows—windows through which we can look out at the world and windows
through which we can look into ourselves" (p. 61).

The contrast between reading Paterson's (1989) words one night and being delivered practice test booklets for the Iowa Test of Basic Skills the next day pulled me back from ideal to real. This absolute contrast between developing heart and muscle in my teaching through reading and the real world of CCMS was indicative of the tensions that continued to waylay me from accessing truly steady ground. Maybe there are some similarities between real physical exercise and those aching muscles we all have the next day when we're recommitting to a personal exercise program. One powerful thing did happen; stated objectives no longer lived on the pages of my planbook. I got rid of them just like Phoenix shooing the dog: "Then she gave a little cry and clapped her hands and said, 'Git away from here, dog! Look! Look at the dog!' She laughed as if in admiration. 'He ain't scared of nobody'" (p. 203). I knew I did not need those objectives, but they continued to thrive around me. But I did not admire their fearlessness.

Reading Results

To present a fuller picture of how all these ideas about ideas were floating amongst the realities of a complicated context, and how reading acted as a real lifeline in the midst of an overwhelming sea of contradiction, I think it helpful to share a complete piece of reflective writing from January 27th:

> In creating another format for planning, I wanted to be very clear about providing experience with text models and space for students to fill in in their own unique ways. This age group has no recess. They are crowded around tables that don't even allow them space for their books. They usually get to walk from my room to our partner classroom four times in the course of a day and then down to the cafeteria, and finally a walk to the other end of the building for their exploratory

classes. Even if the space I can give them is more mental than physical, it is something. I do consciously give them opportunities to be in the library on Wednesdays when they have independent reading time, and they go to computer lab on my full days here—Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. I want the planbook to visually show this need for learning space. This is space I don't even pretend to fill up with my own ideas about how to do things. This is difficult, though, because it is so contrary to the usual order.

I was very disappointed with how the children handled themselves during book clubs. Most of the talk was of the "I don't know" variety. Doing the graphic organizers that Raphael et al. (1998) suggested went well last quarter, but I just feel so badly always giving them models for showing what they're thinking. Will they get better? What can I do to help? A lot of the writing in lab time also seems less than wonderful. I know, however, how hard it is to write well under such time constraints. I have tried to encourage using their writing notebooks during the week but I know it's not working as well as I'd hoped. Conferences during lab time are getting better. It is the most effective way to support them. This can be considered a "given." I see this every time I get a chance to really spend time with a student and her writing. I know they appreciate it too. Sam was just a shining example today. He brought me a copy of what he described as a poem about the road to his home. It was basically a strained paragraph about driving to his house. We talked about how important it was in poetry not to actually use all the words you might use in prose. We played together with rearranging his ideas using different line breaks to make certain words stand out

as more powerful than others and leaving off some of the usual conjunctions and articles you might need for developing a story. It was truly one of those moments teachers talk about when the light comes on. He got it. In the next segment I tried the same strategy with Alex. He resisted the whole concept. He left the conference with his draft in its original form—half poem, half prose. Joseph was the aspectual learner today. The shape ruled. His twister poem had to hold its shape even if the meaning got tossed around in the process. Still a great effort for Joseph.

Two other teachers are also focusing on poetry at this time. One told me in passing that her students were doing their "Poetry Project" where they are responsible for finding and copying fifty poems! The other teacher is having kids interpret poems. In the computer lab another teacher commented to me after observing my students, "Something happens to them between sixth and seventh grade. They don't want to write any more. We're doing number writing now— You know a 10 is the setting...a 9 is character . . . you add up all the points and you have a story."

My students, for the most part, still think of poetry as a sing-song type rhyming scheme. They often just put down any first idea and then see what they can get to rhyme with it. There are exceptions, but by far these students are still very unsure of the possibilities of poetry. Today I took Georgia Heard's (1999) suggestion about finding self-portrait poems and we searched through tons of poetry books for poems that said something about us as unique people (p. 35). It was clear that if the students took care in justifying their choice of a poem then they would have

the start of a poem they could use in writing time. It's a good idea. We need

so many more experiences with poetry. I 'm concerned that we are doing poetry

now, though, when deadlines are coming for publishing companies and contests. I

want them to be feel prepared to submit prose as well as poetry. We submitted

student-authored poems to the Georgia Council of Teachers of English today:

<u>Depressed</u>

a poem for two voices

I'm lonely   I'm sad

I feel your sorrow

I'm overwhelmed   I'm drowning

It's like the whole of an ocean in one sea shell

It's like the dry salt in my mouth

I can smell it   I can taste it

I can see it

I am only sadness

Think positive   I'll try

If it were that easy

Easy as screaming

or not thinking at all

<u>Grandmother</u>

She is really nice

She loves everybody

She has a voice that is

soft and friendly

The light around her

is not too dull

or too bright

It's like the glow of an

angel

soft and friendly

Time just stops when I'm

with her

I could stay in that

moment forever

soft and friendly...

soft and friendly...

<u>Wolf</u>

Golden eyes

Honorable

Like he is somebody

WOLF

Blue gray fur

Bold

Like he is somebody

WOLF

Honor his looks

Cunning

Like he is somebody

WOLF

He is somebody

HONORABLE

BOLD

CUNNING

WOLF

I also struggled this week with how to feel about reading response journals.
Should I be asking them to do the same thing each week? Is an outline helpful if
the goal is for them to be able to share their opinions with their peers as a basis for
making book choices that are sanctioned or abandoned based on student analysis
and not mine? We've been recording this way: Title of the book they read—
Rating 1-5--Recommendation (or not) with specific supporting reasons. As we
were sharing Wednesday, I suddenly realized that what I really wanted to see was
a change in the range and depth of the language they used to express their valuing
of a particular book. I hoped I would see them move beyond simply saying it was
good, too short, too long, etc. I hope to see them use concepts such as audience,
theme, point of view, description, setting, plot—connecting with the decisions
they are having to make as writers themselves. Maybe we should return again
next week to what we know makes for a good reading experience. We need to be
explicit about what a writer does when she writes well for you. We could staple

copies inside the journals for reference. I don't want to resort to the usual list

of questions—who was the main character . . .

It is amazing to see these guys reading <u>Captain Underpants</u> (Pilkey, 1997). They

do not put it down. They read during class. They read in the hall waiting to

change classes. They even read at lunch. These are mostly my most reluctant

readers too. For some I really believe it is the first book they have ever really

read. I know it has been for Dennis who in a roundabout way admitted it when he

claimed, "I never read so many pages in a book before." What does this say to us

when students can be twelve years old and never have read a whole chapter book?

I just have to keep enough good books in front of them. It's a lot to keep up with.

I really do ask a lot of these kids. They have homework from me every night.

They are asked to read a book per week. They're encouraged to live aware of the

stories and poetry that surround them in their everyday worlds. They aim to write

for publication. Right now, there are still concerns about how to do the Strunk and

White book more interestingly and how to be more efficient with the sentence

editing we're doing with Kiestler's <u>Caught'Ya Again</u> book (This is suppose to be

a support feature, not really central to a day). As we develop a class story

paragraph by paragraph, students work in small groups challenging themselves to

identify grammar errors that I have made while recording their ideas on the board

and make the necessary changes. It does address the concept of reviewing writing

as editors of other's work.

This week the students have had experience with texts they chose to read and

they've read many poems independently in class. I shared <u>The Palm of my Heart</u>

(1996) poetry book, but I still can't find dependable time to read extended

texts aloud routinely. Problem!

It's nice to have the Daily Business routine. This gives the students something to

depend on when they enter class and gives me time to adjust from one class to the

next. I came up with the idea this week of having the class officers be responsible

for collecting and distributing homework. This worked well. The vice president

collects homework, the secretary passes out new homework.

As far as beliefs go, I have two concerns as a language arts teacher, not just

literacy but also alliteracy. I want these children not only to know how to read and

write but also to want to read and write. Didn't Calkins (1991) say something like

this is big enough for life work not just desk work?

Immersion takes so much time!

I'm still really worried about Toby. Just looking at him reminds me of the houses

along the way to CCMS. Disorder does contribute to worry, I guess. Toby walks

around with papers falling out of his notebook just like those houses with contents

spilling out into the yard. How do you deal with this without getting carried away

by the middle school organizing theme?

If I had my own school, I would do things even more differently. I feel I need to

fit my ideas within a system of doing things here. One year probably isn't enough

to see big changes. I don't know, maybe it is.

Poetry has given us a space away from story writing for a while. It will be

interesting to see if the level of revision really does change when students have

big blocks of time away from their original work before revising again. I have not

been grading their writing. What will this mean? The "Caught'ya" sentence is the best thing yet for teaching editing marks. Hopefully they will be skilled at this by the time they form student editorial boards for final publications at the end of the year. I bought a new book about book making in preparation for this end of year celebration of professional-type editing and publishing—<u>A Book of One's Own</u> (Johnson, 1998).

This week I have been rereading Georgia Heard's (1999) <u>Awakening the Heart</u> and Jane Bell Kiester's <u>Caught'ya Again</u>! both books are very experience-based and have <u>given</u> me something to build on. I was particularly struck by Kiester's comments about "Ms. Nanci Atwell." Kiester wrote, "At my school, other teachers and I like to use Ms. Atwell's method for five to six weeks at a time three or four times a year. We require that during that time, at least one piece of writing be taken all the way through the writing process—a minimum of at least three drafts, responses, self-edit, peer-edit, teacher edit" (p. 64). It seems to me that Kiester is a sampler. Heard knows herself and writing poetry from the inside out to the point that her advise seems so sensitive and grounded. She too does "exercises" before students write but her "exercises" seem in line with broader goals. Perhaps Kiester and I feel the subtle and emphatic pressure to too often think about today without the luxury of the consultant to stay at that ripening level (Vygotsky, 1978)). I know I am like Georgia Heard at heart but in practice I am acting like Kiester. I don't like this. I get worried that the ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills) is coming up and my students will have to be adept at noticing the details of grammar or all their other work will be discounted. Writing well is

something special. This standardized test does not evaluate "real" writing.

How to think about it . . . sometimes it seems like a miracle . . . it's just pow –

there . . . one student can produce a beautiful example one day and the next return

to what seems like babble in comparison. It is something that I think is nurtured

over a long period of time. I think Heard would agree. I have been worried about

spelling but have decided that the best I can do for them now in that area is keep

them reading and continue conferencing. I do need to be more explicit about

maintaining that kind of awareness while reading, however.

I received my official evaluation from the principal when I returned to work on

Tuesday. It was one of the most comprehensive I have ever gotten. Everything

was rated satisfactory (The only choices are "Needs Improvement" or

"Satisfactory.") It was interesting to see the aspects of my practice that she

focused on. Part of that, of course, is due to the protocol she was responding to.

The whole thing seems to be based on early research on effective teaching. My

teaching partner told me that the principal commented to her that I was the first

teacher she had ever observed in her 29 years that used vocabulary to maintain

discipline and sustain attention. The principal said the students seemed like they

were waiting to see what I would say next so they could decide if they understood

my words. Interesting! Also intriguing was that this same person withdrew from

participation in a community committee on truancy issues because the members

were not working to "the letter" of their plan, yet she did not ask to see my lesson

plans as had been threatened. In the meetings with new teachers at the beginning

of the year, this was something that was supposed to be required. The lore also

had it that she would look through your desk and mark you down if your desk was not neat . . . This did not happen either.

Alarm! Many students have purchased their own copies of Jewel's (1999) poetry book. There are many poems in that book that could be challenged by parents. What do I do about that?

I was reading my new Reading Research Quarterly. I was reading Chall's (1999) response to the first grade studies. It feels good to be out of the phonics war and in sixth grade. What's the central literacy issue at this level?

I still feel as teacher my goal is to not only inform but to inspire. Standardized tests tell us if we have informed. What tells us if we have inspired? That could be the key! Finding an assessment match between these two cornerstones of practice would really be a breakthrough.

The plan that I constructed after writing the week's reflection showed the space I was consciously incorporating into my thinking and awareness of student needs. Even though I no longer included a list of objectives, I still seemed to be trying to do it all. Completing the school sanctioned agenda was a part of our day; homework was still of the worksheet variety in order for parents and the administration to see that Ms. B. was doing "real school" in her class. But, after such nods to convention, what I think of as Paterson's (1989) and Heard's (1999) heart of the matter began developing the connections between passion and principles—the foundation of inspired teaching or as bell hooks (1994) named the challenge, engaged pedagogy.

THURSDAY MORNING

January 28

DAILY BUSINESS

1. Complete Agendas

2. Collect Homework (Vocabulary)

3. Distribute Homework (Reading Passage)

4. "Caught'ya" Sentence

poor hapless harold however is inept at every sport he had tried so far in his 12 years of life

<u>LEARNING SPACES</u>

Craft Lesson

Initiate discussion—Where does poetry come from—Compare to legend, folk tale, etc.

From the shadows

They hide

Begin working through Georgia Heard's suggestions in <u>Awakening the Heart</u>.

• Have students read through poetry anthologies that I gathered from the media center.

• They are in search of self-portrait poems (see pages 35--43)

• Ask students to copy their poem onto 3x5 card and tell why they chose the poem to stand for something about them.

• Tape poems to table.

• Next segment invite students to walk around the room and read the poems their peers have left behind.

<u>AUTHOR'S CHAIR</u>

Students share their current writing with class for helpful feedback.

WRITING WORKSHOP

Students spend the entire period working on their self-identified writing projects.

Status of the Class

Conferences

REFLECTIONS

One student in particular, Bradley, renamed the local real-life character of Daisy and began to build a legend around her:

> They said she was crazy. They said she did not have a heart. They said she was
> the ugliest thing they ever saw. They said she could fly with the eagles. They even
> said she would never die. They called her Crazy Daisy.
>
> Crazy Daisy lived in an old house. The house only had two bedrooms and a
> kitchen which was her living room too. Her husband, Charles, was just as ugly as
> she was. He was always dirty because all he did was work on cars. He worked all
> day on his cars in the garage, and he rarely came out.
>
> Crazy Daisy was the craziest woman I have ever seen. She would pick up cans all
> day for the heck of it. She only had one eye because of the accident.

This was a pivotal moment in our class for Bradley. Up to this point, he rarely seemed really with us—just physically present while his mind was elsewhere. When he shared this introduction with the class, his status changed. He was becoming another writing voice in our community. He showed us how to borrow from Jerry Spinelli's opening for Maniac Magee and incorporate it into his writing. Unfortunately, he was expelled for the

rest of the school year a few weeks later for possession of drugs on campus. Planning well cannot take care of everything.

At this point, I wanted to sit beside Phoenix and rest a spell, let my mind wander off to a place like Maxine Greene (1995) imagined, to be able to think and act "as if things could be otherwise." Welty gave Phoenix such a time:

> But she sat down to rest. She spread her skirts on the bank around her and folded her hands over her knees. Up above her was a tree in a pearly cloud of mistletoe. She did not dare to close her eyes, and when a little boy brought her a plate with a slice of marble-cake on it she spoke to him. "that would be acceptable," she said.
>
> But when she went to take it there was just her own hand in the air. (p. 143)

Am I continuing to reach for the impossible, at least the improbable, as I work to create marble cake in my work? Is it just a dream really?

Walking a Path of Change

I started this chapter inspired by the impact of my personal reading choices and participation in a book club on the connections my third grade students developed with a reading life. The appreciation of this habit was again evident with these sixth graders as I used examples from my fiction reading along with their writing examples to create capacity building experiences. By highlighting features of my reading selections, I could demonstrate in concrete and authentic ways that what I encouraged them to do as writers was not just a school thing but a real thing. For instance, the way Anita Shreve (1998) slowed down time in the opening of The Pilot's Wife was, to me, a remarkable example of how developing nuance can bring a trembling sense of anticipation to what first appears so ordinary. The wife is awakened in the middle of the night by the phone

ringing—a commonly dreaded occurrence. But, I had never thought about how to

develop that tense moment so a reader could wring out their soul along with the main

character. I was astounded by the achievement and thus had to share it with my students.

I used this model as a reference for what I meant when I talked with students about

Fletcher and Portalupi's (1998) craft lesson about "slowing down the hot spot." It also

served as a strong example for showing the reader what is unfolding instead of telling.

By sharing my fiction choices and insights, I helped my students continue to

notice the rarely noticed—to feast their eyes on their own worlds. I used Chris

Bohjalian's (1997) <u>Midwives</u> to show how a look at the sky can help create a mood. I

combined my sense of what Bohjalian had done so well with a suggestion from another

text based on actual classroom practice, <u>Rooms to Grow</u> (Butler & Liner, 1995) in which

the authors suggested more meaningful homework experiences that allow students to

experiment with particular aspects of writing at home, not requiring all writing to be a

part of a planned whole piece. I knew this was in line with what Fletcher (1993) had

proposed in <u>What a Writer Needs</u> as a way to develop particular skill in writing while

still maintaining the flow of daily in-class writing. I was once more astounded by what

the students could accomplish when given exactly what I wanted for my professional

self—time to listen to the sounds of my heart and broad models for building strength in

my work. The following are student-authored examples:

<u>My Beautiful Gray Sky</u>

By Candice

The sky is like a huge blanket and at the edges there are spots of different color

greens. It's gray with a touch of white spreading all around. Airplanes fly through

it, but still they are like flies disturbing the sky. The birds fly in a line; it

seems as though their sewing the lines in a quilt. As I sit here in my old small

rocker, it seems so peaceful.

<u>Sky Description</u>

By Robert

The sky is as cloudy as a memory of last night's dream. It is as grey as burning

charcoal. As far as the eye can see, there is an upside down sea of grey water. The

birds flying are like small black fish coming to the surface. The air is damp and

fog hovers over the ground like a ghost mournfully haunting the creatures on the

ground. The trees seem to be hanging over and bending down, the sky casting an

eternal shadow on the world.

Robert Morgan's (1999) <u>Gap Creek</u> had a lead paragraph that I knew when I read

it aloud to the class had hooked us all:

> I know about Masenier because I was there. I seen him die. We didn't tell
>
> anybody the truth because it seemed so shameful, the way he died. It was too
>
> awful to describe to other people. But I was there, even though I didn't want to
>
> be, and I seen it all. (p. 1)

I had students telling me they stood in the bookstore reading the first chapter of that

book. Even though books about curriculum and teaching are helpful to me, it's when I

can talk about current, popular, trade books that are likely to be displayed at large

department stores, book stores, and grocery stores that students seem to believe that I

know my stuff as a language arts teacher. The comment to parents, "My teacher read that

book" seems to go a long way in building respect for my work from others. I wrote a

bit about this on the first day back after Christmas holidays:

> I began our gathering time by initiating a discussion about all the books we'd
>
> been collecting on the chalk tray as text models during the first half of the year. I
>
> asked students what they thought each one reminded them to consider about good
>
> writing. Mostly they remembered very helpful aspects of writing—things like
>
> leads, word choice, endings—things we had discussed. That was encouraging.
>
> Cynthia also told us, "Did you know there is a whole section of southern writers
>
> at Books a Million?!" Dawson told us about being on a bus tour in Savannah and
>
> how they talked about the book Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil
>
> (Berendt, 1994)-- a book I had read quite some time ago but shared as another
>
> example of southern literature. Davis and Leonard wrote a "legal document"
>
> declaring that if they made any money from the political cartoons they were
>
> developing in our writing workshop, they hereby agreed to split the profits 50-50.
>
> I received a letter from a student who moved, asking me if she could still send me
>
> her writing. It was a really wonderful letter, written as only a middle schooler
>
> could:
>
> "I wanted to know if I could send some of my writings to you. I still want to have
>
> some feedback from you. I don't have any writings in this letter because I didn't
>
> know if it was o.k. I don't want you to fall back on your teaching job, so just do
>
> this in free time if you want."
>
> What a limited view of teacher and teaching are portrayed through textbook

teaching where the teacher is merely a mechanism for transferring information instead of

nurturing attitudes and sensitivities as well as skills. Here, this student considers my support of her as a writer outside the concerns of my teaching job—something only for my "free time."

The first time I shared Phoenix Jackson (Welty, 1994) with my students was as a character I had just met while listening to a book on tape in my car traveling back and forth to school. Later I brought her back as a model for my students as writers to show how plot can be shaped by character: "If you have a strong character your reader can sense as being real," I told them, "then plot seems like a supporting angle instead of the central quality as you most often experience in television versions of story." I reread "The Worn Path" and asked students to volunteer to be Phoenix as I read aloud—to try to feel her issues as they walked. As students thought they were beginning to see Phoenix and move into her situation, they began to walk around the room and share her journey. At one point during this experience, one of the assistant principals came into the room to officially observe me. Weeks later during a parent conference when a mother was complaining that her child didn't like school I recorded in my reflective writing: "I need to remember that an administrator told the parents of one of my students, 'I never liked language arts but I could stay in this lady's class all day, almost.'"

In the end, after receiving the medicine she had come for and accepting a gift of a nickel in the spirit of the Christmas season, Welty (1994) had Phoenix experience the following enlightenment,

> Phoenix rose carefully and held out her hand. She received the nickel and then
> fished the other nickel out of her pocket and laid it beside the new one. She stared
> at her palm closely, with her head on one side.

Then she gave a tap with her cane on the floor.

"This is what come to me to do," she said. "I going to the store and buy my child a little windmill they sells, made out of paper. He going to find it hard to believe there such a thing in the world. I'll march myself back where he waiting, holding it straight up in this hand."

She lifted her free hand, gave a little nod, turned around, and walked out of the doctor's office. Then her slow step began on the stairs, going down. (p. 149)

I was feeling stronger, too. I was seeing my voice beginning to stand up for itself through my planning style and decisions. It was no parade for me or Phoenix, but we would get down the street one way or another, throwing our shoulders back and waving our ideas, a teacher and an old woman making their way together, listening hard for our own drummers, surprised and pleased there could be "such a thing in the world" of teaching as companionship through reading.

CHAPTER 5

SHAPING A PROFESSIONAL CHARACTER

Supporting a Sense of Self through Reading

[F]or we were not strong, only aggressive;

we were not free, merely licensed;

we were not compassionate, we were polite;

not good, but well behaved . . .We substituted good grammar for intellect;

we switched habits to simulate maturity;

we rearranged lies and called it truth, seeing in the new pattern of an old

idea

the Revelation and the Word. (Morrison, 1970, p. 159)

Professional Reputation: Defined by Tests

I wanted to know how it came to be that teachers were not trusted to plan

independently of system-centered formats, administrative review, and state-sanctioned

curriculums. I wanted to document a respectful, yet resistant reaction to this status quo

culture. I needed hope that I mattered in the education formula beyond my ability to

implement programs and join the ranks of overseers of the one-right-way brigade. The

image of teacher as a political figure was threatening my sense of professional identity. I

was aware that each of us, despite our positioning in local and national hierarchies, acts

as "political operatives attempting to develop particular types of readers and writers who

will work to realize particular sets of values in particular ways" (Shannon, 1999, p. 33).

Unfortunately, however, as teachers, we tend to be defined in most simple terms—by our student's scores on standardized test events. In such a position, we are not leaders, only reactionaries—not empowered, mere—not excellent but adequate. We substitute compliance for intellect; we switch implementation for scholarship; we call tests truths, seeing in the prescribed curriculum the Revelation and the Word.

In my case, I was finally generating a rhythm to my relationships with students and our shared work. By designing plans that were beginning to keep a steady beat of routines that legitimized a better match between my beliefs and my actions, I felt like I was finally on my way. I was also developing a dependable parade of attendants, with Phoenix Jackson (Welty, 1994), Katherine Paterson (1989), Georgia Heard (1999), Donald Murray (1996), Lawrence Stenhouse (Ruddick & Hopkins, 1995), James Paul Gee (Kanawati, 1997), William Pinar (1978, 1999), Anna Quindlen (1998) and a host of others marching alongside me.

My plans now included preliminary and summary reflections. They highlighted features of literacy learning that I believed to be essential: A read aloud text, mini-lesson for introducing new considerations or revisiting ongoing issues of reading and writing, a text model from published writing or student writing, and space for idiosyncratic uses and interpretations through authentic use. These basic features were my road signs. They helped me stay the course when other programs or mandates were threatening interruption. We continued to have homework but now what I asked students to do at home was more in line with the reading and writing pursuits of our school days. They were similar to the concept of parallel practices I had developed in the past when what happens at school is informed by home and vice versa (Shockley, Michalove, & Allen,

1995). At-home-time, was an opportunity to make real-life matter for students as writers and readers. This was the place students could practice specific skills of writing such as dialogue so we didn't need to interrupt the flow of writing when we were together in school, but could still practice these critical features. We could develop specific skills outside of class by attending to our real lives and then incorporate these developing abilities into our extended writing choices. For instance, Jed recreated the dialogue his family had when they went out to dinner:

"Do we have to eat here?" Joel asked.

"Yes," dad replied. Dad walked up to the door of the restaurant and said before entering, "No fighting. No complaining and no bad behavior. Understood?"

"O.K." Joel said.

Dad opened the door and Joel as usual went in first.

"Hi," dad said just as they walked in the door. An older man with his wife and daughter said hello back. Joel quickly took his napkin and laid it on the table.

"What would'ya like to drink tonight?" the waitress asked.

As usual Joel couldn't make up his mind. "I don't know he said angrily.

"Four teas please ma'm."

Joel was at the end of his rope with mom and dad. All of a sudden a conversation started up:

"How did you do in school today?"

"Good, as usual," Joel said.

"I heard you just didn't care for building a crane," mom said.

"I did what?" Joel asked.

"I was talking to your teacher and she said that you slammed it in the garbage and said it was stupid."

"Well, was it stupid?" dad asked.

"Yea," Joel replied.

"You didn't get rude with the teacher did you?"

"No, I just simply put my head down on my desk and said, "Boy, this sure is stupid."

Mealtime seemed to help many not only learn standards of dialogue writing but also how to stop and develop a particular scene so that characters actually moved and lived as they talked. Cathy shared a similar scene from her real life:

"How was school?" Dad asked.

"Fine," replied Hanley and Theresa. Theresa wraps spaghetti around her fork.

"What did you do?" Mom asked.

"What did we do where?" Hanley asked innocently while taking a drink of cola.

"At school, stupid!" replied Theresa.

Mom picks up a piece of toast and takes a bite.

"Don't call your sister stupid," Dad says angrily.

Theresa finally eats the spaghetti that has been curled around her fork.

"Mom, this is delicious," Hanley exclaims while eating and trying to get everyone off this subject!

Along my way as I struggled and worried that I just couldn't get there, I found pleasure in the breakthrough moments when particular students displayed particular skills as writers and readers. My other need for a planning format became finding access to such moments as often as possible. By seeing them through their home-based writing as well as their school-based writing, I had a window in to their understandings and life situations that I could prop an elbow on and marvel over. More meaningful homework practices such as the writing exercises and reader response journals gave me pieces of writing short enough to see risks and change taking place and also a way to respond individually to next needs. My lesson plans for early spring are an example of feeling like I am getting there as a professional responsible for planning for student learnings:

Preparatory Reflections

It is important today to build on our developing sense of how one revises and what revision can mean to the quality of ones work. It seems that students think I can just whip out the "right" way to represent their work when I conference with them. I need to highlight that it is a process for me and remains a process throughout a writing life. We need to continue revising picture books—moving on to a new focus—endings.

Daily Business

1. Complete Agendas _____

2. Collect Homework _____

3. Explain New Homework _____

4. Announcements   _____

<u>Read Aloud</u>

Continue with Shiloh. I should remember, however, to give students an opportunity to discuss what has happened so far because we have had such a long break since our last reading. Also, I need to share new information about Phyllis Reynolds Naylor's writing process: She doesn't even have a dog! She develops notebooks of observations and research—another way to prepare for writing well.

<u>Mini Lesson</u> (What I want to highlight for my students about reading and writing—craft, skill, procedural)

The Craft and Skill of Revision (That's a nice way to think of it, I think):

•   Today's focus will be on writing satisfying endings. I will use ideas form Ralph Fletcher's <u>Craft Lessons</u> - pages 68, 69, 70, 71:

Writers work hard to find the right shape for a story or poem. Stories have a beginning, middle, and end (review alternative picture book constructions we have studied). The ending just may be the most important part in a piece of writing. The final words leave a lasting impression on the reader. But coming up with the right ending is hard. Sometimes we get lazy as writers and use the same kinds of endings over and over again—"It was just a dream."—"That's all folks!"—"THE END"—As a writer, you have lots of choices when you try to decide how you want your story to end. You can write an ending that is funny, one that's happy, or one that's sad. You should try to match the kind of ending with the kind of story you are writing—the mood is important here.

Share example: "My Pet Dog" (app. j)

You can also decide to end your story in a way that is similar to the beginning—like in our circle story example—You could decide to use a surprise ending (but be careful not to make it a complete surprise—you need to prepare the reader for the possibility somewhere else in the story).

Recall—<u>Brave Irene</u>

<u>Text Model for Mini Lesson</u>

Prepare transparencies of appendix j and an example of student work—develop ending with whole class (modeling a clay-like process).

<u>Learning Space</u> *(Book Clubs, Author's Chair, Peer Coaching—this is a chance for students to put into action what we have discussed in an authentic manner)* Students will work together in whatever groupings they find helpful to revise their picture books with a particular emphasis on improving the quality of their endings.

<u>Homework</u>

Students compose written reflections about current reading in their reader response journals. We'll continue our usual format and add a discussion about the type and quality of the ending used in the book they are reading. They will actually copy the last few sentences or paragraph from their choice book and discuss what kind of ending their author chose to use. Was it a surprise (when you think back was there a clue in the story that this might happen)--emotional (how)--completing the circle--other thoughts . . .

<u>Summative Reflections</u>

<u>Goal:</u> Keeping students' writing and reading connected. I did a good job linking our read aloud book, Shiloh , with Fletcher's information, and student writing. This was a spur-of-the-moment decision to do that. I finished reading Shiloh and knew I had to start a discussion about ending choices available to Naylor—then to Fletcher's choices—to the endings in the books they were choosing to read independently this week—then to choices within their own writing.

I still need to discuss with the class their ideas regarding the theme of Shiloh. I need to help students connect this aspect of story with their own picture books. What big issue are you trying to address through your writing? As I was explaining to Mary Elizabeth during our conference time, "Are you trying to show your reader that cats are unpredictable or that cats are misunderstood?"

A good day. I need to remember the feeling of having 6th graders staring at you while you read aloud. Somehow it is very different from the seemingly value-free adoration of five-year-olds. These older students seem to be in constant critique-mode.

For the first time my second segment students turned their chairs toward me for the best view as I read aloud. Daniel moved to the floor. Randy soon joined him. We are no longer too "cool" to show we care.

Now my reflective thinking was united with daily planning as well as weekly summaries. The flow of learning together, not a skill-by-skill approach, seemed to finally have a form. Mastery learning was just not a reality for me. I kept asking myself questions like, "Who ever really masters writing fabulous endings? Isn't each new piece

of writing for "real" writers its own unique challenge?" What I wanted was for each

student to get better at representing life and ideas through story and have available to

them an ever-growing facility with literate options. Just as I resisted having my

professional character filled in by outside decision makers, I didn't want to design a

learning atmosphere in which I was filling up my students from the outside in. I

continued to encourage them to work from an awareness of who they were and what their

lives were like. Morrie (Albom,1997), in <u>tuesdays with Morrie</u> said, "I believe in being

fully present" (p. 134). I want to say to my students through the organization of each day

together, "Look at this. Compare this to that. What do you think?" That is my role, I

think. We needed space for the surges and the regressions. Literacy needed to linger

within us and among us and not always have to bear the burden of esoteric evaluation.

From my perspective, I redefined my professional responsibility as setting up the

conditions for literacy learning and use. It was in the use that I could see the <u>value</u> in

e<u>valu</u>ation. But, could my formative process of professional self-definition stand up

against the pressure of high stakes testing? This said, I kept carving out an image for

myself until I ran into another roadblock—The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). The

only specific preparation we did for the test was completing our "Test Ready" booklets. I

purposefully saved this experience for a day when I was going to be away. It was a

perfect substitute teacher task. The substitute would know exactly how to proceed since

the booklets included step-by-step instructions. Even better, I didn't have to write an

elaborate lesson plan for the day. This practice took place weeks before the actual test.

Other than that day's focus, we did not set aside any class time for particular attention to

test preparation. I'm so glad we didn't because when the real test days were upon us, everything changed:

Everything Changes

Life as we knew it came to a screeching halt during the two weeks of ITBS testing. My response to this experience in my weekly reflective writings documented these changes:

This was the first week of two to be devoted to ITBS testing. It was a strange week. The schedule was different; the teachers were different; and I learned a most important lesson. I only wish I didn't seem to have to go through the anxious process of proving it to myself over and over again every time I change teaching situations. Let's see if I can explain . . .

The scene changes

I was actually nervous the first day of testing. I tried to get to school early enough to make sure things were in order, and that I would feel like I knew what was expected of me. Unfortunately, I left my planbook at home because I thought I wouldn't need it since the schedule was so weird and basically all I needed to do was read Brave Irene (1986) and talk about how this story was a circle—quest story and point out the obstacles Irene faced on her mission to deliver the gown to the Duchess. Then I knew I was going to show a video in the afternoon segments (trying to link their interest in movie versions with texts read). I figured I'd have time to pick out a video in the media center when the kids went to exploratory class because with our new schedule, we had planning time in the middle of the day instead of the last two segments. I was surprised to find that there was a video

version of Katherine Paterson's <u>Bridge to Terabithia</u> (1977). There was also a copy of <u>Jacob Have I Loved</u> (1980). That couldn't have worked out more perfectly—sometimes you just have to let things happen. So, here I was without my planbook that had all my instructions for ITBS procedures in it.

My partner teacher kindly updated me, and I wrote the schedule on the board. It really was rather hectic because there were a number of students who were being tested with different groups. Special education students went to different rooms. When the students started arriving, they had to put their names on the water bottles the school had provided just for this event with permanent marker so they would be available for them for the whole 2-week period. I didn't have a marker so my partner loaned us hers. Such a little thing and yet since students had to take turns with the marker, it took a good bit of time. Our class officers passed around the granola bars that were also provided just for testing days, but there were different flavors so kids used more time to discuss their choices. We had from 8:15, when the students are allowed to come to their rooms, until 8:30, when the school stops for the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence to get all the preliminaries addressed. After that, we had to complete the attendance and lunch count and leave the room for the cafeteria by 8:40.

Somewhere in between the students entering and the pledge, another teacher came in saying she was assigned to use our room during testing for her special education group. So there she was standing around. The students were standing around writing names on bottles and getting snacks. The students that were going to take their test with this other teacher in our room started arriving.

Our other partner teacher came in just to see how things worked out on the first morning of testing...I finally just relaxed and said—ok—can't change this—just hope for the best. We managed to get to the cafeteria on time and in alphabetical order. The next hour and a half was time for me to decompress and experience one more testing environment. I actually found it interesting. This was a very disciplined testing environment; it was the most standardized I have ever encountered. That's for sure.

The schedule changes

Testing rules everything now. The whole schedule for every grade level was rearranged. Testing gets priority. The whole school tests from 8:40 to 10:15. No one is allowed to be in the hallways during testing time. Students and teachers may not leave their testing area to go to the bathroom. Students are given a bottle of water to refill daily and a fruit granola bar as they enter the room each morning. This is supposedly based on brain research that says the brain must be hydrated to perform well. (Of course this doesn't matter every other day of the year!) Students are not, however, allowed to keep their water with them during testing. They gulp it down in the few minutes they're in the classroom. Then we take a quick bathroom break on the way to the cafeteria. Teachers are supposed to be standing and walking around the room during the whole testing period. The principal came around to each room several times the first morning to make sure all was going as planned. My class and one other sixth grade class go to the cafeteria for testing. This is because our students sit at tables in our regular classrooms and there is no room to spread them out so students won't copy each

others' papers. One teacher stands at the podium and reads the instructions using a microphone to project her voice. As the other teacher, I am supposed to walk around and make sure students are on the right page, etc. One of the physical education coaches is also assigned to our group as a monitor. There were two other volunteer monitors from the community who were also there on Tuesday. On Thursday there was only one other volunteer monitor. Students could bring one book with them to keep under their chairs so that when the test booklets were taken up at the end of the session, they would have something to do until first segment began at 10:15.

The cafeteria was chilly the first day. The students were very well behaved, however. They followed directions and seemed prepared for the effort emotionally. I was very impressed. This was a far cry from my first graders who used to cry, get lost on the page, put their heads down and sleep, or draw along the edges of their test papers.

What really caught my attention was the instant sensation that I had left a school and entered a hospital when I first opened the door to the cafeteria. A few designated teachers were traveling up and down the sterile looking hallways pushing metal carts from room to room collecting the testing materials. Is this what "standardization" does to the life of a school?

I also noticed the following student behaviors during testing:

Cathy: continued her slow, plodding style. She took longer than anyone else with each question. She is an artist not a time-card puncher.

Missy: overanalyzing. She really wants to please.

Edward: playing with his two number two pencils with his eyes closed while directions were being read—shifting pencils hand-to-hand trying to guess which color would be in which hand when he opened his eyes (pencils were blue and red instead of the usual school-bus yellow). Edward is good at escaping.

Dennis: head down on arm during directions—He is so disengaged with school.

By the third day, all the students closed their booklets when finished instead of taking the time to review their answers as many seemed to be doing the first day of testing. What will it be like by the last day next Thursday? What sections of the test will they be taking by then and what kind of district curricular decisions will be made based on their over-tested performance?

The teachers change

My partner teacher called me on Monday night to make sure I knew where everything was and what I should do on Tuesday. She never does this. After her first testing day on Wednesday, she came into the room on Thursday and motioned me over into a corner and spoke in a whisper but intensely. She wanted to let me know that the teacher who was monitoring the testing time had told the students to put their pencils down several seconds before she should have so the kids were "robbed" of the time they needed and "It was on your part of the test" (meaning the language arts section that I would be held accountable for). She brought me two stop watches (just in case one didn't work) so I could make sure this didn't happen again! She was all in a fluster that we had not been standard. I tried to gently remind her that we weren't "standard" in many ways and not to worry about this. "How else weren't we standard?" she asked. "Well, the setting

was different for our students than for the rest of sixth grade (in the cafeteria instead of our classroom). There were several more monitors walking around looking over our students' shoulders as they tried to make decisions about answers and it was colder in the cafeteria than in any other place in the building." Fortunately by the end of Thursday she seemed calmer.

I change

Here it is—the proud proclamation: The way for students to do well on standardized testing is to read a lot and write a lot and have many opportunities to notice the details of literacy through these experiences. That's it. The reading passages on the test seemed challenging as I read over student's shoulders. But, if they were experienced with reading a variety of texts for real understanding throughout the year, this would hardly phase them. I was not present on the day they took the spelling, punctuation, capitalization sections, but I did notice that the whole first section of the usage part was mostly presenting students with errors in dialect—aint, double negatives, incorrect verb tenses,--things I often hear them do in their own speech. This is something that we could easily address in a way that would matter if we used their speech patterns as the basis for dialect writing in their stories and mini-lessons on how we talk vs how we write standard English. No more will I fall victim to the exercises of disassociation that permeate idea books for teachers, etc. I really felt sure that there actually was a match between the real reading and writing lives of students and this testing. It was so different with sixth graders instead of younger students. I will confidently change my ways the rest of this year. I mean I basically had it going okay before, but still

had haunting concerns about whether I was really offering them all that they needed to show what they could do through this stilted format of testing. If I had done all year what I will do the rest of this year, things would have been much better. I'm eager to start again...I think I need to define for myself what needs to be explicitly taught/memorized for ease of recall and what we can develop best through ongoing experience.

By the end of this testing nightmare, I felt like the book character, Brave Irene. Though her obstacles were the environmental elements of wind and snow, and mine human-made sets of assessment booklets, I still felt the need to lean forward into the storm. I didn't know what to expect in the beginning, I just had to keep convincing my own professional character to be brave. It is frightening to see how fragile we all are under the pressures of this highly charged environment. As teachers, we are off-balance—nervous about outcomes, afraid of being revealed as less than what we hoped to be by low test scores and victims of a concept of absolute standardization when we know that schools are not standard environments populated by standardized students.

Through the eyes of others

In the eyes of the district office and school board, teachers and schools appear to be succeeding or not depending on their test scores for the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. After this spring's testing results were received, the principal had large poster graphs made of our school's performance. She interrupted classes with an announcement on the intercom that our school had the highest reading scores among the three middle schools in the district. References were continually

made in school newsletters and public speeches to this achievement. I was personally approached on two different occasions by two different central office workers with "Congratulations on your test scores" and "I heard you were sprinkling a little magic dust over here."

As it turned out, my class had high reading scores. This was admittedly confirming for me. This was my first year at this grade level and I had not seen these tests before. Also, I had no identified "gifted" students in my class which can often account for some classes having higher scores than others. "Gifted" students are grouped in one classroom at each grade level in this school and that teacher is supposed to have a special certification attachment for teaching "gifted" students. Suddenly, stepping outside the norms of sanctioned school behaviors through rejection of the standard planning format and offering daily reading and writing time in a more holistic manner, as opposed to the textbook progressions, was being reconsidered by more than just me.

What I came to understand was that this standardized test required that students feel comfortable with reading and thinking about what they read. The test instruction booklet stated that three quarters of the questions on the reading section were inferential in nature. From my observations of this test and my sixth grade students, I attribute their immersion in reading books of their own choosing as being supportive of developing a belief in themselves as readers. Interestingly, however, there is no QCC objective that states "Students will believe in themselves as readers." And yet, when I think of basic skills, belief in yourself

along with being able to choose a good book for yourself, are the most basic

of skills and yet receive so little attention during school time.

I also considered the fact that we were always involved in connecting what

we read with what we wrote providing a different kind of underpinning for

thinking about the written word. Many understood that the passages they read on

the test were authored by real people who faced the blank paper when they started

to compose just as they often did. This engendered a different sensitivity in

approach to reading. Attention to the details of writing through ongoing revision

and editing of one's own writing as well as that of one's peers is very different

from completing grammar exercises in a textbook. Student reading logs

documented consistent involvement with whole texts. Their response journals

recorded personal connections, understandings, and misunderstandings about

what they read. Writing drafts and published pieces portrayed consistent attention

to meaningful combinations of words. We talked together every time we gathered

about issues of entering the work with an openness to try, not master.

Interpretations of the complex interplay of extensive reading, discussion, and

living with writing are difficult, but I propose a symbiotic relationship between

believing in your own potential to be a better reader and writer and achieving that

status. Basically, this test confirmed for me that the best way to help students do

well is to make sure they have plenty of opportunities to read widely, to write

authentically, to talk and write about what they read, and to write like readers and

read like writers (Calkins, 1986, 1991; Calkins, Montgomery, Santman &

Falk,1999; Smith, 1988). I am sanctioned in this community now for at least one

more year (until the next test results). Most importantly, however, I have

given my professional character permission to continue the search for alternative

routes for student success despite the weight of the socio-political pack I carry on

my back.

A character to reckon with

So there I was, officially accepted after all that struggle and worry. At the

close of the school year while driving to a consulting job, I listened to Toni

Morrison's (1970) The Bluest Eye. I met her character Pecola Breedlove, and I

started to make connections between her life and the reluctance of teachers to

stray from the beaten path. Pecola longed for the blue eyes of the children that

teachers smiled at in school—Shirley Temple eyes, Dick and Jane eyes. She

believed that to see the world through blue eyes would mean that others would

look at her differently. Pecola was black and poor and considered herself ugly.

Her whole family felt this way. "You looked at them and wondered why they

were so ugly; you looked closely and could not find the source. Then you realized

that it came from conviction, their conviction...They had looked about themselves

and saw nothing to contradict the statement; saw, in fact, support for it leaning at

them from every billboard, every movie, every glance" (p. 34).

Teachers, too, often see themselves through the shaping eyes of outsiders.

Many believe their professional character is defined by their ability to see the

world through the prescribed curriculum, that it is the billboard by which their

beauty is proclaimed. In addition, administrative evaluation forms, prescriptive

teaching guides, and media attention engender distrust and feed back to teachers a

view of themselves as powerless people capable of inflicting intellectual harm

if not managed appropriately. It is difficult to look at teachers and see so many

struggling to comply with such outside standards of beauty. My notes record my

feelings about this state of being: From the beginning I was considered different.

My schedule was different; I was only there two and a half days each week. We

were in the computer lab or the media center every day I was there. Once, Brenda

came into our class to return some science materials to my partner teacher. That

afternoon she said, "You just look different, sitting on your desk at the back of the

room, taking your glasses off to look at your students as they share their writing

then putting them back on again to write something down that they said. I want to

look like you when I teach."

As I listened to Morrison's words and worried over Pecola and the similar

situation of teachers, I also recalled the short story "I Stand Here Ironing," in which Tillie

Olsen's (1953) mother character stood ironing, considering the life of her daughter

Emily, allowing her mind to go back and forth between past and present with the same

rhythmic motion of the iron. In the end she decided:

I will never total it all. I will never come in to say: She was a child seldom smiled

at. Her father left me before she was a year old. I had to work her first six years

when there was work, or I sent her home and to his relatives. There were years

she had care she hated. She was dark and thin and frail-looking in a world where

the prestige went to blondness and curly hair and dimples, she was slow where

glibness was prized. She was a child of anxious, not proud, love. We were poor

and could not afford her the soil of easy growth. I was a young mother, I was a

distracted mother. There were the other children pushing up, demanding. Her

younger sister seemed all that she was not. There were years she did not let me

touch her. She kept too much in herself, her life was such she had to keep too

much in herself. My wisdom came too late. She has much to her and probably

little will come of it. She is a child of her age, of depression, of war, of fear.

Let her be. So all that is in her will not bloom—but in how many does it? There is

still enough left to live by. Only help her to know—help make it so there is cause

for her to know—that she is more than this dress on the ironing board, helpless

before the iron. (p. 12)

Through story, Morrison and Olsen helped me see others—particular people in

particular historical contexts that somehow, though not dominant in attention, absorbed

the full force of a politic of power, crippling their character in profound ways. French

Impressionist painter Bonnard took advantage of this human condition making deliberate

use of our tendency to focus on the most prominent to the virtual exclusion of the

marginal. He worked to catch our eye with the obvious and enjoyed the confounding of

understanding that a closer look could bring. Only by stretching the view beyond the

dominant to the edges of the canvas could the intricacies of his composition become

clear. It takes time for an awareness to grow—to comprehend the canvas—to understand

that there may be more involved than what first meets the eye. In Visual Awareness

Frederick Palmer (1972) explained:

When we look around, our eyes move over the scene in a rather haphazard way.

Our gaze is arrested by certain objects which attract us because of their size,

unusual shape or colour. Similarly our attention may be caught by people and

things we recognize, or happen to have been thinking about. When we walk down the street we view it in a rather general way. We see most clearly the area directly in front of our eyes. This is the most clearly defined part of the scene, it is what we have in focus. The edges of our field of vision are rather blurred, we see what is there but not with the same clarity. If we wish to look more closely at something in this area we have to move our eyes towards it and then, if it is not at the same distance as that at which we have been looking, our eyes must refocus on the object so that it becomes clearly defined. In doing this, if the object is near to us, the distance will be out of focus, and if the object is far away then the reverse will be true. All this we accept as part of our way of seeing. The process is automatic. (pp. 64-65)

All too often, I think, we automatically attend to what is directly in front of our eyes and spend little time searching the edges of our field of vision. It takes time and energy to refocus beyond aspects of our living that are taken for granted, to consider what effect our narrow view has on ourselves and others. For instance, many teachers may accept what "is" about their situation because confirmation is in the area directly before their eyes as they walk school hallways and interpret school documents. What is perceived as common or accepted is often what is placed directly before them. In one CCMS administrator's view, "It's just what we have." I want to exclaim, "How can you be so sure?"

It is as if we teachers are living within a Bonnard still life where others are the dominant figures placed in the publics' direct line of vision and teachers are gathering at the margins with their students to live out the impositions of the official view. Without

accessible response options, teachers also experience the absence of "the soil of easy growth" along with Olsen's Emily. The hope is that they will not continue to feel "helpless before the iron." That they will not be satisfied to say, "This is just what we have." That they will not continue to be silent like Morrison's (1970) Breedlove family who

> slipped in and out of the box of peeling gray, making no stir in the neighborhood, no sound in the labor force, and no wave in the mayor's office. Each member of the family in his own cell of consciousness, each making his own patchwork quilt of reality—collecting fragments of experience here, pieces of information there. From the tiny impressions gleaned from one another, they created a sense of belonging and tried to make do with the way they found each other. (p. 31)

Hopefully, we won't all need to look the same in order to achieve excellence. As Julia Alvarez (1999) complained:

> Had we been able to see into the future, beyond our noses, which we thought weren't the right shape; beyond our curly hair, which we wanted to be straight; and beyond the screen, which inspired us with a limited vision of what was considered beautiful in America, we would have been able to see the late sixties coming. Soon, ethnic looks would be in. Even Barbie, that quintessential white girl, would suddenly be available in different shades of skin color with bright, colorful outfits that looked like the ones Mami had picked out for us. Our classmates in college wore long braids like Native Americans and embroidered shawls and peasant blouses from South America, and long, diaphanous skirts and

dangly earrings from India. They wanted to look exotic—they wanted to look

like us.

We felt then a gratifying sense of inclusion, but it had unfortunately come too

late. We had already acquired the habit of doubting ourselves as well as the place

we came from. To this day, after three decades of living in America, I feel like a

stranger in what I now consider my own country. I am still that young teenager

sitting in front of the black-and-white TV in my parents' bedroom, knowing in my

bones I will never be the beauty queen. There she is, Miss America, but even in

my up-to-date, enlightened dreams, she never wears my face. (p. 44)

In today's time, the tightly designed teaching plan that moves without interference

from identified objective to predicted outcome that is put into motion by an unerring

teacher are things of beauty we are supposed to hold dear. To aspire to such precision

robs us of the time and energy to attend to our professional character development.

It's a Matter of Character

As a teacher who researches her own practices, I exist on the margins of the

educational canvas. I constantly run the risk of being disregarded as I work to understand

and define my own perspective. I find it difficult at times to resist incorporating the view

of teacher that others outline for me. Sometimes I feel an ugliness similar to Pecola

Breedlove. This is an ugliness born of an inability to conform to the beautiful view of

teaching as a linear, non-messy delivery of predefined knowledge. It is difficult not to

adopt the conviction, as a teacher, that others are experts and you are not. Certainly there

is support for that view "leaning at me" from every mandate and curriculum guide I

receive (Apple, 1993). Finding methods that work to ground my experiences in a manner

considered intellectual and scholarly by those in more prominent and thus powerful

positions is a consistent challenge. In previous efforts to align research with teaching, I

have called for a search for organic methods for teachers who wish to study within their

own situations (Shockley, 1996). In this way, method and practice become intertwined.

There can be a mutual contribution as research informs teaching and teaching informs

research. Teachers can build professional character and find new muscle as researchers of

their practices. Teachers can be leaders, empowered by their intellect through a

scholarship that reclaims excellence through self-assessment. I am calmed by the words

of Maxine Greene (1995):

> From a human perspective, that of a teacher beginning a school year, a writer
>
> beginning a book, a child beginning the first grade, nothing is fully predictable or
>
> determined. All kinds of things are possible, although none can be guaranteed.
>
> When risks are taken, when people do indeed act on their freedom, a kind of
>
> miracle has taken place. Arendt reminds us that we ourselves are the authors of
>
> such miracles, because it is we who perform them and we who have the capacity
>
> to establish a reality of our own. (P. 56)

In the literature anthology (Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1997) assigned to sixth

grade, there's a section titled, "Handbook of Literary Terms." I reread the presented

definition for the literary term 'character' and reconsidered the idea of teacher as

professional character. According to this textbook,

> Most often a character is an ordinary human being. . . . The way in which a writer
>
> reveals the personality of a character is called <u>characterization</u> [bold in text]**.** A
>
> writer can reveal character in six ways:

1. by describing how the character looks and dresses

2. by letting the reader hear the character speak

3. by showing the reader how the character acts

4. by letting the reader know the character's inner thoughts and feelings

5. by revealing what other people in the story think or say about the character

6. by telling the reader directly what the character's personality is like (p. 668).

From the descriptions of the Teacher Handbook which established standards for

dress,

Educator's manner of dress speaks very loudly to parents and other visitors to the

school. Teachers and paraprofessionals may dress in any clothing generally

suitable for public display, except for blue jeans, flip flops (rubber), and dirty

sneakers...No jeans may be worn on any day that teachers work with students

to the sorting response of a fellow teacher commenting,

You just look different, sitting on your desk at the back of the room, taking your

glasses off to look at your students as they share their writing then putting them

back on again to write something down that they said. I want to look like you

when I teach

my characterization in this story of planning to teach has been a process of stops and

starts facilitated by situation and reading. Attending to the rhythms of growth and change

my character acts and speaks with increasing authority. A switch-back process of

learning to attend to inner thoughts as seriously as to the expressed thought of others has

helped my character grow into a professional more of her own making.

Katherine Paterson (1989) wrote

The story gives us a language for the unknown. It shapes chaos for us and fills it

with meaning . . . but in order to do this for us, the story must ring true. It must

tell us something we already know but didn't realize we knew. (p. 219)

So, the self-portrait of teacher planning shaped chaos for me and showed me what

I probably already knew but didn't really know I knew. The process was a repository for

thoughtful review much like standing back from a painting to get the full effect of the

accumulation of brushstrokes and color. For the artist, it is the overall impact of the work

that matters most. Does the piece gain attention and warrant rumination? For this teacher,

me, it is also the composite of accumulated detail that I place on the museum wall. It is

the teacher presented as central figure—not to be narcissistic for it is almost

happenstance that it was my self as teacher that was chosen for viewing. It is simply

necessary that if what many say is true, that the teacher is the most critical figure in

education and educational reform then she be given prominence, and her professional

character be granted the attention of its full potential. Certainly, in my situation, this

centrality was not going to be given, it had to be taken. As the principal stated, "Children

first, programs second, and then teachers."

CHAPTER 6

A MORE COMPLETE CHARACTERIZATION

Discussing the Connections

It confirmed, fiercely, my notions of class, and power. It was not so much

a matter of having power to do a thing as it was having the power to stop

things from being done to you. (Bragg, 1997, p. 121)

Through Pecola Breedlove, Toni Morrison (1970) revealed how character could

be dangerously manipulated by culture—we can come to see ourselves only as we seem

to be to others. Eudora Welty (1941) set the character of Phoenix Jackson walking and

told me to also stay my course—to make teacher planning my self-defined errand and to

persevere despite discomforts along a cluttered and uneven terrain. Tillie Olsen heartened

my decision to enrich my less than fertile soil through reading. Once more book people

befriended me as a teacher character. I felt the tensions of beauty that weakened Pecola

and the mission of Phoenix to continue "probing forward" (Welty, 1978, p. 161). They,

along with other book people I met along my way, helped me sustain the effort to be

more than my situation expected of me and to continue a professional journey to find a

voice in planning, to enable me to interrupt a system of things being done to me. They

were my lifelines.

At CCMS teachers learn to devalue their professional thinking by being required

to plan in a standard way and to precisely implement programs that are not of their own

making. There is an unintentional and often unexamined depletion of talent that occurs

when teachers, like the character of Pecola Breedlove (Morrison, 1970), are threatened with images of only one kind of good teacher. Teachers who are routinely presented with detailed curriculum guides soon lose faith that they can be the authors of their own professional goals. Instead, teacher-proof materials serve to confirm that they are not the experts and are, indeed, hopelessly inadequate. To be beautiful in such a culture, a teacher must fall in line and walk a runway, a worn path, of predictability and constant external review. Like Welty (1994) claimed on Phoenix's behalf, "And her going was the first thing, her persisting in her landscape was the real thing, and the first and the real were what I wanted and worked to keep" (p. 161). I valued the same for myself. And,

> Like Phoenix, you work all your life to find your way, through all the obstructions and the false appearances and the upsets you may have brought on yourself, to reach a meaning—using inventions of your imagination, perhaps helped out by your dreams and bits of good luck. And finally too, like Phoenix, you have to assume that what you are working in aid of his life, not death. (p. 161)

As dramatic as it may seem, my experience felt like a survival story. I would either find another way, or quit this place. My reality was that my professional self could not survive simply as a manipulated character.

For Welty (1994), the center of Phoenix's story was the habit of love. For my story, the habit of reclaiming planning through reading "cuts through confusion and stumbles or contrives its way out of difficulty, it remembers the way even when it forgets, for a dumbfounded moment, its reason for being. The path is the thing that matters" (pp. 161-162). My path of hope was based on a genuine concern for the needs of

teachers and children as learners. It is represented by a quote from Alice Walker

(1997) that I used to open this study, "For we can do nothing substantial toward changing

our course on the planet . . . without rousing ourselves, individual by individual, and

bringing our small, imperfect stones to the pile" (p. xxiii). I bring my reading stone to the

pile and lay it alongside those pre-formed stepping stones already so neatly placed—built

by years of curriculum premised on step-by-step lessons of objective to evaluation to

objective to evaluation...that has sacrificed the imagination of so many teachers and

children.

Much of my effort to plan for teaching with a voice of reviewed and revised

authority was done in the shadows. I never had the chance to pull the shade all the way

up and do my work in the full light of day. The administration knew I was studying my

own planning but never asked what I was learning or how my process complied or

differed from the STOPE mandate. Teachers at my grade level were also aware of my

focus but only paused on occasion to politely inquire about my progress. I do think that I

was perceived by my peers in this regard as someone to watch—to see if I could survive

with this administration when I was obviously involved in work that differed from the

official word.

My first attempt to initiate a more open dialogue regarding planning was not

successful, though the challenge came at the end of the year and not the beginning when

the need to address teacher planning first seized me. I remain haunted by one

administrator's reaction to my suggestion that requiring teachers to plan in a standard

way was one reason teachers did not seem eager to devote time to site-based decision

making. I explained how it seemed reasonable to me that if teachers didn't feel they had

choice about how to plan for their own classrooms, how were they to believe their

voices would be respected in school-wide considerations? She turned to me with eyes

attempting to pierce mine and in a threatening tone pressed, "So, what would you do

instead?" Somehow I knew that at that moment she did not want a lengthy explanation of

what I had been going through to actually prepare an empirically based response to just

this kind of question. I simply said, "You could begin by encouraging teachers to develop

their own planning styles and then we could sit together and talk about the features of

each approach and see if we could learn from each other." She turned and walked away

as if there were a burr in her brain.

Throughout my first year of teaching at CCMS, I felt insecure. I didn't know

people well. I had no depth of experience with the students or the community. I was as

emotionally wobbly as a newborn animal attempting to stand and be recognized. I felt I

would one day be able to run in the field again, but as I endured this weakened state, the

words of Anne Lamott (1994) resonated with me, "We're a crowd animal, a highly

gregarious, communicative species, but the culture and the age and all the fear that fills

our days have put almost everyone into little boxes, each of us all alone" (p. 175).

I am left to believe that in so many cases when teachers don't get the desired

responses from students, they blame the students. Administrators, too, seem to point an

accusing finger at teachers when schools, classrooms, and students don't appear to be

functioning at the level of the highest current standards. It is difficult to look closely at

ourselves and the positions we hold in order to tell our stories and paint our portraits for

all to see: The facts, the fantasies, and the flaws. After attending so closely to my own

thoughts and actions during this school year, I can better appreciate the link between

system and self and the struggle involved in making informed decisions that counter

the approved path. It is risky business. Risky because tentative decisions impact young

learners and risky because professional survival is always on the line. Risky most of all,

however, for the character of teacher. Will s/he be able to define the role or just play one?

Finding Shelter

In his novel, The Odd Sea, Frederick Reiken (1998) presented the father character

inspired to become a skilled timber framer:

> "You don't just learn to timber-frame overnight. Like all things, it takes practice,
>
> trial and error, and learning from your mistakes. I may lose money, at first, but
>
> like Gwen says, I'll make ends meet." He chuckled and then said, "Literally,
>
> making ends meet is what I'll learn to do. There is a language, you see, a
>
> structure. Once you understand the timber-framing method, it's all the same. It's
>
> all pegs and holes and proportion. All geometry and balance. It's functional form
>
> of art, something worth building, do you see?" (p. 68)

Literature on educational planning has been dominated by a linear means-ends model as

first proposed by Tyler (1949). Prevailing within this model is a timber-framer's desire

for pegs and holes and proportion without the errors inherent in the trial and error and

learning from your mistakes part. Published curriculums are replete with examples of

clean and easy learning if only one follows the directions and implements properly.

Actual studies of teachers planning, however, confirm that teacher as timber-framer is

more a prospect of working through activities to establish a structure worthy of

supporting necessary content. Teachers know about the balance of geometry and art and

the worth of building something that will sustain itself in routines that allow people to

meet and learn from each other. Until recently, the proposed cycle of teacher planning (Yinger, 1980) did not include scholarly pursuits in the trial and error aspect of building curriculum as a sustainable and beautiful thing to live within. Now, with the educative research model (Gitlin, 1992) and other examples of university and school-based connections (Pate, McGinnis, & Homestead, 1994) such inclusions have been documented. Conspicuously absent, however, continue to be teacher confirmations that decisions regarding objectives lead practice (Peterson, Marx, and Clark, 1978; Zahorik, 1970). The tidy form of objectives to evaluation lives more fully in offices than in classrooms.

I have achieved real insight about the relationship of teaching and planning and reading through the special perch that my self-study has supported. When I first felt this right of thinking being taken from me, I winced at the anticipated loss. I had assumed planning was my domain, that the way I placed the planks of idea to idea would represent a well-balanced relationship between teacher, content knowledge, and students—a co-constructed pedagogy. I made this assumption because I had not been personally challenged before about my planning. As mentioned, there was always the expectation that quality teaching was undergirded by quality planning, but not to the point of being a prefabricated form.

During discussions with my peer sixth grade teachers, I learned that each had an "official" plan and a "real" plan. The first was written in compliance with administrative standards and the other was used to help organize their thinking and their actions in preparation for the confirming and disconfirming input of student learners. I recently visited a teacher's classroom in another state and she too showed me the plans on white

paper that she submitted to the administration each week for review and the "study sheets" that she authored and shared with her students. These study sheets were both informative and visually appealing. She chose beautiful colored papers for each set and organized her information in artfully designed sections that included an easel with a psalm of study (which represented an area of her own inquiry during the summer with teachers from across the country), an inspirational quote about literacy, and an eco-tip for improving the quality of life for citizens of the world community. This plan was offered to high school English students, but it was not limited to simply a straightforward delivery of information from within a discipline; it had an authentic personality, a unique character behind it.

I am concerned that teachers in this day of access to information still resign themselves to an underground attitude of pseudo-autonomy. I wonder why not one of the teachers with whom I worked challenged the rigid planning process in our school. I wonder why the plan that is actually shared with students by the teacher I visited is not an official document to her. In my travels as an educational consultant, I have also heard teachers talk of "acting dumb" if a supervisor should walk in and see that s/he is teaching something other than the official plan. The strategy here is that if one is not challenging but naive then there will be no punitive results. It seems that many have been able to come out of the "closet" and claim their identity but not yet teachers. This is so out of character for teachers who should be role models for the youth of this country and represent the epitome of learning and knowledge. How can students and communities respect and honor teachers when teachers do not often act in a manner that establishes their own professional authority? Perhaps the path of least resistance supports a role-

playing of "the" teacher rather than the challenging intellectual work of being "a" teacher.

Here is my concern: What is a teacher to stand on if not her own lesson plan? If robbed of this foundation, how does s/he know what's worth saying, how to act in support of learning, what to consider in shaping and orienting practice, how to listen to students, families, and community with a sensitive and well-informed stance? How can a teacher achieve full characterization if detached from these basic elements of professional character development? Reclaiming our lesson plans as representation of the kind of teacher character we aim to be is a most basic step in the professionalization of the role. How strong a foundation we each can create will be decided by the extent of our continued study—our reading to know more, our trials and errors to know more, our teacher research to know more? I am convinced that if we each took back our planning, polished this stone for open presentation, created our own shelters from the hard work of continuing to learn ourselves, we would not retreat within them, but invite constructive review because we would feel the security of our own constructions around us. We would not be as fearful because we would know how our understandings were built and would welcome additions and modifications to continue the lifelong process of repairing and expanding our ideas. We would have something substantial to collaborate about.

In my new situation, planning was first helpful as an outline guiding me through what to do when. I was unfamiliar with the time structures of middle school and the organizational requirements of ritualized behaviors such as locker breaks. "I needed reminder statements [at first] for things that needed to be taken care of—cues for making sure I accomplished aspects of the day in a certain order." I even "needed the times

written down to help me develop a 'feel' for how much we could do together in the given amount of time." It was evident from the beginning, however, that the STOPE format for planning highlighted features for primary consideration that held little value for me. The very pragmatic concerns of learning to learn within short time segments and attempting to accommodate the STOPE format were the source of much friction between my hopes for learning with students and stated administrative expectations.

I actually moved cautiously from working within the required guidelines to creating an individualized planning format. Though often articulated by other teachers and administration as a kind of planning law, I slowly discovered that no one actually checked to see what my plans looked like. I received admirable evaluations from all three administrators without a lesson plan review; and once standardized test scores were known, I understood that what counted for this group had been achieved in their eyes.

What counted for me, though, was whether my students wanted to read and write and if they could do so with passion as well as skill. There was no test for this, only ongoing observation of habits and flurries of creative excellence in student writing products. It took more than one year for me to build a structure for planning that was a functional form of art, reminding me that pegs are really people and holes are our ideas. When placed in support of each other they frame a potential space instead of a purely measurable one. I ultimately hammered out a plan that took the following shape and stood as a daily reminder of what I held dear.

Once more, an image from The Odd Sea (Reiken, 1998) helps make my point that teachers need to design a philosophical shelter for their work in the form of planning

templates that frame their decision making and authentically represent their professional character:

> The raising took several hours. We pushed the bents up with our bare hands, until the weight could be supported by the pike poles and gin poles that were manipulated by my father and his crew. We pounded tenons into mortises, braced rafters, and hammered pegs. After a half-day's work, the wooden skeleton was finished.
>
> Then like a mountain climber reaching a long-anticipated summit, my father climbed up to the rafters, a hemlock sapling in his hand. He attached the sapling to the peak of the frame. This is a standard timber-framing ritual, the point of which is to give thanks to the trees. But as he stood there on those rafters—our small crowd watching from below, the sun behind him—my father uttered something more like prayer.
>
> He pulled a sheet of paper from his pocket and read, "Now, with this small branch, I wish safety upon this house. I wish our lives to be as solid as this timber frame we've raised. I wish that all my children see their wishes rise, take form, and dig strong roots into the soil. And know that like this small house, we must stand vertical to this earth. Despite gravity and all of our pain, we rise. There is no choice." (p. 79)

It is time for teachers to make the choice to rise despite systemic gravity and the difficult scholarly work of coming to know what we stand up for.

A Thematic Path

Parker Palmer (1998) established that "the selfhood of the teacher is key" (p. 7). "Who is the self that teaches?" is the shaping question of his book, The Courage to Teach. I came to appreciate planning to teach as part of representing a characteristic professional identity of the one who teaches. This became a subtle process of cultivating a self that achieved authority from the inside rather than the outside. In this sense, Palmer helped me by articulating my definition of the role of the teacher:

> teachers possess the power to create conditions that can help students learn a great deal—or keep them from learning much at all. Teaching is the intentional act of creating those conditions, and good teaching requires that we understand the inner sources of both the intent and the act. (p. 6)

With Palmer's support in mind, I would like to retrace the trail of reading that led to the construction of this study as my shelter, a self-constructed beginning point. From the intentional act of choosing planning as the cornerstone of my self-study, I compiled a spreadsheet of reading events that received mention in one or more of my data sources of notes, narratives, and daily plans (see Appendix A for a more complete explication of this process as a research endeavor). I considered the impetus for each event and the associated influence on my planning decisions. This analysis, in my view, was a form of reader response, specifically, a transactional process in which the reader, the texts, and the context were all important elements in the construction of understandings (Rosenblatt, 1938, 1978). This review of my reading habits uncovered a thematic path of professional

characterization that has shaped this narrative. From foothold to foothold up a tricky slope toward the sense of professional authority I desired, each chapter of this work has highlighted one or more of a series of themes establishing the importance of a full characterization of teacher.

In Chapter One, I encountered the texts of my situation: The Teacher Handbook, the assigned textbooks, and the print propelled at me from banners, bulletin boards, and murals. My response to these materials moved me along as a reader to reading the research on curriculum and planning. Chapter Two chronicled developing professional character through informed resistance and scholarly reading within the discipline. I was committed to achieving a responsible alternative to the presented requirements of my situation. This could not be done ahistorically. This chapter allowed my character as teacher to claim the ahas and amens that reading for background knowledge generated. Here, too, I could sigh and sing as connections were accomplished between then and now.

In Chapter Three, as I initiated my note-to-narrative-to-planning process, I advanced honoring professional character by developing a research attitude. This research attitude complimented the theme of creating "muscle" in professional character by searching to understand why. From these two thematic standpoints, I wanted to combine the historical why with the day-to-day understanding of the whys of my decision making. I also tried to demonstrate in this chapter the need for the professional character of teacher to remain sensitive to students. By reading the texts authored by student's families and the texts crafted by my students as writers, I tried to know and support them as individual learners. Additionally, I

noted the need for informed choice in support of the full characterization of teacher as professional. This theme was demonstrated through the selective union of traditional and innovative approaches. I saw the value of the assigned text as a shared resource, recalled the concise Strunk and White (1956) guide, and tried to innovatively combine the old with the new. I valued the right as a professional to be able to select how and when to use the materials at hand with those at large. It was a trial and error experience to have sixth graders rewrite the words of Strunk and White in terms that made the information more accessible to this age group. How could I know the possible, if not granted the full potential of my character as teacher?

Authority was the focusing theme of Chapter Four. To gain professional strength through reading to renew my spirit, reading to dispel some of the worry, reading to find my confidence, reading for the new insight, reading for inspiration, and reading for results with students, I show how these subthemes recognize that reading fiction and the work of other teachers helped scout a path for professional growth and change. The development of professional authority by broadening text options for the teacher and for students was essential to this work.

Chapter Five portrays the theme of character vulnerability as position can be undermined in literature and in real life during times of moral panic. The pressures of testing come into view in this chapter as the compass by which outsiders venturing for a time in our turf, attempt to pinpoint the status of our professional characterization. However, under the wings of writers professional

character has the potential to continue to develop and thrive**.** This registers the hope of this chapter and this work.

Throughout the lived experience of teaching in this time and place in tandem with the virtual experience of reading my way through it, twists and turns of lesson planning strategies were attempted. The development of professional authority through experimenting with alternative planning formats was the connective thematic feature. Attempts to construct a frame for my plans that could stand up to external challenges and represent my professional character was a greater challenge than anticipated. In fact, it took more than one year to design. I learned that for a plan to mold itself to my professional character, I had to take the time to reknow my self in this new situation for character exists within setting, relationship to other characters, and plot.

Though this work is primarily a character study evolving from a preliminary conceptualization of self-study as self-portrait (see research Appendix A for further explanation), the tensions of good fiction were intentionally interwoven into my story of planning to teach. Ralph Fletcher (1993) defined tension as that aspect of narrative that "staples the reader's eyes to the page" (p. 102). Fletcher also identified three categories of tension: "Person versus Person, Person versus Nature, and the Inner Conflict" (p. 102). In my researched story, all three types of tensions were present. As a teacher character, I expressed tension about how I fit in with other people—my peers, parents, and the administration (Person to Person). I was also continually worrying about my place within an educational system that tried to define me without asking me what I thought

(Person and System). Inside myself (Internal Conflict), I puzzled over what was best for my students and me if I believed that we were all learners and teachers together in a unique time and place. Again, Fletcher assisted my thinking by clarifying that "a person versus nature conflict often boils down to survival" (p. 104). For me, claiming authority for my own teaching within an entrenched system of pre-defined curricular formatting and group standards was a story of intellectual survival. "In the internal conflict" Fletcher wrote, "the main character tries to reconcile opposing forces or desires" (p. 108). It all boils down, I think, to what Mya Angelou (1971) titled a process of "Seeing Beyond Their Own Seeming."

As I participated in this process of achieving a revised recognition of professionalism, I often felt the ground crumble underneath my feet. Nervous as I was entering this new teaching environment, fear was compounded by my first rock sliding event which was, of course, encountering the Teacher Handbook. I suppose that from that point on it was an up and down process of wavering in the face of mostly administratively placed or system placed obstacles that reading gave me the strength to get around. My reading decisions were markers uncovered as I analyzed my progress from the vantage point of summer safety away from the hugeness of actual experience. This annual time of distance for teachers has such capacity building potential if we just acquire the habit during the school year to develop dependable records of practice. I see a teacher's planbook as an overlooked resource for this kind of work. By connecting my reflective writing to my decision making as recorded in my self-authored planbook, I established a

record of my year that was reviewable, allowing me to develop the voice of a more fully actualized professional character that could better stand up for itself.

A sense of professional character was the outcome of recalled and newly discovered readings that guided me through planning to teach without falling victim to the formulaic plotting of institutional and administrative controls. This sense of professional character came through readings that assisted me in 1) taking responsibility for my own professional situation, 2) developing professional character through informed resistance and scholarly reading within the discipline, 3) honoring professional character by developing a research attitude, 4) creating "muscle" in professional character by searching to understand why, 5) honoring the need for the professional character of teacher to remain sensitive to students, 6) having choices for the selective union of traditional and innovative approaches, 7) developing professional authority by broadening text options for the teacher and for students, 8) accepting vulnerability as a tension of the work, 9) seeking the wings of writers for professional character to continue to develop and thrive, and 10) experimenting with alternative planning formats in order to more accurately portray the character of the teacher in support of continued learning for all. Each of these shaping characteristics helped me find my way back to planning to teach with renewed confidence. As a reader, I found the professional freedom to become the author of my own being. As Toni Morrison's (1973) fictional character Sula announced,

> "You think I don't know what your life is like just because I ain't living it? I know what every colored woman in this country is doing."

"What's that?"

"Dying. Just like me. But the difference is they dying like a stump. Me, I'm going down like one of those redwoods. I sure did live in this world."

"Really? What have you got to show for it?"

"Show? To who? Girl, I got my mind. And what goes on in it. Which is to say, I got me."

"Lonely, ain't it?"

"Yes. But my lonely is mine. Now your lonely is somebody else's. Made by somebody else and handed to you. Ain't that something? A secondhand lonely." (p. 143)

Though the effort was a mighty one, I was just not going to live someone else's lonely. I can assure myself now that even though the study group I hoped to organize around issues of teacher planning during my second year has not yet come to be, at least my lonely ain't no "secondhand lonely."

<u>The Quarrel Within</u>

One of my underlying questions as a teacher-planner has been, Who do I listen to when I plan? In early October, I asked myself this question and wrote to find some satisfaction with the issue,

How can I reduce this load (grading) and rearrange opportunities for students so I am true to my beliefs about supporting literacy learning and keep the administration off my back while not angering parents and at the same time keeping student interest high?

The issue of dialogue and its importance for helping to acquire the broader view cannot be overlooked. Many teachers, I believe, continue to find themselves in situations where they are expected to step into a predefined role and walk the walk and talk the talk of sanctioned policies. There is no authoring cycle (Short & Burke, 1991) in operation, only a top-down system of delivery from school board to curriculum directors to administrators to teachers to students. It's like one of those fountains where the water starts at the top and spills over to fill the next bowl and then the next. It is lovely to see but not lovely to live when you're on the bottom drowning in all that runoff.

I propose that self-study is a form of self-dialogue that can be undertaken by teachers living in such circumstance as a way to gain new insight and initiate a cycle of self-authorship. Within this dialogue, I include an infusion of scholarship through reading for pleasure and information. In this section I review my narratives and plans with this issue of self-dialogue as frame, and note in particular that as I understood how the quality of my students' writing was greatly influenced by the quality of the text models I placed before them, I confirm that the quality of my thinking about reading and writing issues was also directly influenced by the text models that I provided for myself. Georgia Heard (1999), Ralph Fletcher (1993), Katherine Paterson (1989), Anna Quindlen (1998), Julia Alvarez (1998), and Sandra Cisneros (1984) were critical friends in helping to move my thinking forward about supportive ways to approach literacy development for my students.

Beverly Payne and Brenda Manning (1998) emphasized the significance of self-talk for the personal and professional well-being of teachers. My commitment to probing

the process of planning to teach was most simply a sequence of self-dialogue. My reflective writings documented the quarrel within myself regarding my right, in the sense of responsibility to student learning, to make alternative decisions. The first week of school I unloaded on paper: "I felt the pull of choices. I am resistant to starting over again. I already feel out of control." These concerns were in sharp contrast to the sentiments of the principal who offered only security in her position that "I know that you know what I want you to do. The expectations are clear at CCMS."

The insecurities expressed in my self-talk on paper signaled an over-all sense of self-doubt. In September I wrote:

I am still nervous because I see myself doing things and saying things in front of the children that don't really match my beliefs. . . . I'm not sure my decisions have been good ones. . . . I wonder if I'll have many parents complaining. . . . I'm having some guilt feelings about working through things as a process. By the end of this first full month of school, I produced the following self-evaluation: If I wrote a progress report for myself right now, I would have to say I am in serious non-compliance. I rarely use the textbooks. In fact I never even issued the writing textbook to students. I have not done any of the required workbook-on-computer exercises. I am experimenting with my lesson plans. I have not put anything on the telephone teacher connection hotline except the initial entry in which I provided families with my home phone number so I could address any issues personally instead of recording some generic message each week. I display work in my classroom that is not perfect. What kind of teacher am I?

I continually questioned myself about the value of my daily decisions for students:

> I am truly burdened by the process of grade collecting (September 15) and on October 27th I observed: I felt so odd writing a test. What I want to do is talk with students in small groups. I can't get there! Watching them take the test was interesting, however. It turned out to be one of those times they seemed most alert and putting forth real effort. It was challenging. Is this the time they will actually pay attention to the details of what I have been trying to share with them? This is so difficult to interface with my beliefs about learning that comes through in ones ability to express ideas in writing not just a regurgitation of isolated facts.

I would call myself to reconsider central concerns such as:

> What have I learned about sixth-grade students as writers? They have potential for excellence, some will waste time sometimes (not of the pre-writing variety), word processing is helpful by being more engaging form of transcription and revision is easier. I never was able to do their typing for them like once thought would be such a wonderful plan. I would have absolutely no time for my family if I did that!

Asking myself hard questions pressured me to seek responses that were supportive of student learners, yet they also added to a sense of tension about teaching that at times felt unhealthy. Reading became the resource of solace that either confirmed my thinking and relieved some of that self-imposed pressure or it gave me something concrete to rest on while I fidgeted through attempts to break through the mound of messages about good teaching that surrounded me. In December, for instance,

The administration reprimands my teaching partner today in front of her class

for not getting some form in on time. She pushes a cart into my room without

even a preliminary, "Excuse me," and starts selling candy for another fund raiser.

On the otherhand, I recorded the same day:

I'm feeling better now that book clubs are happening and writing process for

creating picture books is working. It is such a struggle until you get those routines

going. I am thinking accountability to one's self is most important—then to

parents—then to administration—all three in support of student learning. My

order is different from the principal's chain of considerations: Programs, students,

and then teachers.

After the first of the year, I pressed myself to consider a concern that would

ultimately shape my breaking free from the imposing force of the system muscle to have

everybody adhering to the same planning format. I asked myself, "Should I accept

planning as a conceptual tool for teaching instead of a minute-by-minute plan of

implementation? There's a difference. . . . Am I teaching a plan or acquiring a way of

thinking about learning?" Compared to written comments that repeatedly claimed, "I am

worried" or "It was scary" during the first half of the school year, the second half more

often included a more optimistic tone of "I will try" and "I wonder if."

When serious talk doesn't happen in schools between colleagues, it can happen as

self-dialogue. That's what I did to make my way through a field of mixed messages

toward a re-establishment of self-authority in the process of planning to teach. As Payne

and Manning (1998) understood,

One of the major benefits of self-supportive self-talk is that it allows us to develop a protective barrier or buffer against the unpleasant situations in which we may find ourselves. It is clear that environmental unpredictability and individual stress characterize the teaching profession, perhaps more so now than ever before. These circumstances of teacher accountability and close public scrutiny necessitate the teacher's need for positive, self-supportive speech. . . . Teachers set the emotional climate in the classroom and serve as role models for students' coping skills. In order to be an exemplary role model, teachers need a heightened sense of emotional well-being. Teachers possessing such strengths are in a better position to create learning environments in which students feel physically and psychologically safe (Maslow 1970) and learn optimally. (p. 200)

Interestingly, I began to identify a move from self-dialogue about planning decisions to talking with my students about what they value about our work together. By cross-checking my thinking with theirs, I hoped to build a substitute for objectives-based thinking in much the same vein as my effort to develop a substitute planning format. I want to document what I value about the plan I've made for a day and then have students at the close of each class period document what mattered to them about their time in class that day. I imagine that there will be a breadth to the students' responses that will eclipse any preliminary predictions I am able to make on their behalf. Through their reflections about their own learning, I wonder about the potential to generate a list of student-identified qualities of learnings, which I term valuings, to place alongside the state-constructed QCC objectives.

Through self-study, I purposefully painted myself into the center of my own

learning, talking to myself all along the way. In this sense, I reached agreement with

Payne and Manning (1998) that "Effective teachers must be more than purveyors of

information, they must be people who know something about themselves and how their

own beliefs and feelings affect their work with students" (p. 196). Additionally, this

recentering of the teacher caused me to wonder about the relationship of my process with

the profession. My self-dialogue placed me in conversation with self and my reading

placed me in conversation with authors, their ideas, and their characters. There is a hope

for this effort, however, that moves beyond my time and place to ruminations about the

character of teaching in general. Patrick Slattery (1995) explored a similar potential as he

questioned the impact on professional character:

>   Let us say we discover . . . that one such basic process is depasser, or exceeding
>
>   one's biographic situation, and this exceeding is a complicated function of one's
>
>   encounter with certain forms of scholarly work. Assume we reach this
>
>   understanding via the route of various individuals' expressions of the process. We
>
>   then understand the process, and we also understand to some extent how this
>
>   process or structure is manifested in various varying personalities, under varying
>
>   conditions, and so on. If this were so, then one would be able more accurately to
>
>   assist the novice traveler to read signs and interpret events more fruitfully: In a
>
>   word, to travel (to study) with wise companionship.
>
>   This is very far away indeed. Before we learn to teach in such a way, we must
>
>   learn how to learn in such a way. And this means that we teachers, and this has
>
>   been implicit throughout, must become students, students of currere, which is to

say students of ourselves, before we can truthfully say we understand teaching
in this sense.

In this manner, my effort individualizes the character building process inherent in a teacher's capacity to reconceptualize her potential by attending to the ways s/he learns: how s/he responds to circumstances, how she responds to what she reads, how s/he works to generate possibilities for students.

<u>Implications</u>

As Eudora Welty (1974) knew, fiction has the power to do more than entertain. She wrote, "A fiction writer's responsibility covers not only what he presents as the facts of a given story but what he chooses to stir up as their implications; in the end, these implications, too, become facts, in the larger, fictional sense" (p. 160). It has not been my intention to create a path for others to march along. Neither has it been my intention to devalue the work of those who have come before. I have simply traced a troubled path toward teacher empowerment within the realm of planning—an area I believe has been overlooked as a profound feature of the characterization of teacher as professional. I have discovered a useful way of theorizing the import of reading on planning to teach in which planning is representative of the voice of the teacher character. By forcing models and evaluations on the profession, the character of teacher is a threatened one. Currently, teacher reputations are built on the sand of external approval instead of on personal scholarship and the hard work of building a defendable frame of decision making through plans that are a real record of practice. Instead most plans are an advertisement for unreal educational standards of beauty where learning is straight and narrow and presumably predictable.

Alternatively, I advocate for a professional coming out of hiding. I hope for a rich and varied recovery of the significance of the teacher in relationship to her students and a shared devotion to continued learning given life through planning models that are portraits of planning to teach.

> And the truth of your experience can <u>only</u> come through in your own voice. If it is wrapped in someone else's voice, we readers will feel suspicious, as if you are dressed up in someone else's clothes. You cannot write out of someone else's big dark place; you can only write out of your own. Sometimes wearing someone else's style is very comforting, warm and pretty and bright, and it can loosen you up, tune you into the joys of language and rhythm and concur. But what you say will be an abstraction because it will not have sprung from direct experience: when you try to capture the truth of your experience in some other person's voice or on that person's terms, you are removing yourself one step further from what you have seen and what you know. (Lamott, 1994, p. 200)

This is the danger of becoming dependent on system-sanctioned behaviors. STOPE planning was an abstraction for me that weakened my relationship with student learners.

For a teacher, choosing to study her own decision making process is a character building experience. And, as is often the case in literature, character creates plot. Similarly, too, the main character in a story often experiences some profound psychological or situational transformation. For me, the professional action of self-study has plotted a course of professional emancipation, freeing me to think more broadly about what to offer my self and my students as learners. In this sense think back to the

character of Pecola Breedlove (Morrison, 1970). Compare her situation to Freire's (1970) assertion that "Hopelessness is a form of silence" (p. 152). Recall my opening paragraph for this chapter in which I shared an assistant principal's disappointment in the initiative of teachers to participate in school decision making. Dewey (1899) remarked,

> Plato somewhere speaks of the slave as one who in his actions does not express his own ideas, but those of some other man. It is our social problem now, even more urgent than in the time of Plato, that method, purpose, understanding, shall exist in the consciousness of the one who does the work, that his activity shall have meaning to himself. (p. 23)

Of course, Dewey was speaking in favor of these principles for the child's welfare and not so much the teacher's, but the concepts are sustainable across endeavors. This teacher research process has indeed been an act of resistance, a subversive activity in search of reassociating method, purpose, and understanding in the consciousness of the one who does the work—the teacher.

Julia Alvarez (1999) explained, "Your many questions boil down finally to this one question: Do you have anything more to declare" (p. xiv)? I can now declare that from my readerly perspective, I became able to re-consider my own situation more in the light of day. I could trace the shaping impact of culture on character. I could discern how free will is most often achieved and not simply bestowed. Breaking from the norms is a scary thing and a powerful thing. Reading helped me sort through this dynamic relationship between culture and character—encouraging a mindfulness that we can be more than we seem to be. I declare that we need to go inward—within ourselves and within our ranks to find voices that better stand up for themselves even if it's a basic

thing like changing the way a school plans to teach and learn. And, in closing, I lean

one more time on the words of Rick Bragg (1997):

> I didn't get into this business to change the world; I just wanted to tell stories. But
>
> now and then, you can make people care, make people notice that something ain't
>
> quite right, and nudge them gently, with the words, to get off their ass and fix it."
>
> (p. 152)

CHAPTER 7

A FINAL LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

Letter writing served me well during my stay at CCMS. I wrote the principal to

request supplemental books and received a class set of Stunk and White's (1979) <u>The</u>

<u>Elements of Style</u>. I wrote to explain how I provided families my home phone number on

the Homework Hotline so they could call me with particular questions or concerns. I

argued that because of this easy access and my letters to families I should not be required

to leave the standard weekly messages about assignments on this machine. At the end of

the school year when I saw the requirement to turn in all lesson plans before leaving for

the summer, I wrote to request the right to retain this data for my writing about the

process of planning to teach sixth grade. In each case, I received quick, supportive

responses. I am hopeful that writing one more letter will provide access to a new

conversation at CCMS about issues related to planning:

Dear Ms. Smith,

I know you're aware of my effort to study myself as a planner during the two

years I had the opportunity to be a teacher at CCMS. I am writing to share with

you the planning frame I designed (enclosed) and to solicit your feedback

regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this alternative approach to the

currently required STOPE format.

When I first encountered the STOPE model, I saw textbooks and tests instead of

teachers and students involved with varied print sources.

S-ubject - Math

T-opic - Addition

O-objective - TSW [The Student Will] add numbers to ten

P-rocedure - T.E. pp. 22 & 23 an. pr. #10

E-valuation - #s 1-10 Homework 11-20 p. 23 pp.23

oral response, checklist, daily test grade

Teacher Handbook p. 9

By the beginning of year two, I was able to represent the goals of my work with students in a planning frame that at a glance confirmed for me that language could bring us together. In this letter I will try to explain to you what I mean. Reading aloud was the centerpiece of my planning decisions, so therefore, it received center-stage status in my planning design (Lesson Plan: * READ ALOUD). I recognized that if there were not a specific place for this critical feature of language development in my template, it would be easy to overlook. For months I was troubled in my first year, that I could not find a way to consistently make reading aloud part of our shared experiences during those short seventy-minute blocks of time. Fortunately, for year two, my partner teachers and I, along with your support, agreed to arrange our time with students in a block format allowing more contiguous time with our students. Now I had two hours and twenty minutes of connected time with each group per day. This meant I spent the morning with one group and the afternoon with the other. The first year was so choppy with seventy minutes with one group, seventy with the next, back to the first for the same amount of time, and then the last seventy minute segment

with group two again. By reshaping our time, my team helped me knock down one barrier that kept me worried about teaching to the beat of time with textbooks instead of the pulse of student immersion with language.

For me, the longer block of time also prepared the way for a different sense of continuity, allowing reading to feel more connected with writing. A single line in my planning template forced me to purposefully highlight the reciprocal nature of learning about reading as a writer and learning about writing as a reader (Lesson Plan: * THE R&W CONNECTION). Reading workshop and writing workshop were included as honored blocks of time. I have read accounts of other classroom experiences in middle schools (e.g. Atwell, 1987; Allen, 1995) where school time is focused on reading or writing and home time is for the one not so featured as a school activity. Since I view reading and writing as paired experiences, and I believe what the teacher actually provides time to attend to in class is what students believe the teacher values, I wanted to frame equal representation in my plan. The need for both kept students involved with print as "real" texts— enticements for being "real" readers and "real" writers. By "real" I mean we worked mostly from texts that were trade books and readily available at book stores and libraries, and we tried to become aware of how what published writers did with words were decisions we might find helpful as we worked to engage others through our own writing.

Reading and writing workshop were the primary frames for three aspects of learning that I wanted to try to honor each day: Mini-lesson with text-model, shared experience, and learning space. I was guided by the work of Ralph

Fletcher and Joann Patalupi, authors of <u>Craft Lessons: Teaching Writing k-8</u>.

They helped me remember to keep ideas and insights alive for my students as

readers and writers. I provided a specific place in my plan to record my daily

decisions to explain a new skill or expand on some aspect of print that might be

useful to my students as a mini-lesson. Rather than teach these skills and craft

features out of context, I told myself in my planning template to be prepared with

a text model that would help give the material life in the real world of authorial

decision making. We had a shared experience related to this new information and

then students were set free, so to speak, to read or write and begin to make

translations to their individual needs as writers and readers. The "Learning Space"

helped me remember to honor the unique needs of people who are acting as

readers and writers. This space also gave me a way to "see" my students

individually as literacy learners, working to make sense of print as readers or

construct sense as writers. Each day gave me access to specific needs for next

steps and recognition of accomplishments. As students read, I was able to

conference with individual students and assess individual and group needs that

helped me decide what to address in mini-lessons. The same thing occurred as

students spent time writing so I could help particular children with particular

needs each day.

I grew to better appreciate the significance of beginnings and tried to build a

space in my plan that acknowledged this set of rituals and routines. I finally got

beyond starting each day with details that were of little significance. Even on the

first day of school my second year, I was able to release myself from the pressure

of checking students in and textbooks out in order to create a more relational beginning. I felt it was important to let students know that their voices were most essential to the work of our learning community. We went to the media center and infused this normally quiet space with cheerful sounds of students getting to know each other through a group juggling exercise. This experience served as a shared basis for clarifying standards by which we would work together throughout the school year. We began by authoring in each class a written document proclaiming our rights and responsibilities as members of the class (also included with letter). These documents were then signed by each student and a family member and kept in their reading and writing folders. They were posted at the beginning of each class as a reminder of how we decided to work together, and I used them as a reference when we needed to have discussions about behavior.

Learning for myself the difference it made in my sensitivities to teaching to listen to books on tape as I drove to work, I understood the power of good words to embrace students as they began language arts class. To mark the transition from other classes into ours, we began by reciting poetry that we learned together. This decision was also fostered by the reaction of students during year one on Valentine's Day when they were so eager to learn love poems. Also, I was concerned about a lack of depth of experience with poetry when we were writing poetry the first year. I admit, too, that personally I wanted to find a way to learn poetry. So many days I felt like Alice in Jane Hamilton's novel, <u>A Map of the World</u> saying, "If only I had more Shakespeare on my tongue, more than a few lines knocking around; if only I could rise up, climb on the end table and with

nothing but verbal wizardry rout the angels from their warrens. I had so little,

no complete poems or Bible verses lounging in my brain like firemen on cots,

waiting for the disaster" (1994, p. 40). It was chilling on some days to hear the

students voices fill the room with a chorus of one of their favored songwriters,

Jewel's poetry, "As a Child I Walked" or the rousing rhyme about the sorting hat

in Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone. This was a ritual that served us well

(Lesson Plan: Enrich the Spirit: Poetic Beginnings).

Oral storytelling once again found its way into the life of my work with students.

It was a requested time that grew out of a gift of a few extra minutes between

class changes one day. During year one, I felt there was no time for this piece of

practiced connection that had been so significant when I was teaching elementary

school. Renewed in my devotion to the value of this time for students to tell their

lives as well as write within them and beyond them, I also saw it as a doable

translation of Donald Murray's advise to attend to the potential of particular lines

in your writing. I used our storytelling time for listening for great lines and ideas

that students could later put to use in their writing during writing workshop

(Lesson Plan: Oral Storytelling).

Feeling great frustration in the way grammar was traditionally taught, I kept

looking for a way that might matter more to my students. After all, they had

already had many years of textbook grammar lessons and practice pages, yet

seeing this work come through in their writing less often than expected, I

wondered if making the connection with oral language instead of written language

might aid us more productively. I started trying to make specific connections

between the way I overheard students talk with each other in the hallways and the rules of grammar (Lesson Plan: Make the Connection: Grammar & Dialect). This approach did seem to be getting their attention, but I was not able to develop the process into a series of repeatable experiences that I could share with other teachers. This would be a next step for me along with continued study of a feature of my planning that I anticipate will cause considerable concern—evaluation. How can the administration know I covered all the QCC objectives? How can the system explain my link in the curriculum chain that has been saudered through practiced adherence to a textbook led program? How big a problem am I? My answer is, "I'm not sure." At the close of year two, I began to experiment with a way to look at the issue that fit more with working with young readers and writers in an authentic manner. I recognized that if students used language arts class as a time to really read and write, they should naturally be actively involved in the use of the QCC objectives. These state objectives were, after all, basically the isolated fine points of fluency in constructing and interpreting whole texts. These objectives were relevant as a source of skill-based mini-lessons, but literacy is more than skill, it's also heart.

For me, what I really wanted to better understand was how the match was developing between what my goals for students were and what they would identify as new and useful learning—a skill or approach they could articulate as being important to their work. I thought of this as a process of parallel valuing. In order to develop this concept, I needed to state what I valued as a meaningful literate experience for my students each day, and then give students a chance at

the close of each class to state what they valued about the day. This way I could begin to document the unique learning process of each student while accumulating data that could inform me about the match between my goals and theirs. I planned to claim this process of connected understandings as the focus of my next teacher research study.

Thankfully, I did come to terms with the conflicts I was feeling about the requirements of numerical grades for student work that was as much about process as product. Co-constructing rubrics with students for our writing products eased my concern in this area and helped me invigorate student writing through agreed upon standards. We designed our rubrics to connect with what we noticed the authors of the books we were reading did for their audiences. These rubrics were based on a point system that the computer program required for reporting student grades was able to translate into numerical grades. In this way, I felt more at peace about being able to stay focused on writing as the primary representation of what students knew about working with words and still generate grades that did not undermine the effort. We developed this process to include the opinions of a broader audience—not just for the teacher. Point scores were averaged from the responses of self-evaluation, peer evaluations, family evaluation, and teacher evaluation—a real audience.

If I had simply adhered to the given curriculum, I would not have learned so much about my teaching, and I don't believe my students would have learned as much about the potential of language to express and deepen their lived experience. I know that situation-specific teacher research makes me a better teacher. My

intentional self-study helped me identify a planning format that looked more like me and what I had to offer student learners. I could look at a single page and see clear representation of aspects of praxis I wanted to devote us to as the informational and inspirational leader of these experiences. The boxes were of my making and guided our progress through literate transactions that mirrored my own literate practices of learning as a "real" reader and writer. I was practicing "engaged pedagogy" (bell hooks, 1994) and I was able to maintain a passion for my work with students because...

"The success of a curriculum has less to do with its nature than with whether the people teaching it believe in it, advocate it, and see themselves as innovating it. Such people are reflective and involved when they teach...student engagement in literacy depends, more than anything else, on the momentum, support, and expectations created by the teacher." (Gee, 1992, p. 120).

I knew I had some muscle in my teaching now and I had a plan that let me listen to the sounds of my heart and my students.

Morrie Schwartz, the now famous teacher honored by his student Mitch Albom in tuesdays with Morrie, understood the strain on character created by internal and external forces. First, he stated,

Life is a series of pulls back and forth. You want to do one thing, but you are bound to do something else. . . . A tension of opposites, like a pull on a rubber band. And most of us live somewhere in the middles. (p. 40)

Then he added,

Look, no matter where you live, the biggest defect we human beings have is our shortsightedness. We don't see what we could be. We should be looking at our potential, stretching ourselves into everything we can become." (p. 156)

Well, if it's possible to be out of breath on paper, that is what I am. I have tried to share with you in one letter what has taken me two school years to understand. I know you have been a risk taker in your professional life, and I know you value that trait in others. I wonder how you would feel about opening up planning for your staff to see what we could see together. I would be pleased to facilitate a critical friends group to explore the possibilities of self-designed planning with you and the faculty of CCMS. I know you will agree that a teacher's plans should truly represent her practices. Involving teachers in the critical analysis of their own decision making may lead to more involvement in other forms of shared decision making. Planning could be the place to begin to nurture a professional identity that can stand up for itself in stronger support of teacher and student learning.

I believe you will appreciate the experience of being able to look in on teaching in support of the truths that planning to teach can express about the professional character of each faculty member. I hope to hear from you soon and thank you so much for your time and attention to this very important issue.

Sincerely.

Betty Shockley Bisplinghoff

Inclusions: My lesson plan template

Student-authored "Rights and Responsibilities"

<u>In Closing</u>

Freire (1997) identified dialogue as "the point of encounter when people, together, have the capacity to attempt to learn more than they once knew" (p. 92). Linda Darling-Hammond (1999) called for more school-based collaboration by stating,

Today's schools face enormous challenges. In response to an increasingly complex society and a rapidly changing, technology-based economy, schools are being asked to educate the most diverse student body in our history to higher academic standards than ever before. This task is one that cannot be "teacher-proofed through management systems, testing mandates, or curriculum packages. At its root, achieving high levels of student understanding requires immensely skillful teaching—and schools that are organized to support teachers' continuous learning. (p. 6)

I understand the desire to believe that a simple outline like STOPE can stand as a monument to adequate teaching. What I also understand, is how a "this is what we have" attitude underlying such an approach can keep us from seeking more. Darling-Hammond's additional recognition that "Teachers learn best by studying, doing, and reflecting; by collaborating with other teachers; by looking closely at students and their work; and by sharing what they see" (p. 7) may seem too big a dream for teachers and administrators in situations like mine. As Fecho (1993) discerned,

On one hand, school districts are churning out standardized curriculums and prescriptive teaching formulas faster than they can be bound in plastic. On the other hand, there is a growing movement afoot that would have teachers reading

current theory, conducting our own research, and sharing our practices in an ever-widening professional dialogue . . .

Hargraves and Dawe (1989) suggest that teachers are being asked to be more collaborative precisely when they have less to be collaborative about. I would take that one step further: Teachers are being asked to be professionally responsible although at the same time little is being done to alter the conditions that lead to five classes of 33 students per day.

(p. 269)

It is hard to break free. I think my study attests to this fact. I also believe, however, that the effort must be made to study and act both independently and collaboratively if teachers are to become "immensely skillful" and students are to achieve at the "high levels" of understanding aspired to. It is one thing for Darling-Hammond (1998) to call for a change in how schools function; it is another thing to decide how to give such vision real life in complex school cultures. I began my exploration of teacher planning with self-dialogue that led me to create a professional community with writers. I have yet to make it to the campfire circle with a cohort of fellow teachers who raise their voices together in my school, but I am not without hope that we can come together and work on the significant issues of our praxis. I think there can be more than one path to such a goal. It is clear to me that we must continue to travel with or without all the best equipment and in less than the best weather conditions. It would be wonderful if we could travel together, but when that does not seem possible, let's be sure to pack a book.

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APPENDIX

Analysis

Initially, I relied on the work of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) as my approach to data analysis. I considered my plan for data collection to be complimentary to their process of portraiture and used their "five modes of synthesis" as a definitive way to reconsider my data when my school year was complete. They outlined the following modes for making sense of data:

1) The portraitist listens for "repetitive refrains" that are spoken or observed that yield "a collective expression of commonly held view...Repetitive refrains recur in the specific language the insiders use when representing the site to outsiders - when describing, for example, what makes the site special or the details of its educational philosophy" (p. 217).

2) The portraitist is also attentive to "resonant metaphors" that may reveal how the actors perceive their realities.

3) The portraitist listens for themes as expressed through rituals.

4) The portraitist uses triangulation to join a variety of data sources.

5) The portraitist respects and attends to the insights offered by deviant voices.

The evolution of this plan is developed in this appendix.

A Summer Plan: Notebooks and Colored Paper

Finally, summer. In the past, this has been a looked-forward-to time of review and renewal. It has become my time to look back at a school year to see what I could see. In fact, I think there's a children's camp song I should sing here that would be appropriate:

"The bear went over the mountain. The bear went over the mountain. The bear went over the mountain. To see what he could see." I was very optimistic that these few weeks would allow me to climb over the mountain of demands and pressures of school life and yield a revelation of sense-making. Honestly, I was pleased with myself for organizing a study that yielded a rather straightforward set of data to review. My essential records of practice—planbooks, representative student work, assessment tools, and correspondence with families—were at hand. The three, two-inch, three-ring binders neatly contained the reflective writings and accompanying lesson plans as planbooks for the first semester, third quarter, and fourth quarter of the school year. I had my students' writing journals lined up in a plastic bin for ready review along with manila file folders containing student-authored poetry, picture books, photoautobiographies, and other writings. I had my file of assessment rubrics coconstructed with the students as well as my written correspondences with their families. I had the student's rewriting of Strunk and White's (19 rules for usage, and I had Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's model for analyzing data according to their five modes of synthesis as my guide. I felt prepared and eager to immerse myself in what I felt sure would be pivotal learning through systematic analysis. I walked into my data expecting a transformative experience. Instead, like the bear in the song, "the other side of the mountain was all that [I] could see." I'll explain.

So many times as a teacher I have stepped back from my work with children to remember Bissex's (1980) wise words, "The logic by which we teach, is not necessarily the logic by which children learn." During my first summer of data analysis as a teacher researcher, I needed to tell myself, "The logic by which you planned to analyze your data is not necessarily the logic by which you will learn from your data." Still, I continued my tidy process. First, I reread Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's advice on using their five modes of synthesis and typed a first phase outline of what I needed to be looking for as I reread my data (see Figure 1.1): 1) listening for repetitive refrains, 2) listening for resonant

metaphors, 3) listening for themes, 4) listening for and using deviant voices, and 5) triangulation. I left enough space between each category so I could hand-write my impressions as I read. I copied this outline on pink paper and inserted it after each set of weekly reflections and plans. Soon, however, I started getting confused about how each of these categories actually presented themselves in my data. This was a point of modification from portraiture to self-portraiture. To cue myself more fully, I revised my analysis guide sheet to include more specific delineation for each mode (see Figure 1.2). I printed this revision on darker pink paper. Also, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) developed their method to be responsive to portraits of programs and institutions. I was attempting to create a self-portrait based more on text data than observed data. Another confusion began to surface as I attempted to translate practice through this coding process. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's signal to "listen" for particular things in my setting needed to be changed to focus on a broader interpreting process and include reading, recognizing, and identifying these particular synthesizing insights in my data. My new protocol for analysis was printed on yellow paper (see Figure 1.3).

After combing through my data sources with the guidance of my pink and yellow pages, I bought a new three-ring binder notebook. I pulled the pink and yellow pages from my planning notebooks and inserted them as a group in my new Analysis Notebook. I then bought blue paper to use to distinguish my next phase of analysis. I collapsed the data from the pink and yellow sheets by month of school onto summative blue notes. Purple paper coded the third phase of analysis as I reevaluated the monthly data (blue pages) into two semesters of further integrated data (purple pages). Regrettably, after weeks of reliving my data through this process of attention to the details of my practice, the effort yielded a simple set of basic descriptive themes and not the pivotal and provocative essence that I expected. Though these themes did serve to reorganize my data, none seemed especially helpful in illuminating my thinking about the experience.

The themes were planning style, placeness, choice, time, authority, the appearance of order, models that mattered, negotiating traditions, the relationship of the personal to the collective, principal lore, deviant voices, and failed or abandoned ideas.

Having written my way through conflicts of meaning in the past, I appreciated the value of facing the blank computer screen to force myself to see what I had to say. I trusted that by beginning to write, I would be able to reconstruct the themes of this data as an essential story of planning to teach. I reentered my data to identify particular quotes and stories to include under each theme and tried to reexplore each theme through a data-based narrative. As I wrote, I could begin to see that my themes represented the threads of occupational relationships that held this particular school culture together. From the perspective of the school as institution, a sense of placeness was part of a process of enculturation proclaimed through school mottoes and adherence to specific textbook choices, a required planning format, preset time schedules, and an authority structure that created an appearance of order that submitted the personal to a preconceived collective good.

From a personal professional perspective, I reviewed this institutional thematic stance for meaning for the teacher and students. Through the experience of planning to teach young readers and writers the value of being sensitive to the special features of their current placeness in life, I offered a way to accept and use uniqueness. My message through valuing responses to reading that made connections to personal experience and writing enriched by details of actual observation, was to inform and intensify their relationship to learning through the power of language to claim and celebrate self. By offering my self and my students more models for reading and writing than the assigned textbooks, we expanded our choices. We tried to build teacher and student authority through responsible work practices that encouraged developing the personal to enrich the collective experience. My first written draft funneled these insights into what I, at that

time, considered to be the overarching theme, the appearance of order. Essentially, the administration was attempting to present Central City Middle School as a place "where great things were happening" because we were all on the same page. I, on the other hand, was living a different story. I was out of order. I was showing how under that appearance of order, there were many other things happening. The official view was only a facade, a system of orderliness that was too attentive to the insignificant details of schooling (such as what date bulletin boards have to be changed each month) and too little in tune to the quality of the professional experience for teachers and models that mattered for students.

My first writing allowed me to deal with the pent up emotionalism of trying to grow professionally in an environment that only offered me ways to gauge my performance based on institutional standards. There was no encouragement or forum for intellectual exploration for teachers. Writing allowed me to claim this tension between what was presented as required and what I needed professionally.

Another initial hurdle for releasing my thinking was related to my intense relationship with my data. When I read the research literature on curriculum and planning, I was very troubled by the absence of a teacher speaking for herself about the issues of planning to teach. I wanted my weekly reflections on the process and action plans to stay whole and stand up for the tediousness and tensions of the process. I wanted my data to be there, fully present, chronologically secure and full of my continuing uncertainties. The heart of my first draft of my story was this unmanaged data. I prefaced this core material with elaborations about my basic themes and then tried to connect it through the preoccupation of school with appearances.

I know now that another simple thing was blocking my ability to see through the data to the essence of my struggle for professional survival. In the beginning I was living a day-to-day battle for professional identity that I sensed was being pulled from me by

institutional requirements and standards of acceptance in this school culture. The word portrait along with this sense of slipping identity, kept me too focused on how I seemed in comparison to others in this place. The teacher as manipulated figure instead of decision maker was a disrupting preoccupation for me. Standards for how to dress as prescribed in the Teacher Handbook, lured me to consider the implications for a chapter on "The Dressed Up Teacher." Challenges between meeting the real needs of students as learners and the predicted needs of a standard curriculum had me writing around the issue of "Disfigured Practices." I could not yet unmix the messages. Just because my approach to analysis made so much sense, it didn't necessarily mean that I would be able to make sense of my data.

Reading as Analysis

A few days before my second year at CCMS was to begin, I traveled to a consulting job in Tennessee listening to a new book on tape to help the time pass. I was listening to Toni Morrison's (1970) The Bluest Eye. As I listened to this tortured story of the misshapened childhood and view of beauty of a little black girl, Pecola Breedlove, my mind said to itself, "Teachers feel that way too." As time and miles flew by, I noticed myself participating in a call and response experience. Toni Morrison was letting Pecola call out the injustices done to her in a world where media and schools relied on one standard of beauty exemplified by the blond hair and blue eyes of the white children. And, I was responding with connections to teacher's professional lives that are defined too often by standards of beauty defined by skills of implementation and test scores rather than intellectual stimulation and authentic student experiences. Teachers, like Pecola, rarely have the support they need to become all that they can be.

On my return trip, I purposefully relistened to the audiotape. When I got home, I wrote a chapter about this relationship between Pecola and me. After a year of aloneness among so many people during my first school year, I had another's perspective to join

mine. As I wrote, I relooked at my data through Pecola's brown eyes to "see what I could [now] see." By befriending a book character I could now see that it was my professional character that was at risk, when planning to teach was not fully within my domain. I should have professional authority over my own planbook if it stood for my professional character. How could I be held accountable for other people's planning beliefs? I continued to read and recall other book characters who held a relational connection for me between teaching as a politically and culturally monitored profession. Pecola helped me enter year two with a new commitment to plan on my own terms.

Another pivotal decision occurred when my team agreed to reconfigure our schedule as a block schedule. This way I could have each group for two joined segments per day instead of one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Now I had 140 minutes with which to work in planning to teach. In just a few weeks, I finally designed a format for planning that would work for me for the rest of the year (except for minor tweaks here and there).

A third epiphany came when I asked a friend and committee member to read a draft of my writing. She wrote a very thoughtful response that recognized many of my identified themes such as time and a planning crisis fraught with tensions between my beliefs and the directives of others, but it was a comment she made almost as an aside that enabled me to notice and appreciate what had been right before my eyes all along: "I think you have so much to offer us by showing how you use reading fiction and non-fiction to sustain you and to inform you." Reading was the essence of my planning to teach. Yes, reading was the repetitive refrain throughout my data. My life as a reader was expressed through my plans to teach as rituals offered for student learners. Despite the deviant voices of other decision makers, the triangulation of my data supported the premise that reading was the source of authorial voice for the teacher and students. If

analysis is a process of sense making, the serendipitous was as formative in my experience as the planned.

Another Summer - Another Plan

Now what was I going to do? According to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis's outline of process, I was suppose to systematically search my data for themes that would lead me to what they termed the "aesthetic whole" of my work. Instead, I now had the aesthetic whole identified as reading and now I was going back into my data to see how reading had been at the center of my sense of professional survival.

In my previous work with JoBeth Allen and Barbara Michalove (1993, 1995, 1998), we found a time during each summer that we were working collaboratively on researched practices to escape from the daily routine of caring for home and families to away places. This gave us time to focus on our data analysis and writing. We went to a nearby lake for a week during one summer, to a condominium at the beach loaned to us by a grateful graduate student of JoBeth's for another. We even took over Barbara's parent's home in Atlanta while they were traveling for a long weekend. We were cheap, but we were dedicated to learning together and being able to sustain a focus on our work for a connected period of time. We always seemed to accomplish so much during this time away. After wallowing around in my data for another school year, writing and rewriting before acknowledging that reading was my key feature, I decided to take advantage of a Maymester class for doctoral students that JoBeth had designed to replicate this going away time we had come to value. I signed up for one week in the mountains with this group of thirteen strangers.

At Unicoi State Park, in a three bedroom, one bath, rustic cabin, I joined with the four other graduate students from the Department of Language Education at UGA. I found new space to write and read and agonize over the process of having something to declare. Everyone had time each day to talk with JoBeth specifically about their work and

we met as a whole group for a couple of hours each night to talk about the process. While in this new landscape, I went through my own five modes of synthesis and considered them phases of analysis.

My first step (Phase One) was to create a spreadsheet of my reading data (see Figure 2.1). I reread my reflective writings and noted each time I mentioned the influence of my reading choices. I reconsidered the impact of these reading decisions in terms of transactions (c.f. Rosenblatt, 1978) that created a "live circuit" for me as a professional and a decision maker. My spreadsheet of data integrated my transactional process with response theory by recognizing the interrelatedness of the person (the teacher), context, and the reading transaction for the potential of evoking a poem of lived through experience of some significance. I tracked this process on my spreadsheet by subheadings that noted the particular reading event, its impetus, the influence it had on my thinking at the time, my initial response and how the experience translated into decisions about practice. Last on the spreadsheet was a column for themes that I saw connected to my reading choices. Interestingly, in my method, the identification of themes came after claiming reading as the essence of my planning to teach. Themes were not used to shape an essence but to define it.

Now that my data was organized according to the signature criteria of reading events, I involved myself in the second phase of review (Phase Two). I reread the themes column of the spreadsheet, and I found phrases that I thought could stand in testament to features of reading that mattered in supporting professional character. This phase of the analysis was generally a descriptive one (see Figure 2.2).

My third strategy was to collapse the data to another level of specificity (Phase Three). I examined the relationship of particular reading events to the primary descriptive themes and identified subthemes that highlighted even more specific attitudes and actions spawned by reading (see Figure 2.3). The fourth step (Phase Four) in my process

involved developing a working outline (see Figure 2.4) and the fifth (Phase Five) placed me back at the point of writing again.

As I wrote about planning to teach based on the influences of reading, I discovered the weak places and the strong places in my analysis. For instance, I documented some reading events in my spreadsheet that certainly occurred but did not hold the key to a rich story of fulfilled or challenged practices. Other readings were profoundly formative and sustained my search for confidence and a renewed sense of professional authority. These were the reading events I chose to make the focus of my writing work, and, as previously explained, shaped the chapters of my shared story.

Though it took a second summer to create enough emotional distance from my original data to be able to see into the heart of the experience and listen to how my author friends spoke to me and claim the ways in which I listened to them, it highlighted even more dramatically the risk of over reliance on the partial data of research based on episodic events. In a summative analysis of studies of teacher thinking and planning, Clark and Peterson (1986) listed strategies such as interviews, observations, think-alouds, stimulated recall, and questionnaires. I know that short-term participation in any of these events would not have enabled me to identify the centrality of my reading habit in planning to teach. I had to live this research issue and report on it myself to fully appreciate how my author friends speak to me and how I listen to them as I plan to teach. In honor of this revealed relationship, I listen and learn from Welty (1990) one more time

> I invented for my character, as I wrote, some passing adventures - some
>
> dreams and harassments and a small triumph or two, some jolts to her
>
> pride, some flights of fancy to console her, one or two encounters to scare
>
> her, a moment that gave her cause to feel ashamed, a moment to dance and

preen—for it had to be a journey, and all these things belonged to that, parts

of life's uncertainty. (p. 161)

Figure 1.1

<u>Listening for repetitive refrains</u> **-** as spoken or observed and forming a collective expression of commonly held views

<u>Listening for resonant metaphors</u> **-** that may reveal how the actors experience their realities

<u>Listening for themes</u> **-** as expressed through rituals

<u>Listening for and using deviant voices</u>

Figure 1.2

Date of Document Being Analyzed _____

Type of Document Being Analyzed _____

<u>Repetitive Refrains</u>

Seeing or hearing the same refrain over and over again - actors actually naming or accenting through actions, gestures, innuendo, irony...

Signs and symbols in the environment - murals shout out institutional values - rules and rituals displayed reflect teacher's educational philosophy

Audibly, visually, or textually proclaim

THIS IS WHO I AM	THIS IS WHO WE ARE
THIS IS WHAT I BELIEVE	THIS IS WHAT WE BELIEVE
THIS IS HOW I SEE MYSELF	THIS IS HOW WE SEE
OURSELVES	

Figure 1.3
•   Adapting Lawrence-Lightfoot's portraiture to a process of self-portrait:

Date of Document _____
Type of Document _____
Reading for <u>Repetitive Refrains</u> in Daily Lesson Plans and Reflective Writing:

Reading for <u>Resonant Metaphors</u> used in Daily Lesson Plans and Reflective Writing:

Recognizing <u>Institutional and Cultural Rituals</u> as Events where values are revealed, priorities named, and stories told that symbolize the organizations purpose and coherence - Expressions of Community Life

Identifying Planning and Curricular
<u>Themes</u>

Deviant Voices - heard in my own head, heard through students, administration, etc.

Figure 2.1

THE TEXT the reading event	THE TEACHER the impulse	THE CONTEXT the influence
THE TEACHER HANDBOOK	primary reference - requirement	STOPE
WHITE OLEANDER by Janet Fitch	recalled connection	attempts to control teacher decision making
QUALITY CORE CURRICULUM state of Georgia	foundational information	isolated elements
THE ART AND SCIENCE OF PORTRAITURE by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot	search for a research model that honors situational teaching	the need to define an approach to data collection and analysis
Holt Rhinehart & Winston	Free time at car wash - official texts available in trunk	foundational information - approved materials
"Petals" by Pat Mora in textbook (HR&W)	associated with memory of Chapel Hill flower ladies	availability - all students have textbooks
THE HOUSE ON MANGO STREET by Sandra Cisneros (1984)	personally valued text - eager to share	recognized need to enrich student writing repertoires
KNOTS IN MY YO-YO STRING: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A KID by Jerry Spinelli	intentional bookstore search for relevant read aloud	need for print models to show how to use your life as a writer
Jewel's poetry book - title?	in anticipation of need for models from popular culture and to build student trust in my choices	model for writing poetry and song from own life
Tell-Me-About-Your-Child by parents	need to know each other - respect for personal identity	tendency to move students through classes every 70 min.
"the literacy club" by Frank Smith (1988)	from belief that students are idiosyncratic readers and writers	recalled during individual reading conferences
IN A WORD by McNamara	search for a more generative resource- show voc. potential	need to find substitute for imposed voc. programs
THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE by Strunk & White	search for doable presentation	in reaction to overwhelming size of approved texts
STANDARDS FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS by NCTE &IRA	to compare current situation with national thinking	disconnected standards
ELEMENTS OF WRITING (HR&W) "Use Genre as Lens" by Donald Murray	attracted by respected author	making use of official materials
CRAFTING A LIFE by Donald Murray	link to author's essay in teacher's edition of textbook series	finding more ways to make your life count in your writing
RT: "Real literacy in a School Setting: five-year-olds take on the world" by N. Hall (1998)	ongoing reading of professional journals	school community belief that meeting mandated objectives insures a literate citizenry
RT: reference to Street & Street (1991)	ongoing professional reading	feeding my insecurities with unnecessary requirements
Stenhouse	need another way to think and talk about curriculum & planning	only hear official version - no questioning
THE ENLIGHTENED EYE by Elliot Eisner	recollection of qualities of experience	school community overreliance on QCC objectives
THE POWER OF THEIR IDEAS by Deborah Meier	reassociation with need for habits of mind that ask why	how did curriculum & planning get this way
"Eleven" by Sandra Cisneros	a valued text - eager to share	available to all - included in literature textbook
NCTE newpaper -article by Jonathan Kozol	ongoing reading - familiar author	came to mind during drive to S. C. conference
HOW READING CHANGED MY LIFE by Anna Quindlen	recommended by Joanne - my community of readers	building my own foundational materials as references

SENTENCE COMPOSING FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL by Don K.	technique building for middle school	how to support middle school writers
LA: "Teaching students how to plan: The dominant model and alternatives	search for origins of STOPE	STOPE
CURRICULUM GUIDELINES FOR THE ED OF LIT CITIZENS by Kanawati	search for historical foundation for curriculum decision-making	In reaction to what leads - who leads - why - of cur. const.
James Paul Gee in Kanawati dissertaion (above)	Search for curriculum history -Concept: acquiring vs learning a discourse	only "learning" - only imposed model
A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO ELEM. INST: FROM PLAN TO DELIVERY	Decision to look away from site to search for outside models	Need to identify defendable-authentic alternative
BOOK CLUB: by Raphael, Pardo, & McMahon (1997)	search for technique for organizing book clubs	AR sanctioned site - need to develop generative framework/routines w space
audiotape - a collection of short stories - Eudora Welty	longing to read for pleasure	situation requiring too much reading for info.
SECRETS OF THE YA-YA SISTERHOOD	"It cont. to astound me just how impt. my reading is to my teach.	need for dev. prof. stance toward planning overwhelming
T. Kay, A. Walker, R. Andrews, J. C. Harris, P. Conroy	recalled southern authors - teacher as model reader	you can write from where you are
MIDNIGHT IN THE GARDEN OF G & E by Berendt (1994)	teacher as model	
I BELIEVE...by Beane	search for better understanding of the mid. school concept	conflict: mid. sc. as bridge vs. the now matters
Bruner	recalled reading	reaction to current requirements
Dewey	recalled reading	reaction to current requirements
Yinger (1980) centrality of search for routines	search for planning history	reaction to STOPE
R. Tyler (1949)	recalled reading	reaction to STOPE
Eisner	recalled reading	reaction to STOPE
Dewey	recalled reading	reaction to STOPE
student agendas, meeting agendas, handbooks, STOPE	required reading	system of controls - part of "the necessary evils" ?
CAUGHT'YA AGAIN: MORE GRAMMAR...(Kiester, 1993)	concern for meeting standards of multiple audiences	Adm. belief that the program is the key - not the teacher
FOXFIRE -by Eliot Wiggington	publication is politically savvy way to combat test scores	need for multiple measures of goodness
GO PUBLIC! (Rubenstein, 1998)	"	"
CAPTAIN UNDERPANTS by D. Pilkey	browsing bookstore	"I just have to keep enough good books in front of them"
AWAKENING THE HEART by Georgia Heard (1997)	preparing to be a better model - make process more concrete	students view poetry as sing-song rhyming scheme
RRQ: Chall's response to first grade studies	glad to be out of the phonics wars	my literacy battle - fight for professional authority in planning
CAUGHT'YA AGAIN - Kiester	rethinking benefit of memorized poetry	student initiated Valentine's party
MAILBOX MAGAZINES	"shopping" for comparable experiences	student initiated game
THE SPYING HEART by Katherine Paterson	searching my bookshelf in preparation for booktalk	decision to read Bridge to Terabithia - school owned text set
Calkins book about standardized testing	Where do I stand?	reaction to required standardized testing
IN THE MIDDLE (revised ed.) by Atwell	search for way to stay in touch	current notebooks too cumbersome
AWAKENING THE HEART by Georgia Heard	Are lesson plans my heart maps?	Heard says it's a poet's job to know the interior of her heart
TEACHERS AND TEXTS by Apple	witness to lack of faith in teacher as thinker	trad. closed-door politics of women & impact of intens.

Lipscott	recalled reading	
IT'S NEVER TOO LATE (Allen, 1995)	struggle to achieve meaningful connection between R&W	most ex. are writing in response to lit. only
BOOK CLUB by Raphael, et.al	reread for guidance w Bridge to Terabithia	absence of authentic writing connections - real needs of a writer
OUT OF NOWHERE by Quida Sebestyen	learning from student choice	Student identifies: "things are happening all the time"
BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA by Katherine Paterson	need for shared book for community of readers	decision to rely on available text sets
multiple picture books	to show students options for story frameworks	reading picture books aloud with students gathered around me
Butler and Liner	How to encourage more active, explicit use of writer's notebooks?	making a concept concrete enough - "shopping" w pedagogical foundation
SHILOH by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor	need to read aloud- feel better now - dev. connections w R&W	explicit use of books they're reading to teach themselves
LESSONS WITH MORRIE	need to make my life count in my work	guide students to let their life count in their R&W
THE PILOT'S WIFE (1998)	book I read over the weekend- strong example of development of a scene	Exra's writing about his dog - show w dialogue, description
BEST PRACTICE (1998)	concern - trust to develop meaningful dialog w/o preformed script	class book clubs
WALK TWO MOONS by Sharon Creech	need for shared reading	text set available - not Permabound - Yes!
Mary Higgins Clark	read review in "Connections" surprised by choice	Is it appropriate for this age group?
MIDWIVES (Bohjalian, 1997)	personal reading choice	trying to keep real, current authors as primary models
READINGS	SELF PORTRAIT	SITUATION

THE EVOCATION the response	THE POEM the experience	THEMES
How could I develop a more meaningful planning process?	source of teacher research study	developing professional character through informed resistance
How could one think it should be dif. walking down a hallway in a school?	My plan book needs to represent the potential experiences in our particular classroom.	developing professional character by taking responsibility for my own professional situation
Where's the authenticity?	I will include a record of beliefs in my plan book that ground my decision making.	developing professional character through authenticity - attending to self and beliefs
How does the teacher decide?	remain atuned to the shared aspect of research and practice to both inform and inspire	developing professional character through authenticity - attending to self and beliefs
Maybe the official texts could be useful	Plans will be genre specific - read to support writing in particular genre, etc.	developing professional authority by broadening text options
How can I establish a passion for literate effort?	Plans will include stories of reading and writing from my own life.	developing professional character through interpersonal and intertextual relationships
What can I offer as a doable example?	student borrowings evident in samples of student writing	developing professional authority by establishing real-world, accessible models
What can I offer as a doable example?	student writing	developing professional authority by establishing real-world, accessible models
Can I connect student's love of music with the intensity possible in their own writing?	Plans will include models from popular culture.	developing professional authority by establishing real-world, accessible models
How can I find ways to let each situation and personality come through in their work?	Plans will include space for indiv. interpretations.	developing professional character that doesn't assume to know all - retained vulnerability
Is time to read the most supportive thing I can offer these students who are fairly fluent readers?	Plans will include substantial blocks of time for independent reading during school.	developing student authority through invitational practices - students dependably offered time to read
How can I participate in requirements that I don't believe in?	Vocabulary study will include info. re word origins, families, etc.	encourage and support student authority through use of generative resources
How can I make grammar study more accessible?	rules rewritten in kid language with their examples	developing professional authority by establishing real-world, accessible models
What am I "suppose" to be doing?	support from the national level that I was on the right track	developing professional character through scholarly reading in the discipline
How can I help students more fully explore their ideas/experiences thru writing in multiple genres?	listen to the power of particular lines during oral story telling and author's chair time	encourage and support student authority by attending to their language
How can I help students attend to the intricacies of their own life?	create opportunities for students to explore their own living thru photographs, storytelling, etc.	encourage and support student authority through attention to unique life experiences
How do I help students/families see that "school literacy" is one of a "set of literacies"?	Plans will attempt a balance between school-like exp. (i.e. tests, homework) and "real" writing, etc.	developing professional character through selective use of tradition and innovation
How do I recognize autonomous literacy and ideological literacy?	Plans will include daily opportunities to write like "real" writers.	invitational practices - invite students to participate as real writers
How do I create "muscle" in my professional character?	Plans will represent input from reading, observation, questioning, as well as official criteria	developing professional character by creating "muscle" in my teaching by searching to understand "why"
Would it help to think of the qualities of knowledge a student shows vs objectives?	heightened awareness of conflicting ideas between what is handed down and what I read	dev. prof. char. by attending to rhythms of growth & change: try to comply - read - reform beliefs
How can I continue to learn?	finding support/peers in print - this analysis as example	developing professional character through informed resistance
By sharing shorter, yet powerful forms of writing about personal exp. am I making the writing feel more accessible?	read as dramatic event - created shared reference	developing professional authority by establishing real-world accessible models

What is the point of my language arts teaching? Nourish all with literature	Plans will give time to public sharing of wonderful words: read alouds, book talks, etc.	developing professional character through authenticity - attending to self and beliefs
What do I offer my students that will encourage them as readers and writers?	generated list of questions to guide my thinking as cur. plan.	develping professional character under the wings of writers
Provided confirmation that real texts can be primary resources for details of convention.	Plan to make explicit connections to texts as teachers - ex. dialogue writing	invitational practices through text choice
Does my reflective writing establish that I am doing more than just "shopping" uncritically?	Plans are the result of reflective analysis of current situation	developing professional character through reflective writing
How will I define the purpose of my work with students?	Plans support opportunities to read like writers and write like readers.	developing professional character through research attitude (Santa & Santa)
Am I teaching a plan or acquiring a way of thinking?	Plans include time for "acquiring" and not just learning a discourse thru writing, reading, talking	student development of qualities of knowledge
Is there a better way out there already?	experimented with clinical model (based on M. Hunter) and generic model	developing professional character thru research attitude (Santa & Santa)
Will book clubs provide a dependable and generative routine for dev. engagement w reading?	Plan for time in book clubs weekly	developing qualities of knowledge through socially constructed meaning
How can I get reading for pleasure back into my life?	discovered Welty's "Worn Path" - S. child. need to read S. lit	developing professional character by reading for pleasure
How can I get reading for pleasure back into my life?	shared option of audiotape "reading" w students	developing professional character by reading for pleasure
Is explicit instruction dif. from direct instruction?	Explicit instruction: reason to read: to find people like you	invitational practices through text choice
	Dawson shares family trip to Savannah and Cynthia announces obs. of bookstore section: Southern Writers	developing qualities of knowledge by using the teacher as model
	Students are involved daily in "real" writing based on respect for their current potential for brilliance	developing qualities of knowledge by respecting current indiv. potential
student cur. should be dif. only in degree not kind from professionals.	"	"
resist focus on preparing for role of adult - see now as impt.	"	"
Can a LA teacher be inspirational and not be a R &W	more than school routines - must include life routines	developing professional character through life routines of reading and browsing book stores, etc.
Is my modeling like Tyler's reliance on succesful adult models?	_Experiment with planning designs to accent more than reductionist objectives.	developing qualities of knowledge by keeping experiences whole
Can plans artfully represent experience?	"	developing professional authority by experimenting w alternative formats
How to design educative experiences for/with my students?	selecting rich "influences"	developing professional authority by experimenting w alternative formats
Are these part of "the necessary evils?"	show awareness of spaces w/in such routines	developing professional character that doesn't assume to know all - retained vulnerability
Will this style of grammar work by helpful?	a routine w broad-based support - it looks "right"	developing professional character through a research attitude
What alternatives can I offer beyond standardized tests?	Davis & Leonard compose "legal doc." to share their wealth	developing qualities of knowledge by respecting current indiv. potential
	submissions to GCTE, GA Young Author, Children's Writing C.	developing qualities of knowledge by respecting current indiv. potential
What books will engage them?	Justin: "That's the first time I read a bunch of pages..."	invitational practices - keeping book choices availabe
How can I enrich student understanding of poetry?	self-portrait poems, outdoor sketching, heart maps, 6 rooms	developing professional character through life routines of reading and browsing book stores, etc.
what's the central mid. school literacy issue - engagement?		developing professional character through scholarly reading in the

		discipline
Is memorizing poetry an encouraging practice or a discouraging practice?	student energy towards memorizing poetry	invitational practices - offering choice to memorize poetry
	modify "Caught'ya" routine as daily game	developing professional character by listening to students and modifying practices
origin of ideas, cling to sounds from heart, source of inspiration		developing professional character by reading - having personal library
Where do I stand? (a next study?)	religated to use by the substitute	developing professional character through life routines of reading and browsing book stores, etc.
need for documentation - how can I let days go by when st. produce so little	use Atwell's folders w R&W records	developing professional character through life routines of reading and browsing book stores, etc.
what is the teacher's job to know		developing professional character through reflective writing
Will I prevail?	production of defendable alternative plan	developing professional character through informed resistance based on teacher research
who - what do I listen to when I plan - "the deepest heart of my brain"	plans embody as much inspiration as information	developing professional character from the deepest heart of the brain = core beliefs
reading like a writer and writing like a reader	designing plans that intentionally connect R & W	developing qualities of knowledge that recognize reciprocity of R & W
	selected lessons 2, 3, 5, 9, 12, 13 as options	developing professional character through life routines of reading and browsing book stores, etc.
"But nothing ever happens in your books Ms. B."	continued search for more engaging book choices	developing professional character by listening to students and modifying practices
How can I keep "real" books out there?	student:It's got little words so I don't feel like I'm reading nothin	developing professional character by reading adolescent literature
How can I expand student writing repertoires w/in such short blocks of time?	read aloud in media center - engage their penchant for drama	invitational practices - offering doable models
	free writing, life maps, people watching, eavesdropping, telling tales	developing professional character through life routines of reading and browsing book stores, etc.
	writer's notebook homework - family dialogue scene	developing student authority through texts as teachers
"I believe in being fully present."		developing professional character by reading for pleasure
elements of writing we discuss not just for student writers - for all writers	rubric based on qualities of writing knowledge we've been working on	developing professional character by reading for pleasure
what would be the result over time if students had opportunity for "natural" talk	book clubs -dependable time to talk	developing professional character by experimenting with routines of practice
	great example of use of foreshadowing for mini-lesson	developing qualities of knowledge through shared reading
still striving to keep engaging books in front of students	book choices grow - reading logs - responses w ratings	developing qualities of knowledge through book choice
	example of vivid description shared	developing professional character through reading for pleasure
SELF-DIALOGUE	FRAMED SPACES	THEMES

Figure 2.2

READING AS LIFELINE
Developing Professional Character

<u>Through informed resistance</u>
#2 THE TEACHER HANDBOOK
primary reference - requirement
STOPE
How could I develop a more meaningful planning process?
source of teacher research study
developing professional character through informed resistance

#22 THE POWER OF THEIR IDEAS by Deborah Meier
reassociation with need for habits of mind that ask why   how did curriculum &
planning get this way How can I continue to learn?
finding support/peers in print - this analysis as example
developing professional character through informed resistance
#56 TEACHERS AND TEXTS by Apple
witness to lack of faith in teacher as thinker
trad. closed-door politics of women & impact of intens.
Will I prevail?
production of defendable alternative plan
developing professional character through informed resistance based on teacher research

<u>By taking responsibility for my own professional situation</u>
#3 WHITE OLEANDER by Janet Fitch
recalled connection
attempts to control teacher decision making
How could one think it should be dif. walking down a hallway in a school?
My plan book needs to represent the potential experiences in our particular classroom.
developing professional character by taking responsibility for my own professional
situation
<u>Through authenticity: Attending to self and core beliefs</u>
#4 QUALITY CORE CURRICULUM
state of Georgia
foundational information
isolated elements
Where's the authenticity?
I will include a record of beliefs in my plan book that ground my decision making.
developing professional character through authenticity - attending to self and beliefs

#5 THE ART AND SCIENCE OF PORTRAITURE by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot
search for a research model that honors situational teaching
the need to define an approach to data collection and analysis
How does the teacher decide?
remain atuned to the shared aspect of research and practice to both inform and inspire

developing professional character through authenticity - attending to self and beliefs
#24 NCTE newpaper -article by Jonathan Kozol
ongoing reading - familiar author
came to mind during drive to S. C. conference
What is the point of my language arts teaching? Nourish all with literature
Plans will give time to public sharing of wonderful words: read alouds, book talks, etc.
developing professional character through authenticity - attending to self and beliefs

#57 Lipscott
recalled reading
who - what do I listen to when I plan - "the deepest heart of my brain"
plans embody as much inspiration as information
developing professional character from the deepest heart of the brain = core beliefs

Through interpersonal and intertextual relationships
#7 "Petals" by Pat Mora in textbook (HR&W)
associated with memory of Chapel Hill flower ladies
availability - all students have textbooks
How can I establish a passion for literate effort?
Plans will include stories of reading and writing from my own life.
developing professional character through interpersonal and intertextual relationships
Through retained vulnerablity
#11 Tell-Me-About-Your-Child by parents
need to know each other - respect for personal identity
tendency to move students through classes every 70 min.
How can I find ways to let each situation and personality come through in their work?
Plans will include space for indiv. interpretations.
developing professional character that doesn't assume to know all - retained vulnerability
#43 student agendas, meeting agendas, handbooks, STOPE
required reading
system of controls
Are these part of "the necessary evils?"
show awareness of spaces w/in such routines
developing professional character that doesn't assume to know all - retained vulnerability

Through scholarly reading within the discipline
#15 STANDARDS FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS by NCTE &IRA
to compare current situation with national thinking
disconnected standards
What am I "suppose" to be doing?
support from the national level that I was on the right track
developing professional character through scholarly reading in the discipline

#49 RRQ: Chall's response to first grade studies
glad to be out of the phonics wars
my literacy battle - fight for professional authority in planning

what's the central mid. school literacy issue - engagement?
developing professional character through scholarly reading in the discipline

Through selective use of tradition and innovation
#18 RT: "Real literacy in a School Setting: Five-year-olds take on the world" by N. Hall (1998)
ongoing reading of professional journals
school community belief that meeting mandated objectives insures a literate citizenry
How do I help students/families see that "school literacy" is one of a "set of literacies"?
Plans will attempt a balance between school-like exp. (i.e. tests, homework) and "real" writing, etc.
developing professional character through selective use of tradition and innovation
#67 BEST PRACTICE (1998)
concern - trust to develop meaningful dialog w/o preformed script
class book clubs
what would be the result over time if students had opportunity for "natural" talk
book clubs -dependable time to talk
developing professional character by experimenting with routines of practice
By creating "muscle" in my teaching by searching to understand why
#20 Stenhouse
need another way to think and talk about curriculum & planning   only hear official version - no questioning
How do I create "muscle" in my professional character?
Plans will represent input from reading, observation, questioning, as well as official criteria
developing professional character by creating "muscle" in my teaching by searching to understand "why"
By attending to rhythms of growth and change: Try to comply - read - re-form beliefs
#21 THE ENLIGHTENED EYE by Elliot Eisner
recollection of qualities of experience
school community overreliance on QCC objectives
Would it help to think of the qualities of knowledge a student shows vs objectives?
heightened awareness of conflicting ideas between what is handed down and what I read
dev. prof. char. by attending to rhythms of growth & change: try to comply - read - reform beliefs
Under the wings of writers
#25 HOW READING CHANGED MY LIFE by Anna Quindlen
recommended by Joanne - my community of readers
building my own foundational materials as references
What do I offer my students that will encourage them as readers and writers?
        generated list of questions to guide my thinking as cur. plan.
develping professional character under the wings of writers
Through reflective writing
#27 LA: "Teaching students how to plan: The dominant model and alternatives
search for origins of STOPE

Does my reflective writing establish that I am doing more than just "shopping" uncritically?
Plans are the result of reflective analysis of current situation
developing professional character through reflective writing

#55 AWAKENING THE HEART by Georgia Heard
Are lesson plans my heart maps?
Heard says it's a poet's job to know the interior of her heart
what is the teacher's job to know
developing professional character through reflective writing
Through research attitude
#28 CURRICULUM GUIDELINES FOR THE ED OF LIT CITIZENS by Kanawati
search for historical foundation for curriculum decision-making
In reaction to what leads - who leads - why - of curriculum construction
How will I define the purpose of my work with students?
Plans support opportunities to read like writers and write like readers.
developing professional character through research attitude (Santa & Santa)
#30 A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO ELEM. INST: FROM PLAN TO DELIVERY
Decision to look away from site to search for outside models
Need to identify defendable-authentic alternative
Is there a better way out there already?
experimented with clinical model (based on M. Hunter) and generic model
developing professional character thru research attitude (Santa & Santa)
#44 CAUGHT'YA AGAIN: MORE GRAMMAR...(Kiester, 1993)
concern for meeting standards of multiple audiences
Adm. belief that the program is the key - not the teacher
Will this style of grammar work by helpful?
a routine w broad-based support - it looks "right"
developing professional character through a research attitude

Through reading for pleasure
#32 audiotape - a collection of short stories - Eudora Welty
longing to read for pleasure
situation requiring too much reading for info.
How can I get reading for pleasure back into my life?
discovered Welty's "Worn Path" - S. child. need to read S. lit
developing professional character by reading for pleasure
#33 SECRETS OF THE YA-YA SISTERHOOD
"It cont. to astound me just how impt. my reading is to my teach.
need for dev. prof. stance toward planning overwhelming
How can I get reading for pleasure back into my life?
shared option of audiotape "reading" w students
developing professional character by reading for pleasure
#65 LESSONS WITH MORRIE
need to make my life count in my work
guide students to let their life count in their R&W

"I believe in being fully present."
developing professional character by reading for pleasure

#66 THE PILOT'S WIFE (1998)
book I read over the weekend- strong example of development of a scene
Exra's writing about his dog - show w dialogue, description
elements of writing we discuss not just for student writers - for all writers
rubric based on qualities of writing knowledge we've been working on
developing professional character by reading for pleasure
#70 MIDWIVES (Bohjalian, 1997)
personal reading choice   trying to keep real, current authors as primary models

example of vivid description shared
developing professional character through reading for pleasure
Through life routines
#39 Yinger (1980) centrality of search for routines
search for planning history
reaction to STOPE
Can a LA teacher be inspirational and not be a R &W
more than school routines - must include life routines
developing professional character through life routines of reading and browsing book stores, etc.
#48 AWAKENING THE HEART by Georgia Heard (1997)   preparing to be a better model - make process more concrete   students view poetry as sing-song rhyming schemeHow can I enrich student understanding of poetry?
self-portrait poems, outdoor sketching, heart maps, 6 rooms
developing professional character through life routines of reading and browsing book stores, etc.
#52 THE SPYING HEART by Katherine Paterson
searching my bookshelf in preparation for booktalk
decision to read Bridge to Terabithia - school owned text set
origin of ideas, cling to sounds from heart, source of inspiration
developing professional character by reading - having personal library

#53 Calkins book about standardized testing
Where do I stand?
reaction to required standardized testing
Where do I stand? (a next study?)
religated to use by the substitute
developing professional character through life routines of reading and browsing book stores, etc.

#54 IN THE MIDDLE (revised ed.) by Atwell
search for way to stay in touch
current notebooks too cumbersome
need for documentation - how can I let days go by when st. produce so little

use Atwell's folders w R&W records
developing professional character through life routines of reading and browsing book stores, etc.

#59 BOOK CLUB by Raphael, et.al
reread for guidance w Bridge to Terabithia
absence of authentic writing connections - real needs of a writer
selected lessons 2, 3, 5, 9, 12, 13 as options
developing professional character through life routines of reading and browsing book stores, etc.

#63 Butler and Liner
How to encourage more active, explicit use of writer's notebooks?
making a concept concrete enough - "shopping" w pedagogical foundation
free writing, life maps, people watching, eavesdropping, telling tales
developing professional character through life routines of reading and browsing book stores, etc.
By reading adolescent literature
#61 BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA by Katherine Paterson
need for shared book for community of readers   decision to rely on available text sets
How can I keep "real" books out there?
student:It's got little words so I don't feel like I'm reading nothin
developing professional character by reading adolescent literature
By listening to students and modifying practices
#51 MAILBOX MAGAZINES
"shopping" for comparable experiences   student initiated game
modify "Caught'ya" routine as daily game
developing professional character by listening to students and modifying practices
#60 OUT OF NOWHERE by Quida Sebestyen
learning from student choice
Student identifies: "things are happening all the time"
"But nothing ever happens in your books Ms. B."
continued search for more engaging book choices
developing professional character by listening to students and modifying practices

By developing professional authority by broadening text options
#6 Holt Rhinehart & Winston
Free time at car wash - official texts available in trunk
foundational information - approved materials
Maybe the official texts could be useful
Plans will be genre specific - read to support writing in particular genre, etc.
developing professional authority by broadening text options

#8 THE HOUSE ON MANGO STREET by Sandra Cisneros (1984)
personally valued text - eager to share
recognized need to enrich student writing repertoires

What can I offer as a doable example?
student borrowings evident in samples of student writing
developing professional authority by establishing real-world, accessible models
#9 KNOTS IN MY YO-YO STRING: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A KID by Jerry Spinelli
intentional bookstore search for relevant read aloud
need for print models to show how to use your life as a writer
What can I offer as a doable example?
student writing
developing professional authority by establishing real-world, accessible models

#10 Jewel's poetry book - title?
in anticipation of need for models from popular culture and to build student trust in my choices
model for writing poetry and song from own life
Can I connect student's love of music with the intensity possible in their own writing?
Plans will include models from popular culture.
developing professional authority by establishing real-world, accessible models

#14 THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE by Strunk & White
search for doable presentation
in reaction to overwhelming size of approved texts   How can I make grammar study more accessible?
rules rewritten in kid language with their examples
developing professional authority by establishing real-world, accessible models

#23 "Eleven" by Sandra Cisneros
a valued text - eager to share
available to all - included in literature textbook
By sharing shorter, yet powerful forms of writing about personal exp. am I making the writing feel more accessible?
read as dramatic event - created shared reference
developing professional authority by establishing real-world accessible models

By developing professional authority through experimenting with alternative planning formats
#41 Eisner
recalled reading - reaction to STOPE
Can plans artfully represent experience?
developing professional authority by experimenting w alternative formats

#42 Dewey
recalled reading - reaction to STOPE
How to design educative experiences for/with my students?
selecting rich "influences"
developing professional authority by experimenting w alternative formats

#67 BEST PRACTICE (1998) concern - trust to develop meaningful dialog w/o preformed script
class book clubs
what would be the result over time if students had opportunity for "natural" talk
book clubs -dependable time to talk
developing professional character by experimenting with routines of practice

Figure 2.3

READING AS LIFELINE
IN SUPPORT OF PROFESSIONAL CHARACTER
PLANNING TO TEACH: A SELF-PORTRAIT

THE CONTEXT

1. Reading the Landscape

THE TEACHER AS READER
Developing Professional Character

1. Through informed resistance as a teacher researcher
a. claiming the effort
b. adopting an organic approach
c. reviewing existing options
d. taking responsibility for my own professional situation
1. supported by scholarly reading
2. supported by reading for pleasure
2. Through life routines
a. reading professional catalogues
b. maintaining a home library
c. reading for pleasure
d. using life experience
e. having friends who read
f. reading what my students read

3. Through authenticity: Attending to defendable core beliefs
a. selective use of tradition and innovation
b. sustained vulnerability
c. reflective writing
d. observing and listening to students and modifying practices

4. By developing professional authority (not eclecticism)
a. broadening text options
b. experimenting with alternative planning formats

THE POEM

1. Developing student authority
a. through invitational practices
1. students dependably offered time to read: #12, #34, #47
2. students invited to participate as real writers: #19
3. keeping book choices available: #47, #26
4. offering choice to memorize poetry: #50
5. offering doable models: #62

b. through use of generative resources: #13 (vocabulary)
c. by attending to their language: #16
d. through attention to unique life experiences: #17
e. through texts as teachers: #64
f. through shared reading: #68
g. through book choice: #69

2. Identification of Qualities of Knowledge
a. routines/patterns for "acquiring" not "learning": #29
b. through socially constructed meaning: #31
c. by using the teacher as model: #35
d. by respecting current individual potential: #36, #37, #38, #45,   #46
e. by keeping experiences whole: #40
f. that recognizes reciprocity of reading and writing: #58

IMPLICATIONS

•   rework Teacher Researcher article
•   develop plan book based on these discoveries

Figure 2.4
LIFELINES
Developing Professional Character by Reading:
A self-portrait of teacher planning

THE CONTEXT
Chapter One: Reading the Landscape
This chapter will serve to situate the study in a particular time and place
through a first-day drive to the new school site and offer an account of
initiating experiences during introductory meetings of pre-planning. This
chapter establishes the situational and professional need for the study.
THE TEACHER AS READER
Chapter Two: The Reach of Reading: A case for teacher research as a means for
developing professional character through informed resistance
Comprehending the Complexities
understanding the situation
rereading for meaning

Decoding Decisions
adopting an organic approach
portraiture and teaching - a natural link
responding to Rosenblatt
teacher research - a genre of reflective action
grounded in situational stories
Summarizing the main ideas
supporting details with
scholarly reading

reading for pleasure
This chapter builds a case for attention to professional character through
informed resistance. It stands as a rationale for the use of teacher research
to rebuild professional authority and reading to reconstitute the character of
teacher.
Chapter Three: A Reading Life: How life routines impact professional character and
impact development of classroom routines
Using life history to establish character
Using reading to establish character
This chapter identifies the teacher as primary character. Who she "is":
what she believes, what she is learning, how she acts, are important factors
in the construction of her storied experience. [how authors disclose
character]
Chapter Four: A New Story: Plotting my own course
Beginning: Identifying defendable core beliefs (Back to my Basics)
selective use of tradition and innovation
sustained vulnerability
reflective writing
reading the research

Chapter Five: Middle: Developing professional authority (Beyond the basal)
broadening text options for me

> looking at my reading resources for professional decision making intellectual isolation of a diet of Teacher's Editions only

story of biologist & turtles
broadening text options for students
invitational practices
students dependably offered time to read
keeping book choices available
offering doable models
through texts as teachers
through shared readings
Chapter 6: End: Identification of Qualities of Knowledge
establishing routines for "acquiring" literate attitudes and "learning" skills
organizing work with students
through socially constructed meaning providing "space"
by using the teacher as model
by respecting current individual need & potential
by keeping experiences whole
by recognizing the reciprocity of reading & writing

> listing qualities of knowledge that matter for me from these experiences - Compare with QCC

> This chapter will show professional growth over time as the BIG ISSUES of planning are addressed: On what do I base my thinking and decision making? How can I continue to learn and then use these practices to share literate authority with my students? What are the outcomes that matter?

THE POEM

Chapter Seven: New Plan
Create a plan book that shows how to plan based on identification of core beliefs—qualities of knowledge—and elements of professional character - in preparation for the next challenge

Chapter Eight: Reasons to Read

> rework "Teacher Researcher" article to establish place for reading in development of professional character

• Note: Continue to weave insights from my personal and professional reading throughout each chapter = the tie that binds and builds increased credibility for my case
• Question: Where should I include research/methodology information - still my toy with idea to include in italics at end of each chapter - I think this is doable and will be helpful as a methods resource book for other teacher researchers - This way the research process really comes to life.