LEARNING ABOUT DIVERSITY AT SPRINGFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT IN A PEER-LED INQUIRY GROUP

by

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(Under the direction of James F. Baumann & H. James McLaughlin)

ABSTRACT

This descriptive study focused on four main problems that the author perceived in public education: (a) the academic difficulties encountered by linguistically and culturally diverse students, (b) the lack of relevant professional development opportunities for teachers to learn effective teaching methods that integrate theory with practice, (c) the need for teachers to update their teaching methods, and (d) the alienation of linguistically and culturally diverse students in mainstream classrooms.

The purpose of this dissertation study was to investigate the learning practices of teachers participating in a teacher inquiry group while they examined and reflected on their teaching relationship with students in their classes who are linguistically and culturally diverse. Each teacher participant chose a focal student whose linguistic and cultural background differed from her own and whose first language was not English. In the teacher inquiry group, the participants had opportunities to learn about and develop literacy theory and teaching practices that supported the literacy learning of their students. In addition, they tried to understand the cultural practices of the students they taught in order to build bridges between the home and school cultures.

Findings are presented in 6 chapters. The first describes the nature of the inquiry group process and presents themes of discussions initiated by the participants. The next 4 chapters each focus on one participant, analyzing reported changes in that participant's knowledge, attitude, or behavior. The final chapter analyzes similarities that occurred across the participants**.** This analysis focuses on changes in teacher understanding, connections to practice, connections to parents, and reflections on teaching and learning. Additionally, the author describes political issues raised and issues about staff development. She discusses the personal and social significance of the study, lists questions for further exploration, and presents suggestions for others who plan to implement a teacher inquiry group.

INDEX WORDS: Teachers' knowledge development, Teacher inquiry group, Cultural and linguistic diversity, Staff development, Descriptive qualitative research

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, who always believed in me; to the students and teachers at Springfield Elementary School, who inspired me; to my son, Matthew, who encouraged me; and to my loving husband, Jon, who lovingly and patiently supported me throughout this learning process.

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PROLOGUE

The School Day Begins

It is 7:35 in the morning. There is a chill in the air, and the sun is still low in the sky. Three geese, flying in formation, honk as they pass over the school building. A breeze rustles the leaves of the Bradford pear and dogwood trees that line the driveway of the red brick school. Students who live in the apartments next door to Springfield Elementary School are already walking, singly or in clusters, to the front of the building, backpacks in tow. The doors will not open until the bell rings at 7:45. Buses begin to line up in the circular driveway, forming a caravan of 15 at a time, end to end. Bus drivers leave their engines running and strive to keep a semblance of order on the buses while waiting for the signal to unload.

A dozen mobile classrooms are positioned on what was once the front lawn of the school. They are surrounded by gravel. Wooden steps with rails lead to the front and back doors. Even with the recent addition of many new classrooms, the school is over crowded. A staff member positions himself at one end of the driveway to direct cars away from the bus lane and to the next entrance at the back of the school. In the back, cars are lined up, ready to let their children out for the morning. Some parents, perhaps running late for work or with impatient bosses, ignore the rules and let their students off where they will, making U-turns in the school's driveway. The walkers' line gets longer, and students spar and tease each other in a way familiar to parents and teachers everywhere.

It is almost 7:45. Several teachers, paraprofessionals and an administrator come out of the school to prop open six front doors and position themselves every 20 feet around the bus circle, preparing to shepherd the children inside. The bell rings, and a signal is made to the buses that students may be released. They emerge and head toward the building entrance. The children are all shapes and sizes, from 3-year old preschoolers with hearing or mental impairment to 12-year-old fifth graders.

Black, White, Hispanic, and Asian faces abound. Muslim girls with their heads covered at all times. Boys with hair cut short and dyed yellow. Girls in frilly dresses. Boys with baggy pants and oversized athletic shirts. Girls in short skirts and leggings. Girls with hair carefully plaited, and girls with hair extensions. Boys and girls wearing jeans and T-shirts. Students with eager, smiling faces and students with sullen, vacant expressions. Lyman County schools are unusually large, and Springfield is no exception. Over 1,400 students will enter the building in the next half-hour. There is no opportunity to gather or loiter. They flock toward the school on the narrow sidewalk like sheep entering the fold.

Paraprofessionals and classroom teachers for the special needs early childhood classes greet two mini-buses and assist their young students onto the sidewalk. These children, too, are a diverse group. One student wears thick glasses. Several have devices on their backs and in their ears to assist in sound detection. Others, with unsteady legs, are assisted into a large plastic red wagon. The adults greet them with warm smiles, hearty greetings, and hand signs. They wait, grinning eagerly, to be pulled into the school.

The original school building is designed in the shape of a ladder, with hallways forming both the sides and the rungs. On the right end is a new two-story addition. Students enter a wide foyer with the office on the right and the media center on the left. The hallway going straight

ahead leads to the cafeteria. In the back of the school are additional trailer classrooms housing second, third, and fourth grade classrooms. Once inside, the streams separate, with students going left, right, and straight ahead to their classrooms or to the cafeteria. Nearly half the students are eligible for free or reduced-priced meals, and most students eat breakfast and lunch at school.

Just beside the office is a small desk where a volunteer, when one is available, sits to welcome and sign in parents and give them a sticker that identifies them as visitors. Mrs. Phillips stands in the foyer at a cart that is the school store. Students line up to buy pencils and other supplies. In front of the media center, Miss Jones has another cart full of children's books. Several students are browsing through the collection of books that cost only $1 each. Teachers station themselves on each hallway to direct the traffic flow. The students eating breakfast first stand in line to pick up a carton of juice and a slice of cheese toast, and then return to their classrooms to eat it. There is not enough room for them in the cafeteria.

The fourth graders in Mrs. Green's class have a long trek from the cafeteria to the end of the hallway, then upstairs to the new wing. Several slices of cheese toast sit abandoned in the stairwell. Student desks are clustered into three "tables" comprised of seven, eight, or nine desks pushed together. On the whiteboard, Mrs. Green has written the morning assignments. She greets each child at the doorway as they enter the room and finishes her breakfast of buttered grits and coffee supplied to teachers by the cafeteria each morning. The television on the closed-circuit school channel plays soothing instrumental music to start the morning. Students hang their book bags on the coat hooks against one wall and carry breakfast to their desks. Some children dig into breakfast first, while others set it aside and begin the morning assignment.

Mrs. Green enters the room and gives gentle reminders to several students about expectations for the morning. She goes to the computer in front of the room and checks her e-mail, then continues to circulate and speak to students. She reminds them to turn in their homework to the designated basket. At 8:15, the bell rings and students continue to trickle in from the cafeteria with their breakfast. The soothing music abruptly ends and the Springfield morning announcements begin on the closed circuit TV. The principal, Mrs. Porter, greets the children in her warm and friendly voice, “Good *morning*, boys and girls.” Another day has begun at Springfield Elementary School.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Springfield Elementary is my school. I have worked there for over four years, holding four different job titles, and working with all grade levels from kindergarten through fifth**.** During the time that I was writing my research proposal, I was employed at Springfield as a half-time reading specialist. I worked with one fourth grade teacher and three fifth grade teachers as a reading support teacher. I team-taught with the classroom teachers to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio during their language arts instruction. I knew that I would spend a lot of time working on my dissertation topic, and I hoped that while completing my inquiry, I could also make a positive difference in the lives of the students and teachers I worked with. I decided to conduct my research within a staff development setting in order to support teachers working with linguistically and culturally diverse students at the same time I was studying them.

When I first began teaching at Springfield, I was personally overwhelmed by the diversity in the school and my own lack of knowledge about English language learners (ELL). I had 24 years of teaching experience in elementary schools working either as a special education teacher or a reading specialist, and had 12 years of college preparation. In spite of this experience and education**,** I had received little information about and no specific training that prepared me for the students I now encountered. In conversations with my peers, I learned that other teachers were equally overwhelmed. Like me, they were not prepared for diversity either in their preservice classes, graduate coursework, or prior teaching experience. I wondered about ways to help teachers learn how to better understand these newest members of their classrooms.

Statement of the Problem

Cultural and linguistic diversity in the United States is increasing at a significant rate, especially among children of school age (David & Caparo, 2001; Perez, 1998). While the student population has become more diverse than ever before, the linguistic and cultural background of those who teach has remained fairly stable (Grant & Sleeter, 1998; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001). Because of this, teachers' experiences and personal identities are often quite different from those of their students. The complexity of the challenge of simultaneously building literacy, developing written expression ability, and enhancing English language growth can be daunting to even the most seasoned and accomplished teachers (David & Caparo, 2001; McAllister & Jordan, 2000). Teachers need to understand value orientations that underlie the behaviors and beliefs of different cultures (Raeff, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2000; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001). Preservice preparation of teachers for ELL students is minimal (Cruz, 1999; Gutierrez et al., 2002).

My dissertation study focused on four main problems that I perceived in public education: (a) the academic difficulties encountered by linguistically and culturally diverse students, (b) the lack of relevant professional development opportunities for teachers to learn effective teaching methods that integrate theory with practice, (c) the need for teachers to update their teaching methods, and (d) the alienation of linguistically and culturally diverse students in mainstream classrooms. Each of these will be described briefly in turn.

The first problem is the academic difficulties of linguistically and culturally diverse students (Au, 1993; Cummins, 2000. 2001). "Children from ethnolinguistic minority backgrounds tend to lag behind their monolinguistic peers on criterion-based or standardized

measures of achievement—at least in the first few years of schooling" (Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992, p. 7). Cummins (2001) reported:

> The dropout rate among Mexican-American and mainland Puerto Rican students remains between 40% and 50% compared to 14% for whites and 25% for blacks (Jusenius & Duarte, 1982). Similarly, almost a decade after the passage of the nondiscriminatory assessment provision of PL94-142, we find Hispanic students in Texas over-represented by a factor of 300% in the 'learning disabilities' category (Ortiz & Yates, 1983). (Cummins, 2001, p. 175)

Disaggregated data from Lyman County standardized test results indicate lower scores for students of poverty, Hispanic students, Black students, and English language learners participating in ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) programs compared to White and Asian students not participating in ESOL or in the free/reduced meal program.

Very often, ELL students are able to fluently converse in English after a year or two of school attendance because they have learned what Cummins (1994) labeled *basic interpersonal communication skills* (BICS). Once BICS are mastered, ELL students are perceived by classroom teachers to be language proficient in every way. However, it takes longer for students to obtain the *cognitive academic language proficiency* (CALP) needed to be successful with academic content. Cummins explained that BICS are context-embedded and cognitively undemanding, typical of the world outside the classroom. In contrast, academic language is more context-reduced and cognitively demanding. When ELL students begin to fail academically, lack of language ability is often not considered. This has led many ELL students to be labeled as learning disabled (Cummins, 1994). In addition, schools are often not successful in teaching non-mainstream culture children, especially children of poverty, how to read (Allington, 1991; Au, 1981, 1993; Ball, 2000; Delpit, 1995).

The second problem is a lack of relevant professional development opportunities to assist teachers in improving practice for linguistically and culturally diverse students (Gutierrez et al.,

2002; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001). Culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Moll, 1988) is not usually taught to teachers in public schools. Some relevant issues that are little discussed include cultural behavior on the part of students and their parents that are different from the historically mainstream norm, effective strategies for teaching literacy to ELL students, ways to integrate students who speak little English into the classroom community, and how reflection on one's own background and culture can help in understanding those who are different.

Traditionally, professional development decisions have been made by those "furthest removed from the actual sites of learning and teaching" (Wells, 1986, p. 1). Inservice classes offered to teachers continue to be dominated by transmission models of learning, denying teachers opportunities to use more powerful methods of dialogue and reflection (Birchak et al., 1998). Transmission models are grounded in behaviorism and are in direct contrast to socially constructivist approaches (Richardson & Placier, 2001). In a transmission model, an instructor imparts knowledge to the learner, who then receives it and repeats it back for the purpose of assessment. Learners are not usually actively involved in the construction of knowledge and making personal and meaningful connections. If the learners do make these connections, it is not because they are acknowledged by the instructor or built into the planning of the learning sessions. Therefore, there can be a disconnection between theory and practice.

In this style of staff development, the instructor stands in front of the class, often a whole faculty, and presents information on an overhead projector or a computer-generated slide show. Class members read along with handouts, if provided. There may be a quiz to test their knowledge at the end of the class. Most classes of this type meet for 1-5 sessions. Discussion may be allowed in this format, but is limited due to the size of the class and time constraints.

This type of staff development can be helpful and effective in many instances. However, it is often mandatory for teachers. They did not choose to attend, and therefore may resist learning. The format of the class might not be conducive to their learning style. They may not know how to apply this new knowledge to their unique classroom situation. Therefore, the effect on classroom practice may be negligible.

In a more social constructivist or sociocultural model, teachers learn about themselves by examining their own practice, dialoging, and reflecting (Lieberman & Miller, 1991; Meyer et al., 1998). They share their insights with other teachers and gain social support from them. The professional development class is organized so teachers can collaborate, interact, and discuss issues with their peers as well as with the facilitator. The facilitator supports learning but does not control it (Gould, 1996). New theoretical learning is directly linked to classroom practice.

The terms social constructivism, constructivism, cognitive constructivism, and social constructionism can be easily confused. For an explanation and clarification of the terms, see Hruby (2001). This research and literature review are not concerned with social constructionism, which is defined as "a *sociological* description of knowledge" (Hruby, p. 51). Constructivism, on the other hand, is "a *psychological* description of knowledge" (Hruby, p. 51). This brief clarification is included in Hruby's (2001) abstract:

> *Constructivism* . . . seems reasonably understood as a theory or set of theories about how individuals fashion or structure knowledge, rather than receive it in pipeline fashion, all of a piece (Spivey, 1997). *Cognitive constructivism*, often associated with the work of Jean Piaget (1932) . . . focuses on how these processes occur either metacognitively or unconsciously. *Social constructivism* (Bruner, 1986), which is generally understood to include Soviet activity theory (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978), pays more attention to the social scaffolds and frameworks that promote the fashioning of such internal structures in accordance with the requirements of an individual's social surroundings (Schwandt, 1994; Spivey, 1997).

To avoid confusing the reader, I will use the terms *sociocultural learning theory* or *sociocultural perspective* to refer to my theoretical stance, connecting it to Bruner (1987, 1996), Vygotsky (1978), and Wells (1986, 1993, 2000).

In my study, I wanted to explore the use of a sociocultural model to learn about linguistic and cultural diversity in the classrooms of Springfield. I had rarely had this kind of opportunity myself, outside of graduate school. I wondered how the teachers would respond to the format, and what kinds of questions would arise from them. I wondered if participation in the group would affect their perceptions, beliefs, and thinking about classroom practice.

The third problem, related to the second, is that teachers continue to use methods that may have been successful for White, middle-class, native English-speaking students, but may not be as effective with an ever-changing and increasingly diverse population of students (Purcell-Gates, 1995). There is often a difference between the home cultures of linguistically and culturally diverse children and the school culture, causing misunderstandings between teachers and students, and teachers and parents (Gonzalez & Moll, 1995; Heath & Mangiola, 1991; McCaleb, 1994; Raeff, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2000; Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Trumball, 1999). It is vital that schools recognize and build upon the prior experiences of second language learners and that schools work with parents as co-educators of children (Cummins, 1994).

The fourth problem is that, due to a difference in the cultures of home and school, linguistically and culturally diverse students and their parents may feel alienated and unaccepted in the school setting (Quiroz, Greenfield, & Altchech, 1999; Valdés, 1996). Students who feel disempowered in this way lack confidence in their ability to learn (Cummins, 1994). This can impede their language acquisition or academic success.

The purpose of this dissertation study was to investigate the learning practices of teachers participating in a teacher inquiry group while they examined and reflected on their teaching relationship with students in their classes who are linguistically and culturally diverse. Each teacher participant chose a focal student whose linguistic and cultural background differed from her own and whose first language was not English. In the teacher inquiry group, the participants had opportunities to learn about and develop literacy theory and teaching practices that supported the literacy learning of their students. In addition, they tried to understand the cultural practices of the students they taught in order to build bridges between the home and school cultures. This dissertation is the report of our experiences: those that led us to participate in the group, those that occurred during the group, and some that occurred after the group.

A Note about Racial and Ethnic Terminology

Preferences for terminology used to refer to racial and ethnic groups change often. For this dissertation, I chose to use terms typical of the census literature and for reporting in public schools. These are the terms most often used by the participants in my study while engaging in daily conversation and completing forms for the school. These terms include Black or African American, White, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, and Mixed. At Springfield and on Lyman County forms, the terms Black and African American are used alternately. In our final interview I asked Doreen, a Black participant, if she had a preference. She responded, "Both of them are acceptable. I think we do use them interchangeably within the Black community. So I don't think there's a problem with that. Not at all."

I decided to use Black to be parallel to White as the designation used in my discussion. Isabela referred to herself as Hispanic rather than Latino or Costa Rican, and to her daughter as

Mixed. When possible, I listed the national reference (Mexican, Korean) rather than the more general term (Hispanic, Asian). When actual transcripts are included, the speakers' own words are used.

Research Questions

I began my study with the following, multi-part research question: How does participation in a peer-led inquiry group influence teachers' (a) understanding of linguistically or culturally diverse students, (b) teaching practices with those students, (c) interaction with parents of those students, and (d) reflections on their teaching and learning? During the course of my inquiry, these questions guided me. My findings in regard to these questions will be addressed in chapters 4 through 9.

A Roadmap

This descriptive study includes traditional components typically found in a doctoral dissertation. Analysis is integrated into the reporting of the group members' experiences, and references to literature are woven into the analysis as appropriate. In this introduction, I set the context and purpose of my study. In Chapter 2, I present a focused review of the literatures on teacher knowledge, sociocultural theory, and teacher inquiry groups. In Chapter 3, I discuss why qualitative inquiry is well suited for my study, describe the inquiry group format, address ethical issues, and explain the criteria of quality appropriate to this research text. In Chapter 4, I describe the nature of the inquiry group and the role of the facilitator in the group. I also share my perceived shortcomings and present themes from our discussions. The next four chapters show the development of the teacher participants in my study, drawing from my data. I include my own autobiographical chapter and integrate my personal research journey into the story. Finally,

in Chapter 9, I present my findings from the study in relation to my research question and discuss the personal and social significance of the work. I conclude with further questions to explore and give suggestions for others who wish to pursue this type of research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There are three major literatures that provide a framework for my inquiry. The first is the field of knowledge development for teachers, also referred to as professional development or staff development. The second is the sociocultural theory as influenced by Vygostky (1978). The third is the use of teacher inquiry or study groups as a specific strategy for knowledge development. My goal in this chapter is to provide the conceptual context for this particular study through a focused review of the literature in these three areas: knowledge development, sociocultural theory, and teacher inquiry groups. I explain how teacher inquiry is influenced by sociocultural perspectives and describe how my study is situated within these broader frameworks.

Knowledge Development for Teachers

Teaching is traditionally a lonely and isolating profession (Lieberman & Miller, 1992; Schön, 1983; Wasley, 1991). Teachers typically arrive at school, go into their individual classrooms, teach their students, briefly break for lunch, and stay in their classrooms to plan and grade papers at the end of the day. Because they have little time to interact with their colleagues, they have few opportunities for learning and professional growth through dialogue and interaction (Wasley, 1991). Additionally, teachers may be unprepared for the unprecedented diversity they find in today's classrooms (Lieberman & Miller, 1992).

Historically, professional development for adults, including teacher staff development, focused on techniques and technical skills to transmit information (Cranton, 1996; Schön, 1983, 1987). More recently there has been a push for further conceptualization of adult education in

relation to theoretical frameworks. For example, Merriam and Caffarella (1991) identified four basic orientations in the literature — behaviorist, cognitivist, humanist, and social learning. They also analyzed seven theories of adult learning and extracted four components that were integral to all: "1) self-direction as a goal of adult learning; 2) breadth and depth of life experiences as content or triggers to learning; 3) reflection or self-conscious monitoring of changes taking place; 4) and action or some other expression of learning that has occurred" (pp. 264-265). This study is situated from a social learning orientation. I believe that people learn by observing other people in a sociocultural environment. I organized the inquiry group to allow the teachers self-direction, to examine their own life experience, to provide time for reflection on practice, and to apply their learning with a student in their classroom. The organization of the group and how it functioned is explained in depth in Chapter 4.

Richardson and Placier (2001) identified three common themes shared by both the current teacher education and staff development literatures. The first theme is an emphasis on cognition. Richardson and Placier suggested the need for research on interventions that encourage the reflective thinking of teachers. The authors also discussed the influence of teacher beliefs as a predictor of individual change. A second theme in the literature is constructivist learning and teaching. These studies attempted to help teachers create constructivist classrooms and to focus on the constructivist nature of staff development. Richardson (1999) defined constructivist learning as a theory or set of theories about how individuals make meaning by connecting what they already know to those ideas they come in contact with through social interaction. A third theme deals with the complexity of teaching and the importance of context. The authors noted that qualitative approaches allow more interpretation of teachers' thinking processes and more fully account for the influence of context than quantitative studies. My

qualitative study builds upon the themes of social constructivist approaches from a sociocultural perspective, teacher reflection, and learning in the classroom context.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) developed four conceptions of teacher learning. These conceptions influenced my thinking about professional development. Their purpose was to "provide an analytic framework for theorizing teacher learning on the basis of fundamental ideas about how knowledge and practice are related and how teachers learn within communities and other contexts" (p. 251). As I read the literature for knowledge development, I found myself going back to this framework and finding similarities and connections to it. Cochran-Smith and Lytle's four conceptions are *knowledge*-for-*practice*, *knowledge*-in-*practice*, *knowledge*-of-*practice*, and *inquiry as stance*. Each of these is explicated in turn.

Knowledge-for-*practice*

Typically, staff development opportunities for teachers have been short term, "one shot" affairs, developed because an administrator from either inside or outside of the school determined that a process, method, or system should be implemented. However, these programs have limited follow-up activities and have low rates of implementation (Richardson & Placier, 2001). The kind of formal knowledge transmitted during these staff development sessions are what Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) refer to as knowledge-*for*-practice. Experts present this formal knowledge or knowledge-based research to teachers, who are expected to learn the new methods and apply them in their classrooms. Teachers have traditionally been considered "knowledge users, not generators" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 257). Schön (1987) referred to this knowledge as "technical rationality," which is based on an objectivist view of the world. The belief of the trainers operating from this perspective is that teaching the knowledge

base will improve teacher practice. This behaviorally oriented approach composes a "grand narrative" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), or an unquestioned way of looking at things.

In the past, different views have developed about what counts as professional knowledge and how to conceptualize that knowledge. In a simplified view, academic knowledge deals with "knowing that" while craft knowledge shared from teacher to teacher involves "knowing how" (Munby, Russell, & Martin, 2001). This incongruence between an emphasis on theory over practice often confuses teachers, many of whom will nod politely during the presentation of the new program while planning to close the door to their classroom and continue doing what they have always done. I attempted in the inquiry group to create a balance between theory and practice by connecting ideas to the classroom and encouraging reflection on classroom practice.

Knowledge-in-*practice*

More recent approaches to teacher learning emphasize a social constructivist orientation over a transmission oriented one (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Cranton, 1996; Richardson & Placier, 2001; Richardson, 1999). A social constructivist learning model emphasizes the prior knowledge and experience that the learner brings to a new situation, as well as the social aspects of learning. Learning occurs over time, includes opportunities for reflection, and links previous knowledge with new information. Richardson (1999) differentiated two major constructivist approaches in education—Piagetian cognitive constructivism, focusing on individual cognitive development, and social constructivism, associated with Vygotsky, emphasizing education for social transformation. A focus on learning that requires social interaction is known as the Vygotskian sociocultural approach. This model suggests that "individuals create their own new understandings, based upon the interaction of what they already know and believe, and the phenomena or ideas with which they come into contact" (Richardson, 1997, p. 3). Cochran-

Smith and Lytle (1999) coined the term "knowledge-*in*-practice" to describe knowledge that is embedded in the exemplary practice of experienced teachers and "rooted in a constructivist image of knowledge" (p. 263). Knowledge-*in*-practice is based on Schön's concept of "knowing-in-action" (1983, 1987). The knowing is revealed through skillful performance that the teacher may not be able to make verbally explicit. While in the midst of practice, the teacher may engage in "reflection-in-action," or critical questioning with an immediate significance for action. (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001). In this model, teachers, in addition to university-based researchers, are producers of knowledge.

In a similar vein, Connelly and Clandinin (1999) coined the term "personal practical knowledge" to describe how teachers integrate their prior knowledge (past), their goals for a student (future), and a current teaching situation (present). Connelly and Clandinin came to see teacher knowledge "in terms of narrative life history, as storied life compositions" (p. 2). These personal and social "stories to live by" informed them of knowledge that was both formed and expressed in the context of teacher's personal or professional settings.

While I have certainly learned information from classes operating from a knowledge-*for*-practice perspective, the staff development that radically changed my professional life was a class on whole language taught by Betty Shockley-Bisplinghoff. In that class we learned about each other by sharing our personal stories. We made connections between what we already knew and what we were learning. I not only retained and applied the information I learned about teaching reading and language arts, but I became politically active about educational decisions made by county administrators. I spoke up for my beliefs by publicly addressing and challenging

the school board in regard to financial decisions that impacted curriculum and student resources. Later, I decided to return to graduate school. I wanted the inquiry group in my study to be as life changing to the participants as Betty's class was to me.

Knowledge-of-*practice*

In the knowledge-*of*-practice construct, classrooms are considered sites of inquiry connected to the work of others. Teachers come together in collaborative inquiry groups where the theory and research of others can be critiqued. These groups provide social and intellectual contexts in which beginning and experienced teachers alike can question their own assumptions in addition to the theory and research of others. In this setting, they jointly construct local knowledge that connects their work in a local school to larger social and political issues (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Knowledge-*of*-practice utilizes the four focus points suggested by Oja's (1991) review of adult developmental theory: (a) practical application followed by reflection, (b) peer supervision and advising, (c) more complex role taking, and (d) a supportive environment. In the inquiry group at Springfield Elementary, I tried to build in time for reflection, sharing of ideas, and understanding the roles of parents and students from new perspectives. I attempted to create a non-threatening environment that supported teacher learning.

Teachers engaging in knowledge-*of*-practice avoid the isolation often felt in the classroom. Teachers need opportunities, as students do, to be involved in cycles of experimentation, reflection, and discussion (Wasley 1991). Long-term critical consultation between teachers can help them to consider different ways to solve daily classroom dilemmas (Cranton, 1996). Time is needed to analyze events after the fact in order to reflect on the actions in their classrooms (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001).

Inquiry as Stance

Teachers taking an inquiry stance "work within inquiry communities to generate local knowledge, envision and theorize their practice, and interpret and interrogate the theory and research of others" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 289). The inquiry groups are both social and political in that they critique the current arrangements of school and ways that knowledge is used, constructed, or evaluated. Teachers theorize by connecting their daily work to larger movements for equity and social change (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Saavendra, 1996; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001). The Springfield inquiry group, for example, critiqued policies related to the federal No Child Left Behind Act and made proposals to school administrators about changes needed in local school policies. The next section of this literature review will discuss a sociocultural approach to learning.

Sociocultural Theory

Inquiry groups often follow a sociocultural approach that is influenced by Vygotsky's (1978, 1986) theory of social learning (Meyer et al., 1998; Raphael, Florio-Ruane, Kehus, George, Hasty, & Highfield, 2001; Wells, 1993). This approach views knowledge as being "temporary, developmental, internally constructed, and socially and culturally mediated" (Ball, 2000).

Members of a cultural community who share a common language involve themselves in meaning making and reality construction (Bruner, 1996). In the setting of a teacher inquiry group, group members share their personal beliefs while learning of the differing beliefs of their peers. Through rich discussion in a social setting, they grow as more knowledgeable and competent teachers. In the Springfield inquiry group, teachers brought their personal practical knowledge to bear in our discussions on how to work with linguistically and culturally diverse

children. They integrated their prior knowledge with the new knowledge learned from the peer group and developed new plans for working with students in their classroom.

Wertsch's (1985) comprehensive analysis of Vygotsky's theory explicated three underlying themes in a Vygotskian sociocultural theoretical perspective. These are the use of signs and symbols to understand mental processes, the social origin of mental processes, and reliance on developmental method. Each will be discussed in turn. The first theme is that mental processes can only be understood through the signs and tools that mediate human action — primarily language in the written or spoken form. People make sense or meaning predominantly through the facilitation of language within a sociocultural environment (Ball, 2000). Lee and Smagorinsky (2000) asserted, "Language becomes the primary medium for learning, meaning construction, and cultural transmission and transformation" (p. 2). Through talk, tasks are defined and evaluated, participation is monitored and assisted, and "students and teachers engage in the dialogic co-construction of meaning, which is the essence of education" (Wells and Chang-Wells, 1992, p. 33). Teachers in the Springfield inquiry group used language to discuss, question, observe, reflect, and assert. Professional readings were shared to help members of the group make connections between theory and practice. Reflective journals were used to help teachers record their developing thinking.

The second theme Wertsch reported is that mental processes in the individual have their origins in social processes. Learning is facilitated with the help of more knowledgeable members of the community and culture through social interaction. Human thinking "develops through the mediation of others" (Moll, 2001, p. 113). In an inquiry group composed of both novice and master teachers from various socioeconomic, linguistic, ethnic or cultural backgrounds, each member of the group has rich opportunities to learn from the new culture of the inquiry group.

Vygotsky asserted that development appears first on the social or interpsychological level and then at the individual or intrapsychological plane. “All the higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). He believed that children “grow into the intellectual life of those around them” (p. 88). Adults also develop in a similar fashion in an appropriate social setting using dialogic models of staff development (Meyer et al., 1998; Raphael, Florio-Ruane, Kehus, George, Hasty, & Highfield, 2001). I experienced such learning in graduate school seminars taught from a sociocultural perspective, in Betty Shockley-Bisplinghoff’s class, and in the inquiry group at Springfield. Moll (2000) developed study groups to serve as *mediating structures* – “settings purposely created to help us think together” (p. 260). He found that the study groups became central to the teachers’ development and “became new *cultural devices* for thinking and learning” (p. 260).

Learning, Vygotsky believed, occurred in a *zone of proximal development*, or ZPD. Vygotsky (1978) defined the ZPD as:

> the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (p. 86)

In a collaborative setting, the learner can develop with assistance that which he or she is unable to achieve independently. By attempting to make sense with and for others, the learner makes sense for herself (Wells, 2000). “Therefore the only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it; it must be aimed not so much at the ripe as the ripening functions” (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 188). Learning should help the student extend beyond what can be accomplished without assistance, “but not beyond the links to what the student already knows” (Lee and Smagorinsky, 2000, p.2). In formulating the concept of the ZPD, Vygotsky shifted his “emphasis from sign use to social practice and development. . . . The

concept of the zone of proximal development integrated social activity into the theory while retaining the significance of sign and tool mediation in understanding human learning and development" (Moll, 1990, p. 5).

In a mixed group of peers, the role of "capable other" will vary from moment to moment or day to day based on the topic and areas of expertise of the members. In this way, the group becomes a "sustaining thought collective" (Meyer et al., 1998). This was true in my group as well. Each teacher at various times shared her particular cultural perspective or teaching expertise with the group. This helped us all to develop our knowledge base.

The third theme of a sociocultural theoretical perspective is reliance on a developmental method. Vygotsky believed that individual development could be understood only as it is situated in a broader social, historical, and evolutionary context. In the chapters that follow, you will learn of the teachers' personal and professional history that occurred prior to participation in the group, examples of their activity within the group, and observations from after the group experience. In this way I have attempted to honor the developmental method, studying the lived experiences of the teachers "dynamically . . . engaged with instead of detached from human beings and sociocultural dynamics" (Moll, 2000, p. 258).

Each teacher in the inquiry group interprets the same learning experience in a different way because of her unique history. "The life history of each of us is an important predictor of how we will interpret what it is that we are learning, including learning how to teach" (Manning & Payne, 1994, p. 159). In summary, the sociocultural approach posits that human psychological functions are "culturally mediated, historically developing, and arise from practical activity" (Cole, 1990, p. 91). The next section focuses on how inquiry groups or teacher study groups function.

Characteristics of Inquiry Groups

Teachers know about education "as few others do and . . . the field of education needs to capitalize on this knowledge" (Duckworth, 1997, p. 1). Teacher study groups or inquiry groups are forms of professional development that recognize the voices of teachers as professionals. The group can provide long-term support for reflection and dialogue (Birchak et al., 1998), build a sense of community and caring, challenge teacher beliefs and practices, and serve as a place to integrate theory and practice. Effective teacher learning opportunities in working with immigrant youth tend to be grounded in inquiry, reflection, and experimentation; are participant driven, collaborative and interactional; are derived from teachers' work with students; and are sustained, ongoing, and intensive (González & Darling-Hammond, 1997).

The concept of teacher inquiry groups has been slow to win acceptance "in the system at large" (Wells, 1993, p. 1). This may be because it challenges the traditional transmission oriented approach to staff development and because teacher research uses methods that are not part of traditional educational research. This strategy also requires a larger commitment of time and energy on the part of teachers and is not effective for large groups of teachers at a time. There is often emotional resistance to the self-evaluation and reflection that is involved.

Wells (1993) made three observations about teachers working in collaborative communities. First, they behave like professionals who willingly assess the needs of individual students and modify classroom instruction as appropriate. Second, they are intentional learners who actively observe what is going on in their classrooms and revise plans and expectations in light of what they observe. Third, they seek out the company of like-minded but diverse colleagues with whom to share their problems and achievements.

The inquiry group is an effective vehicle for supporting teachers' knowledge development. The group supports knowledge-*in*-practice by allowing teachers an opportunity to reflect on their daily classroom activities and model personal practical knowledge to their teaching peers. It supports knowledge-*of*-practice by forming social groups in which the theory and research of others can be critiqued. It supports teachers taking an inquiry *stance* in generating local knowledge, theorizing their practice, and interpreting the work of others while working for social change. Learning in inquiry groups develops not only from social relationships, but also from the actions of teachers working within particular sociopolitical contexts through interactions and relationships that exist among learners and teachers (Nieto, 1999). The group as I defined it for my research (see "Situating my Inquiry" below) operated from a sociocultural perspective.

The Inquiry Process

The inquiry process is a recursive one that involves questioning, seeking, answering questions, and collaborating with peers. There are four basic steps in the process (Cousin, Dembrow, & Molldrem-Shamel, 1997). These steps are: (a) Decide what you want to learn and explore, (b) develop and implement a plan, (c) collect relevant information or data and evaluate successes and failures, and (d) synthesize, reflect, and make plans for further inquiry. The inquiry process creates a new, dialectical relationship between theory and practice and allows teachers to develop personal theory (Wells, 1993). Through attention to specific classroom context and informal, collaborative talk with their peers, teachers can recognize the importance of reading other theoretical and practical work and the need to write for themselves and others.

This approach, when applied to issues of cultural diversity, allows "more than a superficial understanding" (González & Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. xv) of the needs of

culturally diverse students. In the inquiry group, teachers have "extended opportunities . . . to reflect on their practice and work with colleagues to improve it" (González & Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. xvi). Practicing educators have few opportunities to experience sustained dialogue with their peers to discuss complex ideas such as these (Raphael, Florio-Ruane, Kehus, George, Hasty, & Highfield, 2001).

Self-reflection is essential when striving to implement culturally sensitive teaching (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, (2001). This reflection must include both intellectual and emotional investments and self-criticism in order to yield insights that lead to successful change. Opportunities for ongoing discussion, dialogue, and reflection are absent in traditional staff development.

Teacher Transformation

In teacher inquiry groups formed on a voluntary basis, teachers have control over their own learning (Lefever-Davis, Wilson, Moore, Kent, & Hopkins, 2003). Teachers determine their own agenda. This sense of control can lead to teacher transformation, a perspective in which teachers learn to better understand their place in the context of the classroom and the community (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Saavendra, 1996). The socially constructed context of a study group can "facilitate opportunities for teachers to examine their own situations and the nature of their positions in school and other social systems" (Saavendra, 1996, p. 272). This occurs as teachers are provided the time they need to reflect, analyze, and critique classroom practices with their peers.

The process of transformation can be a difficult one that involves dissonance and conflict (Saavendra, 1996). As teachers critique their own beliefs and practices, they can face clashes between conflicting paradigms, ideological commitments, and personal histories:

> These conflicts occur cognitively in each individual teacher, within the study group, and in the relationship between the individuals and their institutions. Embracing the dissonance and conflict as learning opportunities is essential for transformative learning. (Saavendra, 1996, p. 274)

Informing Classroom Practice

Inquiry groups allow teachers opportunities to connect theory, application, and problem-solving to real-life classroom situations (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Lefever-Davis, Wilson, Moore, Kent, & Hopkins, 2003). In this setting, teachers have opportunities to link prior knowledge gained through practice or university-generated research to their current classroom practice while engaging in dialogic reflection with peers.

This type of teacher education is important in assisting teachers to make deep changes in their understanding of teaching and learning (Richardson, 1999). It is through question posing and a culture of inquiry, reflection, and self-evaluation that teachers learn and apply new practices in their classroom (Robb, 2000). Reflective action "leads to shifts in knowledge, belief, and future action" (Saavedra, 1996, p. 274).

Obstacles to the Formation of Inquiry Groups

The largest obstacle to the formation of inquiry groups in schools is the time and commitment involved. Several teachers who were interested in my study either chose not to participate or truncated their involvement, citing this reason. Effective groups take time to build the trust needed to provide teacher support and personal sharing of insights. My group spanned a little over 3 months. A successful group will more typically continue meeting for 1-3 years. This is a major time commitment.

Another obstacle is the need for facilitation and organization. Often, university-based researchers lead teacher study groups (Birchak et. al, 1998; Duckworth, 1997; Meyer et. al,

1998). It is unusual in my experience for a teacher to implement an inquiry group at the local school level. This may be because teachers have little or no experience with this method or time to prepare for sessions in addition to their required duties.

Situating My Inquiry

The staff development class that I facilitated at Springfield followed a teacher inquiry group model. For my purpose, I defined an *inquiry group* as "a group of teachers who are self-reflective and apply knowledge to practice as they share discoveries with each other in a caring and supportive environment. This collaborative group of teachers uses a sociocultural approach to focus on student learning."

Each member of the inquiry group conducted systematic and intentional inquiry about teaching, learning, and school in their own classroom setting (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). I suggested that the teachers formulate their own educational alternatives starting from their own particular circumstances, try them out in practice, and select the ones they deemed successful (Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992). Their focus was on literacy learning for students with linguistic or cultural backgrounds different from themselves. I explained to the teachers that by a sociocultural approach, I meant that students would be studied in their own classrooms, that they would engage in activities meaningful to their own classroom settings, and that the teachers would develop knowledge while sharing what they learned with their peers in the inquiry group.

The key areas that informed my conceptual framework were the sociocultural learning perspective and the personal practical knowledge of teachers using their knowledge-in-practice, knowledge-of-practice, and taking an inquiry stance. In the inquiry group we made connections

between theory and practice while attending to the sociopolitical context of the school setting. The reflective nature of our discussions helped us to articulate our own knowledge and personal theories at the same time that we helped inform the thinking of our peers.

In this text I describe the teacher participants and their self-reported knowledge development and teaching practice before, during, and after the inquiry group experience. My own experiences as researcher and one of the teacher participants of this inquiry group are shared**.** I tried to make sense of the experience of the group as it occurred and through the distance of time and reflective activity. Descriptive qualitative inquiry is a way to think about experience aimed at understanding and making meaning of the experience. My role as researcher was a dual one of participant and analyzer. I was an inquirer analyzing my own experience. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used in this inquiry. I portray the inquiry site, participants, the format of the inquiry group, how data were collected, my analysis, criteria for evaluation, and issues of ethics.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I discuss the descriptive qualitative approach I used in my study. Next, I review the purpose of the study and the study question. In addition, I provide important contextual information about my specific study site and the larger context in which it is situated. After that, I explicate my participant selection, data collection employed, and the process of analysis. Then, I review appropriate criteria of evaluation for my inquiry, and conclude by addressing ethical issues for qualitative research.

Qualitative Approaches

In this section I first discuss features of qualitative studies in general and how they pertain to my study. Then, I describe the descriptive approach and interpretive paradigm used to guide the research**.** I present deMarrais' (1998) three ways of knowing in qualitative research. Finally, I explain narrative knowledge and its influence on my research.

Features of Qualitative Studies

Eisner (1998) enumerated six features of qualitative studies. First, they tend to be field focused. Since I wanted to study a school setting in action, I intended to conduct a field-focused study. A second feature of qualitative studies is their use of researcher or self as an instrument. "The self is the instrument that engages the situation and makes sense of it" (Eisner, 1998, p. 34). I wanted to use my own perspective on the school to learn about how teachers in that setting might learn about cultural or linguistic differences. Therefore you will find "confessional tales" (Van Maanen, 1988) integrated within the chapters.

A third aspect is a study's interpretive character. Eisner (1998) asserted that to interpret could mean either to explain why something happened or to explain the personal meaning of the actors or participants. In my study I wanted to honor the teachers' emic perspectives as I told their stories. A fourth feature that makes a study qualitative is the use of expressive language and presence of voice in a text. I intended to tell this story in my own voice and in an engaging manner. A fifth feature that qualitative studies display is an attention to particulars. I wanted to retain the voices of my participants and let them speak for themselves. Qualitative research is well suited for this.

A final characteristic of qualitative research, according to Eisner, is the way it is evaluated. Qualitative studies "typically employ multiple forms of evidence, and they persuade by reason" (Eisner, 1998, p. 39). The researcher must persuade the readers of the reasonableness of her conclusions by staying close to the data. A more detailed discussion of evaluative criteria for my study can be found under the "Criteria of Evaluation" section of this chapter.

Descriptive and Interpretive Studies

I used a descriptive qualitative research design to guide my study. Qualitative research takes place in the natural world, uses multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic, is emergent rather than tightly prefigured, and is fundamentally interpretive (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Descriptive qualitative studies describe social phenomena and contribute to understanding about them (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Quantitative and qualitative research methods each represent different ways of thinking about the world (Holliday, 2002). Quantitative research is *normative*. "[Normative quantitative research] maintains that there is normality that we can . . . understand, and master by statistics and experiment . . . it is possible to reveal *objective facts*" (Holliday, 2002, p. 5). In contrast is the belief that research is *interpretive*. "[Interpretive

qualitative research] maintains that we can explore, catch glimpses, illuminate and then try to interpret bits of reality" (Holliday, 2002, p. 5).

Descriptive studies fall under the interpretive paradigm. A paradigm is "a basic set of beliefs that guides action, whether of the everyday variety or action taken in connection with a disciplined inquiry" (Guba, 1990, p. 17). As part of the interpretive paradigm, descriptive studies are governed by a specific set of beliefs (Guba, 1990). A key feature of interpretive approaches is a central research interest in human meaning in social life and its elucidation and exposition by the researcher (Erickson, 1986). Interpretivists employ relativist ontology—they believe in multiple interpretations of reality that cannot be value free. Their epistemology is more subjectivist than that of a postpositivist, with findings reported as a creation of the process of interaction between the inquirer and those inquired into.

Because there is a mix of objectivity and subjectivity in human processes, pure objectivity is not possible when studying people. The *hermeneutic* aspect of interpretive methodology involves the accurate depiction of individual constructions. Hermeneutics as method involves the reading and interpretation of text—in this case, human texts. It is necessary when there is a possibility for misunderstanding (Van Manen, 1990). It is both descriptive and interpretive. The interpretive turn is "both consciously and subconsciously applied to the narrative data as we try to make meaning of an event" (Hankins, 2003, pp. 8-9).

There is also a *dialectic* aspect of comparing and contrasting individual constructions "so that each respondent must confront the constructions of others and come to terms with them" (Guba, 1990, p. 27). Dialectics involves the critical examination of phenomena, including apparent opposites, and formulating theory that embraces both opposites. While in scientific

thinking the scientist strives to eliminate ambiguity and uncertainty, in our everyday reasoning about social reality we accept apparent contradictions (Robinson & Hawpe, 1986).

Ways of Knowing in Qualitative Research

Kathleen deMarrais (1998) introduced a framework to assist students of qualitative research. This framework centered on three ways that researchers understand phenomena using qualitative research approaches. The three ways of knowing she described are archival knowledge, narrative knowledge, and observational knowledge. While there is an overlap between these kinds of knowledge development in various methodological approaches, deMarrais asserted that each method tends to privilege one type of knowing over the others.

For example, historical research may incorporate interview data but tends to privilege the review of artifacts, resulting in archival knowledge. Ethnography, a study of culture, can incorporate interview data but relies most heavily on observational knowing to understand people's actions through participant observation. Although I reviewed artifacts and used participant observation, this study privileges narrative knowledge. Participant's stories of their personal histories and their reported changes after participating in the inquiry group are at the heart of my research. Primary data sources include written narratives submitted by the teachers, transcripts of dialogue that include stories shared by the teachers during our group meetings, and transcripts from teachers' interviews. More information can be found in the "Data Sources" section of this chapter.

Narrative Knowledge

Richardson (1990) argued, "whenever we write science, we are telling some kind of story, or some part of a larger narrative" (p. 13). She asserted "Although a life is not a narrative, people make sense of their lives and the lives of others through narrative constructions" (p. 10).

People naturally construct stories as they reflect on their experiences because they think, perceive, and imagine according to narrative structures (Robinson & Hawpe, 1986; Sarbin, 1986). These narratives serve as natural mediators between the particular and the general in human experience (Richardson, 1990). Richardson posited that the design of conventional research reports reveals a "narratively driven subtext" (p. 13). The literature review includes the theory that is the past or the driving reason for the researcher to begin the present study. This leads to the future, including the findings and implications of the research. She argued, "Narrative structures, therefore, are preoperative regardless of whether one is writing primarily in the narrative or logico-scientific mode" (p. 13).

In the above quote, Richardson followed Bruner (1986), who theorized that there are two modes of cognitive functioning, each of which has distinctive ways of constructing reality. The two modes are narrative and logico-scientific (also referred to as paradigmatic). The paradigmatic mode "makes use of procedures to assure verifiable reference and to test for empirical truth. . . . [It] leads to good theory, tight analysis, logical proof, sound argument, and empirical study guided by reasoned hypothesis" (p. 13). The narrative mode leads to "believable (though not necessarily "true") historical accounts. It deals in human or human-like intention and action and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course" (p. 13). It is concerned with the particular rather than the general. "Narrative deals with the vicissitudes of human intentions" (p. 16).

This descriptive study has been influenced and shaped by readings in various qualitative traditions and I have borrowed ideas from them. These traditions include educational ethonography (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; LeCompte & Priessle, 1993), case study (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1984), and progressive qualitative research (Holliday, 2002). However, I have been

most influenced by my readings in narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Conle, 2000a, 2000b; Gergen, 2001; Gundmundsdóttir, 2001; Oliver, 1998; Polkinghorne, 1988, 1995; Riessman, 1993; Witherell & Noddings, 1991; Wortham, 2001), particularly in regard to analyzing my data and constructing the chapters on the participants. This study of teachers deals with the vicissitudes (changes in circumstances) of their intentions of practice**,** leading to narrative understanding. In this dissertation I will move forward and backward in time to portray the personal and social experiences of the teacher participants, look inward to my personal motives for completing the work, and look outward toward the social significance of the work. My research purpose and question are described in the next section.

Purpose and Question

The purpose of my study was to investigate and describe teacher knowledge development as it took place in a peer-led inquiry group. The setting of the inquiry was an elementary school in the Southeastern United States. This school had a linguistically and culturally diverse student population but a minimally diverse teacher population. My research question was: How does participation in a peer-led inquiry group influence teachers' (a) understanding of linguistically or culturally diverse students, (b) teaching practices with those students, (c) interactions with parents of those students, and (d) reflections on their teaching and learning?

Site Selection and Description

My research interest focused on the school where I was employed as a reading specialist through a state intervention program during the year I conducted my inquiry. I call this school Springfield Elementary, a pseudonym. Because I had worked at Springfield for several years, I had easy access to the site, had built a level of trust with my coworkers, and held an insider's, or emic, perspective. I had ample opportunities to observe and gain knowledge of the site.

The choice of setting meets Holliday's (2002) five criteria for research settings: boundedness, variety of data, sufficient richness, manageable size, and ability to participate in the setting. The setting was limited to participants at Springfield Elementary School who participated in a staff development class from December to April. A wide variety of data were available to me. These will be discussed in a later section of this chapter. I had a rich environment in which to interconnect these data, which included workplace observations, inquiry group participation, personal conversations, and interviews. My role as a teacher in the school gave me easy access to documents or information I needed.

The inquiry group had a manageable number of participants. Initially there were five teachers beside myself in the inquiry group. One was unable to continue past the third session, and one did not attend after the first week in March.

The study began in December and ran for two years. Inquiry group meetings and follow-up interviews were held from December to April of the first year. Member checks, analysis, and additional interviews continued for another 19 months, through the writing phase of this dissertation. Pseudonyms were used for the names of the state, city, county, school, and participants (myself excluded) for reasons of confidentiality. The school site is situated in Taylorsville in Lyman County, a suburban community near a metropolitan area of a Southeastern state. Lyman County has made a dramatic transition from an agricultural economy to an industrial one in a short time. The county's generally affluent population increased threefold between 1980 and 2003. The population was predominantly White, with only 6% Black and a fast growing minority of Hispanic, Asian, and European immigrants, when this study began.

Given Lyman County's growth, each year added thousands of additional students and hundreds of new classrooms. Because building space was limited, the county system used high

numbers of trailer classrooms. A majority of teachers in the system had a master's degree or higher with an average of 17 years teaching experience. According to Lyman County statistics, students in the system represented about 50 languages and countries. Of the students who spoke languages other than English, the majority spoke Spanish, followed by Korean and Vietnamese. Less than 20% of students countywide qualified for free or reduced lunch.

Springfield differed from the county in many ways, including teacher experience and preparation, income, and student ethnic background. Only one-third of Springfield teachers had earned a master's degree or higher during the year of my inquiry. Three-fourths of them had taught 10 years or less. The certified teaching staff the year of my study were 91% White, 7% Black, less than 2% Hispanic, and 0% Asian/Pacific Islander. Students represented over 30 countries and languages. The students were approximately 40% Black, 20% White, 19% Hispanic, 14% Asian/Pacific Islander, 3% Multi-racial and less than 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native or Other. Nearly half of the students in the year of my study qualified for free or reduced lunch. One-third of all Springfield students had a primary home language other than English and many of those received services in the ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) program.

ESOL Policies in Lyman County

Springfield Elementary is situated within particular geographic, cultural, and political contexts. In order to better understand the political and pedagogical contexts affecting culturally and linguistically diverse students and the educators who teach them, I interviewed a Lyman County official to find out more about county policies and philosophy in regard to the types of services provided for students receiving ESOL services. We discussed a variety of topics and

issues affecting ELL students at school. He reported that Lyman County is very supportive and expends a large portion of its budget on ESOL programs and staff development:

> From my perspective, this is a very exciting place to work and there are a lot of things we can do here. But there are established Lyman County traditions, and it's going to take a long time to change those attitudes. There will probably need to be a community power shift before some of that occurs.

I asked the official why Lyman County does not offer bilingual instruction. He asked me to turn off the tape recorder before replying to that question. There are local and state-level politics involved in that decision, and some subjects cannot be discussed in this dissertation.

I shared with this official comments made by ESOL teachers at my school that "research has shown that bilingual programs are ineffective." I felt that these statements implied what they had heard from county training and wanted to know what research they might have been quoting. He replied:

> There is some very *powerful* research that does talk about bilingual instruction. . . . I've seen bilingual programs in various states and when it is *well* done it is wonderful. But it is hard to do *well*. Part of the problem of bilingual education nationally is that there have been a lot of poorly designed programs. . . . From my point of view, a well-designed and well-implemented ESOL program is better than a poorly designed bilingual program. . . . I always believed that ESOL would be the first step and that eventually we would begin to expand to other models as situations within schools permitted it and qualified staff were available. . . . The message from the state has been "English only" for the last 5 years—that [first language] knowledge and knowledge of the first culture is just of no importance at all in the whole mix of academic achievement.

Lyman County offers training for teachers who seek ESOL endorsement certification as well as a 30-hour strategy class for classroom teachers. About 500 teachers receive this training each summer, and more during the school year. I asked if the state funded the ESOL model. The official replied:

> The state funds the basic program, which is ESOL. But it *never*, at any point, said what kind of instruction had to be used. The goals were English . . . there is nothing that says that some other kind of instruction cannot be provided. It wouldn't cost any more. The only difference would be some additional training for teachers and additional materials.

On parting, the official provided me with a copy of the county's report on English to Speakers of Other Languages that was commissioned by an official in Lyman County. The report gave a summary of research findings on instructional strategies. This summary explained that most studies comparing the effectiveness on programs focused only on the early elementary grades. However, if programs are followed through the high school years, program effects become larger. Language minority students who receive strong cognitive and academic development in their first language in addition to English at least through grades 5 or 6 sustain high academic achievement that peers educated in English only do not have.

Thomas and Collier (1997) made a similar conclusion. They reported that once students exit the ESOL system in the early grades they "fall behind the typical achievement levels of native-English-speakers (defined by the 50th percentile or NCE) by 1-4 NCEs *each* year, resulting in a very significant, cumulative achievement gap of 15-26 NCEs by the end of their school years" (p. 34). In contrast, bilingually schooled children are able to sustain gains in English or outperform native-English-speakers as they move through the secondary years. Typically, according to Thomas and Collier's findings, bilingually schooled children on grade level in their first language will achieve grade level parity in English in from 4-7 years. In contrast, those with no instruction in their first language take 7-10 years to catch up. This is because cognitive development continues in the first language and transfers to the second. The Lyman County report concluded that decisions to use a bilingual or English-only approach affect children's academic achievement.

Participant Selection

Inquiry Group Participants

I used criterion-based selection to recruit participants for my study. In this process, the researcher establishes advanced criteria or a list of attributes desired in the participants (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). My first criterion for inclusion in the study was that participants taught reading, writing, and language to students in grades 3, 4, or 5 at Springfield. This provided a common ground for discussions on academic subjects and a venue in which to practice new teaching strategies. I wanted a span of grade levels in order to allow for multiple perspectives and to have a wider selection pool, but a narrow enough range that all teachers present would feel like the topics discussed applied to them. I chose the intermediate grades over primary because my teaching assignment at that time was in fourth and fifth grade classrooms, and I would be one of the participants in the group.

Additional criteria required teachers to: (a) attend inquiry group sessions, (b) keep a reflective log, (c) participate in discussions about their classroom practice, and (d) allow themselves to be interviewed individually. Finally, teachers participating in the inquiry group were required to choose a focal student in order to complete a case study over the three months of group meetings. Each participant developed her own classroom inquiry.

In order to recruit participants, I sent an email to all third, fourth, and fifth grade classroom teachers, ESOL teachers, teachers of gifted students, and special education teachers. The email briefly outlined my study. I also addressed staff members at a faculty meeting to describe my study. Additionally, I approached several teachers and issued them a personal invitation to the group. As an incentive for participation, I prepared a staff development proposal to Lyman County for the inquiry group. Any participant who attended at least 80% of the

meetings would receive 2 staff development units (SDUs) for the course. These units are required for teachers in order to renew their teaching certificates.

I met with several prospective volunteers in the fall to explain the commitment of group participation. Some decided that they could not meet the requirements or had schedules that conflicted with the inquiry group schedule. Another teacher missed the meeting but asked to be included, and recruited her team member to join us.

The inquiry began with six participants, including myself. One teacher, Linda, left the study after three meetings when committee responsibilities competed with her time. Another teacher, Isabela, never formally left the study. She completed the final interview but did not attend the last three meetings or complete a case study. I did not include chapters on Linda or Isabela because of their minimal participation. However, their names may be mentioned in the context of other teachers' stories due to the time they did participate, quotes from them appear in some of the dialogue, and relevant information from Isabela's final interview is included in Chapter 9. The four teacher participants who earned staff development in the group were Doreen, Sue Ellen, Tricia, and myself. Each of these participants has a chapter that tells her story (Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8, respectively).

The small group size was ideal in allowing for intense discussions with maximum personal involvement by each participant. With only four or five members present, teachers talked "openly and honestly with each other about educational issues" (Birchak et al., 1998, p. 41). In our group, we had some of our richest discussions in our last three sessions with only four participants. All of the teachers in the group were female. Doreen was a Black third grade teacher; Sue Ellen was a White ESOL teacher of fourth and fifth grade students; Tricia was a White third grade teacher; and I was a White teacher who team-taught language arts with fourth

and fifth grade teachers. Isabela, who may be mentioned in some of the transcripts, was a fifth grade teacher whose family emigrated from Costa Rica during her elementary years. Linda was a White fourth grade teacher. I had a few study participants who are mentioned in these stories who did not participate in the inquiry group. These include classroom teachers and an administrator.

Data Sources

In this section I describe the sources of data used for my study. While I made some direct observations within the inquiry group setting, most of my information about how participants learned has to do with their *self-reported* perceptions, beliefs, and thinking as reported through conversational stories in the inquiry group discussions and in the final interviews. Thus, my study yields narrative knowledge rather than observational knowledge (deMarrais, 1998), as discussed in the section on qualitative approaches above. The data are imbued with interpretation because as the researcher, I selected what I attended to and noticed in the field and in the transcribed conversations.

Transcripts of Inquiry Group Meetings

The inquiry group met on 10 different occasions for 90 minutes per meeting. Although the consent form referred to 12 sessions, I allowed participants to make optional home visits, complete reflective writing, or research an independent topic in lieu of the other two meetings. Each group meeting was audio recorded. Additionally, each teacher was interviewed one-on-one in March. These open-ended interviews lasted from 15-65 minutes. I transcribed each audiotape personally. This helped me begin the process of preliminary analysis, as I jotted down impressions or questions of the data. I transcribed each meeting after it ended so I could do

periodic member checking with individuals or the group about my initial analysis and clarify anything I did not understand.

Teacher Stories and Autobiographies

Prior to our first meeting of the inquiry group, I asked the teachers to complete two written assignments. The first was to write about a focal student they "worried about" (Allen, Michalove, & Shockley, 1993) who was culturally or linguistically different from the teacher. Their instructions were to "Write a description of everything you know about the student you have selected after obtaining parental consent. Include anything and everything you think is relevant or important." The second assignment was as follows:

> What kinds of experiences have you had with linguistic or cultural diversity growing up, going to school and college, in your teaching career, and your personal life? Write a story to share these personal and school histories with the group. Think about which experiences in your history that you draw on when working with diverse students. How have your experiences shaped the way you teach, relate to students, relate to parents, or relate to administrators? Include these thoughts with your story.

In addition to turning in these written stories, the teachers shared them orally and embellished on them in the inquiry group. In the process of group discussions, the teachers frequently shared stories about students in their classroom and in the school. These provided rich and informative narrative data.

Field Notes and Journal

I used a journal to record impressions, reflections, and emotions during my experiences in the field. Sometimes these started out as quickly scribbled notes on a legal pad in the middle of a staff meeting. I typed these up within a day after the group met and the information was fresh in my mind.

My ability to write field notes was greatly inhibited by my intense involvement in the group experience. The process of participant observation has been described as “schizophrenic” (Merriam, 1998). As a member of the group, I became too absorbed in the activities to pull back and take notes. This would have set me apart from my peers in the group, disrupting my personal connection with them. Therefore, my journal, along with transcripts and notes, served as my field notes. I included with these notes telephone and personal conversations with the teachers, especially in regard to activities in the group or reactions to various drafts of my stories about them. Everything was dated in order to place it temporally in the study.

When I was not directly involved in the inquiry group, I recorded ethnographic impressions of the school using *thick description* (Geertz, 1973). My understanding of thick description is that it includes the integration of analysis. While “thin” description describes what someone is doing, thick description includes the motives and theory the researcher believes about why something may have happened in a particular way. In some cases this thick description comes from the initial data. Other times it is added during the writing process through more detailed reflection and analysis.

Research Interviews

The last inquiry group meeting included a group interview in which I asked the teachers about their group experience and how it had changed their thinking and practice. Before this, I scheduled one-on-one interviews with all group members. Due to the close relationships formed in the group, these interviews had an informal, conversational quality. In these interviews I returned to my original questions to get their input on how they believed participating in the group influenced their understanding of linguistically or culturally diverse students, teaching

practices with those students, interactions with parents of those students, and reflections on teaching and learning. A copy of my interview guide is found in Appendix A.

Teacher Journals and Written Case Studies

I gave each teacher a spiral notebook to use as a journal in which they could respond to readings and record thoughts and reflections. I gathered these periodically to copy and read, as described in the teacher informed consent (Appendix B). All of the participants, excluding myself, confessed that they were strongly reluctant to write. Therefore, this was a sparse source of data. At the end of the inquiry group phase of the study, 4 group members wrote case studies on their focal students. As a guide to assist them, I provided a protocol to gather information adapted from Brisk and Harrington (2000). A copy of this guide is in Appendix H. Comparison of the teachers' case studies to their original writings revealed their new depth of knowledge about these students. The original descriptions and case studies are found in Appendices C, D, E, and F.

Documents

I collected and reviewed information on the school and county to assist in providing context for the study. I saved newspaper articles about the district that described its ethnic makeup, socio-economic status, and test scores of various schools. I examined the school's "report card" as issued by the state, published test scores, the school handbook, and related contextual documents. The reading of these documents helped me focus on the school context beyond my experiences in the inquiry group and helped me portray the school in a realistic manner. However, I have not incorporated the information so specifically that the school can be identified by it.

Comments about Data

In this section I have delineated several sources of information created during this research. In the writing of the dissertation, they are not so neatly categorized or differentiated. Instead, they are interwoven throughout in order to analyze the teachers' experiences. For example, in the writing of Doreen's chapter, I tell of her childhood background and early experiences with diversity. To tell this part of her story, I included information from a school photograph, her written autobiography, her oral autobiography, personal and telephone conversations that were not recorded but on which I took notes, and Doreen's oral and written comments during several member checks over one year later. All of these were integrated to develop a cohesive description. Source material is not specifically identified, because this would disrupt the narrative flow.

Analysis

My initial analysis began as I collected data for my study and incorporated thick description into my field notes and researcher's log. I not only made notes of what I had seen, read, or heard, but I incorporated my thoughts and feelings about those events. This analysis continued as I transcribed each audiotape of the inquiry group sessions and interviews and thought about my initial research questions. I made notes of ways that the teachers presented evidence of changes in attitudes, knowledge about diversity, and teaching practices with their linguistically and culturally diverse students.

After several false starts of attempting to code data for categories, I began reading about narrative inquiry. This reading helped me in the process of analysis. I looked more deeply at the meaning that actions and intentions had for the teacher participants (Conle, 2000a). I wrote my first drafts attempting to use Polkinghorne's (1995) narrative analysis. Using this method, I

selected data events leading to an outcome. I described the cultural context and significant people and relationships that led the participants' movement toward an outcome, or how they believed they changed as a result of being in the inquiry group. I tried to use the data to generate a story of the teachers' participation with a beginning, middle, and end.

Narrative analysis, according to Polkinghorne (1995), relates events and actions to one another "by configuring them as contributors to the advancement of a plot" (p. 16). For example, in Doreen's story I thought about her emphasis on parent-teacher relationships and teacher-student relationships. I chose data events in which she described being isolated as a child and young adult and disconnected from the communities in which she lived. This helped to explain why she felt as strongly as she did about forming these relationships.

When I wrote the first draft of Doreen's story, I was feeling pressure, due to my own insecurity as a researcher, to identify key themes. Unsure how to proceed, I completed an analysis of Doreen based on Ladson-Billings' (1995) conception of culturally relevant pedagogy, but this did not read coherently. When I shared this draft with Doreen, she did not understand the theoretical terminology and was put off by the analysis, although she did agree, once it was explained, that the analysis painted an accurate portrait of her.

I referred to Connelly and Clandinin (2000) for suggestions about how to proceed with analysis. I went back and attempted to narratively code the data. To do this I looked at the data, thinking about one participant at a time. First, I carefully read the final interview for that teacher, looking at how my study questions were answered. In other words, I looked at how the teacher said she had changed as a result of participation in the inquiry group. I made a chart listing the denouement or conclusion of the "plot" for this character. Then, I reviewed notes pertaining to conversations after the group concluded, to further understand how the "character" might have

changed. I went back to the autobiographical information that person had shared to see where she had started out. I examined the journals, transcripts of the inquiry group, and the written case studies to see how the participant reported changing her perceptions, beliefs, or knowledge over the course of the group experience. I selected examples that would highlight this temporal change. I paid particular attention to stories that held topics of social significance for teachers of culturally or linguistically diverse children.

Using this method of analysis, I revised Doreen's chapter and presented it to her for a second critique, asking her to comment on parts of the draft. Each subsequent round of critiques and comments has been incorporated into the final chapter, as it has been for all of the participant chapters and the summary in Chapter 9. The process of analysis involved the full 24 months of my research, beginning at the preliminary level and continuing through initial and final written drafts. I used my research questions to guide analysis and looked for events that led to the final outcomes.

Criteria of Evaluation

In the positivist paradigm of qualitative research, criteria for evaluation are similar to that of quantitative studies: internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity. However, the interpretive paradigm that guides my research calls for different quality criteria. This move away from postpositivist models of validity and textual authority is called the *crisis of legitimation* (Lincoln & Denzin, 1998). It is not appropriate to judge interpretive studies using positivist criteria (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lather, 2001; Lincoln, 1995). In this section I address appropriate criteria with which my study may be judged. These criteria include noting my accuracy in research methods and writing, how I sought feedback from participants and informed readers, how I used participants' own words, how I revealed my

subjectivity, and my sense of *wakefulness* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), or ongoing reflection. I attempted at every stage of this inquiry to be wakeful and thoughtful of all of my inquiry decisions.

Wolcott (1994) explored alternatives to validity in evaluating qualitative studies. His suggestions included careful listening to participants, accurate recording of conversations, use of peer reviewers, including the words of the participants, incorporating the researcher's subjectivity into the research text, seeking feedback from informed readers, trying to achieve balance, and writing accurately. I have used all of these suggestions in the writing of my dissertation.

The dialectic, hermeneutic process, as described earlier in this chapter, served as quality control (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The key was to be explicit about the subjectivity and constructions of myself as inquirer and to apply the same level of "challenge, criticism and counter examples" (p. 244) to my constructions as to those of the participants. To help do this I asked my fellow participants and knowledgeable peer readers to review my chapter alongside the others. I am explicit about my subjectivity so that the reader can take my point of view into consideration.

Lincoln (1995) and LeCompte and Priessle (1993) addressed relational criteria, or the need to recognize and validate relationships between the inquirer and those who participate in the inquiry. They stressed several ways this can be accomplished: use methodology that recognizes that all texts are partial and incomplete, get feedback from participants through member checks, and address concerns about accuracy, honesty, truthfulness, voice, critical subjectivity of participants, and issues of reciprocity. I highly value the relationships I developed during the

inquiry group. Each teacher participant reviewed her drafted chapter to ensure that she was comfortable with my representation. Their responses were incorporated into subsequent drafts. Standards for quality can also be considered standards for ethics (Lincoln, 1995). Ethical concerns will be addressed in the next section.

Issues of Ethics

In each stage of my inquiry I made every effort to address ethical concerns and to behave in an ethical manner toward my participants, coworkers, and readers in the teaching and research communities. Researchers in the interpretive paradigm see participants as partners in research (Punch, 1998). This approach emphasizes avoidance of harm, fully informed consent, and the need for privacy and confidentiality. In this section I outline several of the issues as I addressed them. These include informed consent, confidentiality, site entry, my own subjectivity, and the crisis of representation.

Informed Consent

Prior to my engagement in this inquiry, I designed informed consent forms for participants (See Appendix B). These included forms for the teacher participants in my inquiry group, the parents of students with whom they conducted their case study and home visits, and additional school personnel who were not inquiry group participants. I designed the parent forms to make them easy to understand, and had them printed in English on one side and Spanish on the other. I developed an additional consent form specific for the home visit, since not every participant wished to participate in this activity. I composed all forms in compliance with the guidelines of the Human Subjects Office of the University of Georgia. All forms stated that participation in the study was entirely voluntary, that participation would not involve any

foreseen stresses or risks, that participation would remain confidential, and that the participant could withdraw consent at any time. My intent was to protect participants from harm and embarrassment (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000).

The teacher consent forms explained the reasons I was conducting the research, the benefits for teachers, and the procedures of the inquiry group. I explained that I would retain possession of the audiotapes, transcribe them personally, assign pseudonyms to the teachers, give them opportunities to read sections of reports that pertained to them, and encourage their input before completing the final report.

I wrote the parent consent forms in friendly letter form that was signed by the teacher completing the case study. Students verbally assented to participate in the study before taking this letter to their parents. The letter explained that the teacher was taking a class with me as a research study that I was completing. It explained the reason for the study and the procedures involved. It specified that the teachers might collect work samples or audio-tapes of the student's performance and that she would be talking about the child with other teachers to plan for more effective teaching. The letter stressed that nobody outside of the inquiry group would know that the child was in the study. Only Sue Ellen, who worked with ESOL students, was familiar with some of the other teachers' focal students. I never met any of the focal students except for my own student, Manuel. The consent letter emphasized the voluntary nature of the study and that participation or non-participation in the study would not affect the child's grades in any way.

I also designed the parent consent form for the home visit in letter format. Participants gave this letter to parents during spring parent-teacher conferences. It requested permission to visit the parent and child at home "so that I can learn more about your family in order to be a

better teacher" and to "learn more about your culture so that we all understand each other better." It further explained that a translator would visit with the teacher if needed. It explained issues of confidentiality and the voluntary nature of the visit.

Confidentiality

Except for myself, participants in this inquiry are portrayed in a manner intended to protect their identity. Many details about the participants have been changed or disguised, including physical attributes included for their narrative quality. I assigned each teacher a pseudonym. Pseudonyms were also used to identify the school, the city in which the school is located, and the county system with which it is affiliated.

There are times, however, when confidentiality is difficult to ensure completely. Someone who knows where I teach will be able to identify the study site. That person might be able to determine who was in my study, but only if the participants themselves discuss their participation. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) discussed this problem, giving the example of how the principal of their school site proudly introduced them to visitors as researchers and announced that he was a participant in their study, even revealing his pseudonym. My participants will naturally have spoken to their peers about their participation in the inquiry group, as well.

The student participants' identities are ensured, since I never met any of them, besides my case study student. Their descriptions and backgrounds parallel those of hundreds of other Springfield students. The students themselves were never aware that they were part of a study, only that their teacher paid them some extra attention that winter and spring. I maintained vigilance in regard to issues of confidentiality throughout the study.

I used my personal judgment to determine what level of detail was important for the reader to know and what details could be changed or disguised for the protection of the participants' identity. Each participant read the final version of her chapter and approved it.

Site Entry

Negotiating entry is commonly seen as an ethical matter framed in terms of principles establishing responsibilities for researchers and their participants (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). As a part-time teacher at Springfield Elementary School, I already had access to the site. While the inquiry group as an entity had a starting and end point, my presence at the school did not end when the group disbanded. Neither did the relationships developed within the inquiry group. I extended the time frame of my study with the Institutional Review Board for an additional 12 months so I could continue to analyze data, informally interview participants, and complete member checks. This helped me understand ways in which the teachers and policies in the school changed as a result of our involvement in the group.

I wanted all of the teachers to have a voice within the inquiry relationship. I brought transcripts of our sessions to the last meeting and shared drafts of pertinent sections with the teachers to elicit their response and feedback. I took these comments into consideration when rewriting these drafts and wrote about the comments in subsequent drafts until the final version was written. Each of the three most involved inquiry group members read the draft of my chapter and responded to it as well.

Subjectivity and the Crisis of Representation

Fine (1998), in writing about the "crisis of representation," (Marcus & Fischer, 1986) examined how qualitative researchers "work" the hyphen between the dualism of Self-Other that "separates and merges personal identities with our inventions of others" (p. 131). She stressed

that by constructing texts collaboratively and by examining our relations with those who are Others, we move against "othering." There are three primary ways that I attempted to avoid "othering" in my inquiry. These included my own participation, the inclusion of my subjectivity, and the use of member checking.

First of all, I was a participant in the study along with three other teachers. I completed the same reading and writing assignments that each of them was asked to complete. I studied my own practice, made a home visit, and wrote a case study. I taught alongside of them and participated as a group member. I listened to their stories and learned from their personal practical knowledge. However, I did feel at times that I was on both sides of the fence in my role as teacher researcher. There are discrepancies between the stance of outsider and insider, of participant observer and observer participant (Erickson, 1993).

Secondly, I realized that the events in this research text would be filtered through my personal awareness (Coles, 1997). It would be possible to slip into the role of University Researcher "I" – Participant "They." To help avoid this dichotomy, I included myself in the study as a participant and analyzed my own knowledge development during this process. I was candid in the text about my subjectivity and revealed feelings and personal reactions early in the text (Wolcott, 1994).

Finally, I asked participants and informed readers to read drafts of their own chapters and mine, as well as the chapter about the group, in a process I refer to as *member checking*. I asked participants if they thought the writing told an accurate account of events and if the portrayals were honest. I revised these working drafts as needed based on their responses. I asked teachers familiar with Lyman County to read my introductory chapter for input, and I shared other sections with doctoral candidates and recent doctoral graduates to get their responses. I asked my

readers if I was respectful to my participants and if the chapters made sense to them. These comments were taken into consideration as the chapters were rewritten. To make this process visible for other researchers, I discussed this to let the reader know how the chapter had been modified after the member check. After reading the final versions, the participants stated that the chapters gave an accurate and honest portrayal of the group. They felt that someone reading this could get a picture of the school, the inquiry group, and the way the group interacted, while still maintaining participant confidentiality**.**

I addressed these ethical issues throughout my study from the very beginning and incorporated them into the research design. In the next chapter I tell about the group experience. Four chapters telling stories of individual group members will follow this.

CHAPTER 4

THE INQUIRY GROUP

The inquiry group experience differed from any staff development that group members had participated in before. It had fewer members, included more time for discussion, allowed us to share personal stories, and tied learning activities directly to classroom practice. Initially we had to adjust to our different roles and learn how to interact. In this chapter I discuss the nature of the Springfield inquiry group. I explain the roles of the facilitator, include samples of discussions that we held on topics of social significance, and provide transcripts to show how we interacted as a group. I clarify the *Bridging Cultures* framework (Trumball, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001) and include examples of how this framework influenced our discussions. I reflect on what I believe were my shortcomings as a facilitator of the group and describe what I might have done differently. I end the chapter with quotations from the participants that express how they were affected by membership in the group.

The Springfield inquiry group met ten times between December and April of the first year of the study, and I conducted final interviews in March. The last meeting also included an informal assessment of the group's effectiveness. I planned each group session in advance, yet I remained flexible about discussing any topics that teachers brought up during our time together. The school's media specialist ordered multiple copies of the books we used as resources. The book we referred to the most was *Literacy and Bilingualism: A Handbook for ALL Teachers* by Brisk and Harrington (2000). The second book was *Constructing Knowledge Together: Classrooms as Centers of Inquiry and Literacy* by Wells and Chang-Wells (1992). We did not have the opportunity to read very much of this one. We also referred to *Bridging Cultures*

between Home and School: A Guide for all Teachers by Trumball, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, and Quiroz (2001). We read selected chapters from this book and various articles that I thought would be helpful to teachers. A list of readings and mini-lessons can be found in Appendix I.

The Facilitator's Roles

As the facilitator of the group, my roles were to model strategies for linguistically and culturally diverse students through mini-lessons, to provide reading and reference material as resources for the group, and to stimulate discussion. I suggested topics for inquiry and assigned readings or activities for them to complete between meetings. I served as a go-between for the group when they wanted their ideas communicated to school administrators. As I transcribed discussions and noticed issues that I felt needed to be discussed, I introduced these issues to the group and encouraged open conversation. I returned to some topics, such as "seeing color," discussed in a following section, hoping to promote dialogue. In this way I challenged the thinking of the participants, causing them to look more deeply at their actions. At times, I needed to put my own agenda aside and allow group members to initiate topics of discussion that concerned them at that moment. Occasionally, I was guilty of cutting a discussion short in order to get back to my plans. Most of the time, however, I was flexible and open to the introduction of a new topic.

A Slow Beginning

Our first meeting was the last Monday in December before the winter holidays. We did not know each other yet, and we did not know what to expect from each other or the group. We came prepared to share our autobiographical stories and the information we had gathered about our focal students, as described in Chapter 2. This meeting and most subsequent ones were held in Tricia's room, due to its central location. Tricia's room was near the back hall of the school,

and she had two large windows. Her desk was arranged in front of one window so she had natural light from the afternoon sun falling across her desk. Tricia's bulletin boards had an instructional focus: one developed calendar skills, another classroom rules, and a third displayed student work. Signs were posted on the four walls labeling them East, West, North and South. It was a colorful, busy-looking third grade classroom.

I brought a rolling book cart each week full of professional books for the teachers to borrow, as well as my audio recording equipment and a timer to remind me when to turn over the tape. The day of the first inquiry group, I was both excited and nervous. I'd spent years preparing for this day, the beginning of my doctoral research. I arrived in Tricia's room as soon as her students left for the bus. I brought in refreshments, set up the tape recorder, wheeled in my book cart, and checked the recording equipment one more time. I put out the sign-in sheet so teachers could get credit for attendance, and I organized my handouts.

Sitting near the tape recorder, I arranged desks so we would sit in a circle in the center of the room. The other teachers arrived, one at a time, and signed in. I was disappointed that first day to find that both Doreen and Isabela were absent. The first meeting was so crucial, I thought, for sharing personal stories, bonding as a group, and establishing trust. I worried that the group might fizzle out before it had even begun. The four present included Tricia, Sue Ellen, Linda, who left the group in January, and myself.

Before the first group meeting, each participant prepared two assignments. These are described in detail in Chapter 2 under the section, "Teacher Stories and Autobiographies." The first assignment was to write about early experiences with diversity at home, school, and on the job, and to describe how these experiences influence the person today as a teacher. The second assignment was to tell about the student picked as the focal student – everything the teacher

knew about the child and why this student was chosen. We began the group by sharing our autobiographical stories**.** As I told my story, the other women listened attentively. However, at certain junctures they exclaimed or interjected comments that indicated their engagement with the story. Each teacher shared her story in turn. By the end of that first session, the group seemed more comfortable with each other. The ice had been broken, at least for those of us who were present.

At the end of the meeting, Sue Ellen asked me why I had chosen the Brisk and Harrington text for our use. I explained that it included teacher-tested strategies and fit the school's budget. Sue Ellen stated that she was "not real happy" with my choice. She explained:

> All the studies that have been done recently on learning a second language are more in favor of the way we do ESOL in Lyman County. We don't do anything bilingual. It just takes them longer to learn the language.

I told Sue Ellen that I welcomed her critique of the book, but in subsequent discussions she was mostly in favor of it. I wondered what she had been unhappy with, and realized the authors used the term *bilingual* to denote *English language learners* who were speaking two languages. It did not necessarily promote bilingual instruction as a school program. This had been her first impression, which I clarified through further discussion with Sue Ellen.

Defining the Group

All six teachers, including myself, were present for the second group meeting, held in January. I began by asking if anyone had reflections about the previous meeting that they had either recorded in their journal or had thought about. Sue Ellen noted that she had been thinking about the group. She commented:

> I've thought a lot about it. I thought, I can't wait to hear about [Doreen and Isabela's] experiences because I feel like theirs would be so different from ours. We were very, very similar, I think, in our experiences growing up and our school education and school careers, and I thought it would be interesting to hear different backgrounds.

Doreen's and Isabela's early experiences were in many ways different than ours. For example, Doreen's story, in Chapter 6, begins with her memory of being the only Black child in her kindergarten class, while our stories told of classrooms where the other children looked like us. Isabela and her brother were the only Hispanic students in their school when she came to the United States from Costa Rica.

I told the teachers what my research was about and gave them each a copy of my study questions. I also defined an inquiry group for them as a group of teachers who are reflective and apply knowledge to practice as they share discoveries with each other in a caring and supportive environment. I explained that I would teach them how to use a sociocultural approach to focus on student learning. They would conduct systematic and intentional inquiry about teaching, learning, and school in their own classroom setting. They would try out strategies in their own classrooms and share those they found successful with the group. They would focus their inquiry on the question, "How do my students learn?" I explained that by a sociocultural approach, I meant that the teachers would study their students in the classroom context, choose personally meaningful activities, and acquire by sharing learning in a social setting with their peers and through thoughtful reflection. Nobody had any questions or comments, so I assumed that they accepted this plan.

I gave participants journals to use to record reflections on their learning during their inquiry and as a vehicle for sharing. I suggested that they include observations of their focal student. We talked about making optional home visits. Tricia, Doreen, and I planned on visiting each of our focal students at home.

Seeing Color

In our second session, I summarized the activities of the previous meeting for the sake of Doreen and Isabela and noted to the group that, when looking over the transcripts from the first session, more than one teacher commented on "not seeing color." I shared the following:

> The ability to work with children without prejudice is an admirable trait, but I wonder what kind of message we're sending to children of color, to say that we don't see color. Because if that is part and parcel of who that person is, if they do have different culture, or linguistic background or ethnicity, then by saying we don't see color, in a way we're really seeing them more like ourselves than not. If you're assuming they're like you but they're not like you, then in a way you're not seeing the whole child.
>
> Sue Ellen cut in: Well, I think of it as being more, seeing them as equal, right? All children of all cultural backgrounds and diversity as all being equal.
>
> Linda added: I think there's a difference between whether or not you *see* color, and whether or not you see diversity. Because I see *diversity.* And I welcome the diversity, because I think that it's an asset in the classroom. But I don't see … Does that make sense?
>
> At this point, several voices overlap, as indicated by the bracketed words:
>
> Linda: [If you don't see color but you see diversity.]
>
> Cathy: [It's like somebody…]
>
> Sue Ellen: [If somebody asks me,] I've had this happen before. Maybe I was discussing a particular child with a teacher to get their input, and I've had them ask me, "Well, is the child White? Is the child Black? Is the child Hispanic?" or whatever, and I have to say, "Well, wait a minute, let me think." Because I don't really look at [children] in that way. And that's what I mean by not seeing color. I have to really stop and think about it.
>
> Doreen: Hmmmm.
>
> Cathy: I guess what I'm thinking; I'm trying to put myself in another position, because I'm the majority White person. I'm thinking if I'm *not* seeing somebody as maybe a Black child, or a Costa Rican child, or a Mexican child, then I am not seeing the whole child, if that's the way *that* child maybe thinks of him or herself. Should I be paying more attention to that? Not saying that there is a value judgment based on that but thinking about how the child *is* different from me instead of assuming they're always the same. Because by assuming they're always the same, I might be positioning myself in the class and teaching, assuming children are seeing things the same way I am. Does that make sense?

Sue Ellen: Yes.

Cathy: This is just some of my thinking. Maybe [Doreen and Isabela] when you tell your stories, you can tell if teachers didn't see who you were as an individual. And if so, was that a good feeling or a bad one and did you feel pressured to feel more like everybody else or were you accepted for being who you are?

When Doreen and Isabela shared their stories, neither brought up the issue of teachers not seeing their culture or color. Each of them had experienced being the only Black or Hispanic students in their classes at school. Isabela said that she and her brother were immediately accepted when they immigrated to the United States, and Doreen reported that, except for kindergarten, her elementary teachers were kind to her and liked her. However, she did tell a story in which seeing color was highlighted. The story follows.

When she first came to Lyman County to teach, Doreen was told at an interview, "We're so glad you came, we really need a Black!"

Doreen replied, "Really?"

They said, "We really need a Black here."

Doreen responded, "Well, look, if you want to hire me just because I'm Black, you really don't need *me*." She turned down the position.

Upon hearing this story I admired Doreen's courage and character, but at the same time I felt my cheeks burn as I recalled that I had made a similar remark just weeks earlier. In November, when I met with prospective participants, one of them was Doreen's close friend Miss Jones, another Black teacher. I remembered being very enthusiastic about having her participate in the group. She is very private, so I didn't know her well, and I welcomed the diversity she would add to the group. I said something to her about how nice it would be to have a Black perspective in the group, then regretted saying it. Later in the week when I got the email that she would be unable to participate, I wondered if I had offended her with my remark. Did

she feel toward me the way Doreen felt about that administrator from so many years ago? In Doreen's case, she felt that the White interviewer saw *only* her color, and not the qualified teacher of color. This is another extreme of not seeing the whole person. I hoped that Miss Jones did not think that I did not notice *all* that she had to offer to the group as a person of color.

When Doreen finished sharing her autobiography, I asked her, "How do you respond to my comments earlier about a teacher seeing your color?" Her answer surprised me and took us off to another topic altogether:

> You know the first thing that came to my mind? And I'm embarrassed to say this. I might not have only admitted this to other African American teachers. But when I get my class list, you know the first thing I look at? How many African American boys do I have? Because in my mind, as much as I hate to admit this, when I look at the list, I know if I have a large number of African American males, I'm probably going to have a difficult class as far as behavior. Because over the years it just seems to me that African American males have some real issues that are never dealt with, and I do believe that they pose some of our largest discipline problems, and the largest group of our students who are academically at risk. . . . 75% of African American homes [have no father figure.] So they have a lot of attitude. . . . they need that Dad in the house for a role model. They don't have any role models. A lot of African American women have multiple children and all of them have different fathers. . . . You have all of these African American males who never knew who their fathers were, and they're in crisis. And you can look at any test score in any school, and I'll bet at the bottom of every one of those will be African American males.
>
> I tried to steer the conversation back to my original question of seeing color:
>
> Cathy: So do you have to deal with or handle those African American boys differently?
>
> Doreen: Absolutely!
>
> Cathy: So you do have to see their color to do that [and take it into consideration.]
>
> Doreen: [For African American males in particular.] And it's very difficult because they have a lot of behavioral issues in addition to some of the academic issues.
>
> Cathy: There seems to be a lot of anger [in some of the boys.]
>
> Doreen: [Yes!] Just attitude kinds of things. And if you don't get them on your side, you can just forget it. You're not going to be able to teach them.

> Cathy: But I've also observed some White teachers really getting in the face of these little Black boys. [And I'm concerned]
>
> Doreen: [Well, (sighs).]
>
> Cathy: about how much of it is just reacting to the student, and how much of it is [reacting to their color.]
>
> Doreen: [They tend to be very aggressive.] Also disciplinary techniques are very different in African American homes. African American mothers do tend to be more in the face.
>
> Cathy: So it works with them, then?
>
> Doreen: That tends to work with them more than [said sweetly and softly], "Oh, sweetheart, please sit down." It's almost like taking a kindness for weakness approach. I think the first thing you have to do with African American males is establish a very good working relationship with the mother. 'Cause if you don't have that, you're done for.

In the above dialogue, although Doreen did not come out and say it explicitly, it is apparent she believed it was important to acknowledge and understand the culture of students in her class, particularly those in her own culture. She did not disagree with this assessment after reading this interpretation. However, my implication that teachers at Springfield might be prejudiced against Black males and treat them more harshly than White males was skirted over quickly by the group. It seemed to me that the teachers avoided some of these "stickier," more political issues in the group. Topics such as this one were relegated to "the silenced dialogue" (Delpit, 1995).

Tricia commented on this section through an email:

> I liked hearing your reflection about the discussion of whether or not we see color. I think we all felt uncomfortable after that discussion because it seemed to attack what we saw as good intentions. Does that make sense? It raised the question that in our desire not to come across as being prejudiced or stereotypical with our students are we doing an injustice. Your idea is a sound one—talk about things to make students feel worthy and important about themselves and/or their differences or similarities.

Tricia's comments highlight the difficulty we encountered in critiquing ourselves in a group in front of our peers as well as the teachers' perception of critique as criticism or negative judgment, even as an "attack."

In order to help us understand our focal students better and to improve communication with their parents, I introduced a framework to the group called *Bridging Cultures* (Trumball, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001). In the next section I elucidate the framework to help the reader understand how it shaped our thinking in the group and our interactions with students and parents.

The Bridging Cultures Framework

In our fourth inquiry group session, I introduced the *Bridging Cultures* framework (Trumball, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001). This framework is designed to help teachers see the cultural differences of students and parents. In our group, we used the framework to help us view culturally different students and parents in a new light and to guide our actions during spring parent-teacher conferences. It is "a framework that helps teachers understand their own underlying cultural value system and how this may differ from that of their students and their students' parents" (p. 27). This theoretical framework offers teachers practical insight into human behavior by helping them to understand how the behavior comes from particular cultural values. It may generate questions and observations. The authors of the framework argue that awareness is essential to problem solving. They assert that in order to be an effective teacher and promote student success, both students and teachers must become "bicultural" (p. xvii), or acquire elements of each other's culture.

The orientation to culture in the Bridging Cultures framework "is primarily focused on the ideational elements [of culture]: ideas, beliefs, knowledge, and ways of acquiring knowledge

and passing it on (learning and teaching). Not only do individuals and groups have cultures, institutions do as well" (Trumball, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001, p. 1).

The Bridging Cultures framework describes a continuum of individualism/collectivism that "represents the degree to which a culture emphasizes individual fulfillment and choice versus interdependent relations, social responsibility, and the well being of the group" (Trumball, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001, p. 4). The culture of the United States is manifested and perpetuated in public schools as highly individualistic. It emphasizes individual achievement, competition, and choice, the authors state. However, many immigrant cultures and Native American cultures are more collectivistic in orientation. In these latter cultures, social responsibility and the well being of the group are highlighted.

In general, different cultural values lead to different strategies for dealing with social situations that arise at school. For example, most children raised in a more individualistic orientation are encouraged to play independently with toys. Their parents tend to use language to communicate to their children and to control their behavior. In a more collectivistic culture, physical objects might be valued for the way they mediate social relationships rather than their value as individual possessions. Parents in these cultures tend to control their children by touching, holding, or modeling, rather than by predominantly verbal means.

In more collectivistic cultures, boundaries of property are more permeable than those of individualistic cultures. School supplies, clothing, and toys may be readily shared and considered as belonging to the family rather than to individuals. Children who express their opinions to adults may be considered disrespectful in a more collectivistic value system. Elders can be considered sources of knowledge and wisdom, along with written texts. Within a more collectivistic perspective, cognitive skills are not valued for their own sake unless those skills

contribute to a socially useful function. For example, the Spanish word *educación* has a broader meaning than the English word *education* and includes both moral values and manners (Valdés, 1996).

Teachers may observe several areas of potential conflict in the classroom or in interactions with parents due to differences in cultural orientation. These sources of conflict are listed in Appendix G. In the group, we discussed how an awareness of differences in orientation could help during *cross-cultural parent conferences*. These are conferences in which the background of the teacher does not match the background of the student (Quiroz, Greenfield, and Altchech, 1999).

When I introduced the Bridging Cultures framework to the group and we began discussing the contrasts between a continuum of individualistic and collectivistic paradigms, I shared the author's caution to use the framework as a guide and to avoid overgeneralization and stereotyping. I pointed out that our culture generally praises independence and achievement, while more collectivistic cultures such as Hispanic, Asian, and Native American, may value how a student participates in a group and cooperates with others. Standing out from the crowd can be seen as negative rather than positive. Tricia became animated as she made a personal connection to her classroom:

> That's funny that you talked about this . . . because this happened . . . today. I told [selected students], "You know, guys, you should feel proud of yourselves, because you are always doing what you need to do."
>
> And one of my Asian students raised her hand and said, "I don't feel proud of myself."
>
> And I got *worried* at first and I thought . . . I should talk to her. [I asked her why].
>
> And she said, "Because my dad says that we shouldn't feel proud. We're just supposed to do what we're told." And it took me off guard.

By sharing this anecdote, Tricia opened a discussion pertinent to her immediate situation that brought the theory of the framework to life. While trying to praise and reinforce classroom

behavior, Tricia contradicted the child's parental directive to humbly comply with her teacher's wishes. It seemed that the student wanted to make sure the teacher knew she didn't think she was proud, as this would be a negative thing from her cultural perspective. Tricia, operating from a more individualistic perspective, did not understand this. Igoa (1995) reported that in her experience, immigrant children from "throughout the world, not just Asians, bring with them the attitude that they must render respect and obedience to the teacher in the same way they respect their parents" (p. 100). This means that they may acquire the conscious or unconscious attitudes or behaviors of their teachers, creating a cultural mismatch for the student between the parent at home and the "parent" at school.

As we continued discussions about the Bridging Cultures framework, the teachers prepared to revise their approach to spring parent-teacher conferences. They began to express their realization that parents' needs were shortchanged in the conferences as they traditionally conducted them. Most teachers at Springfield allotted 15 minutes per conference. During this short time they explained the students' performance relative to grade-level standards and shared results of standardized testing. Students who were functioning below expectations were placed on an academic contract that needed to be signed by the parent. There was little time to listen to parents or to answer questions.

Tricia noted:

> Teachers feel like they have to cover all this stuff, and it's overwhelming to parents. I'm not sure that they can process it all. They might have come here with one simple question. [The cross-cultural conference ideas] are going to make me think differently when I [have] conferences next week. . . . I remember in my last conference the question parents asked most was, "Do they get along with the other students?" And I was surprised by that question! But [now I realize that] it is important to them because they value the social skills.

In this comment, Tricia shared her observation that parents at Springfield often seemed more interested in social skills than academic ones. Before she learned that social skills are highly valued by more collectivistic cultures, these observations confused her.

Differences in Background and Expectations

After making the home visit to Manuel's family, I shared my experiences with the group. One thing I discovered was that, due to a childhood illness, his mother had not attended school beyond third grade in Mexico. She could not read or write in Spanish. Her husband finished school after sixth grade. So Manuel's English literacy skills were already beyond his parents' ability. The group responded:

> Tricia: I don't think I ever gave it enough thought that a lot of our Mexican children come from homes where their parents barely have an education.
>
> Cathy: I think it's fairly common in families from the rural areas, because primary school goes up to sixth grade, and I think that's mandatory. But after sixth grade,
>
> Doreen: [That's it.]
>
> Cathy: [I don't think it's a mandatory education.]
>
> Tricia: And they work. They have to work or help at home.
>
> Cathy: Now I was concerned, when I wrote Manuel's "autobiography," that I stereotyped this family by having the father as a construction worker and the mother as a fulltime homemaker. But that's exactly what I found.

This dialogue is one that we would not have had if I had not made the home visit to find out more about Manuel's family. It drove home the differences in cultures and preparation for school in an American culture that so many middle-class teachers take for granted. Valdes (1996) made similar observations about families from rural Mexico living in the United States. She noted:

> Both the schools and the families made assumptions about each other. Schools expected a "standard" family, a family whose members were educated, who were familiar with how

> schools worked, and who saw their role as complementing the teacher's in developing children's academic abilities. . . . The parents, on the other hand, were living lives that required large amounts of energy just to survive. They had little formal schooling and few notions about what schools expected of them and their children. And yet, they valued education (p. 167).

Trumball, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, and Quiroz (2001) confirmed, "Concerning academic skills, it is important to realize that for most poor people in Mexico only elementary education is available" (p. 39). In addition, they explained, "Parents may not believe it is necessarily their role to help with academics because that is the domain of the professional teacher. Their role focuses on raising respectful, well-behaved human beings" (p. 39).

Discussion Topics

In this section I include themes that arose in our weekly discussions. The teachers discussed these topics frequently as we shared our opinions about teaching and learning. These themes included concerns about high stakes testing, language issues, the importance of building relationships, and the achievement gap between different groups of children.

Concerns about High Stakes Testing

At several of our meetings, teachers expressed their concerns about the high stakes tests implemented in our elementary school by the county. By high stakes, I mean that the test determines whether a student passes or fails the grade. Rarely, a student fails the high stakes test even while earning average or above-average grades in the classroom. In this event**,** a committee is formed to determine whether the student will be promoted. Students have a second opportunity to pass the test after summer school. If they fail again or do not attempt to retake the test, they are considered transition students. Transition students receive remedial instruction on the "failed" curriculum while learning curriculum from the next grade. They have another opportunity to pass the test the following year in order to be promoted. The teachers had strong

feelings about these tests and brought the topic up frequently. I include excerpts from some of our discussions here. Doreen expressed the views of Black parents in her community:

> Doreen: Many people think that Lyman County put that high stakes test in place to keep minorities out of the system, since they can't pass it. People are saying, "Hmmm, I'm not gonna go out there to Lyman. They've got that high stakes test. No, we don't want to go out there and deal with that. We hear that it's hard, and the kids aren't doing well."

Sue Ellen's concerns lay with her ESOL students, especially those who were recent immigrants to the country or who had recently transferred to the county:

> We had a question come up in our staff development for ESOL about students that come in to our school. Next week is the high stakes test, and they haven't been in Lyman County schools, and they haven't had the curriculum or anything, and they're still required to take the test.
>
> Cathy: I tested a student last year who was enrolled on the morning of the high stakes test, and had to sit down. The first thing she did in a Lyman County School [was to take the test.]
>
> Sue Ellen: [Poor thing!]
>
> Isabela: Was she accountable for passing the test?
>
> Cathy: I think so. If they move in from out of the county are they still accountable if they haven't received the instruction?
>
> Tricia: That doesn't seem right.
>
> Cathy: We've had students who used alternate addresses and went to other schools for that grade. . . . They never moved, [but they used a relative's address to enroll.]
>
> Sue Ellen: [There are a lot in my neighborhood that are home schooled.]
>
> Tricia: But is the test that hard? Why are the parents that worried about it?
>
> Doreen: Well, it's something new. Anything new, it's always going to be a little scary, I think. I was concerned about it, too. My daughter was in the first group to take it. I was extremely concerned about the test. And when they passed out the copies of the sample test to the faculty I was even more concerned when I saw the questions. I found it to be very hard.

I proceeded to the mini-lesson, but the teachers soon readdressed testing concerns. After a discussion of writing strategies in the Brisk and Harrington (2000) book, I gave a preview of the sociocultural approach described in Wells and Chang-Wells (1992). In making connections to the text, the following discussion occurred:

> Cathy: But if you have a child who comes in with very little English, [the language experience approach] may be a starting place for him. What [Wells and Chang-Wells] get into is more of kids working together in groups, maybe in their home culture. I think a lot of our students, maybe they're not as comfortable sitting in desks in rows, just listening. They want to get down there and get their hands dirty, and do more active things. Maybe that will accommodate their learning styles better. And maybe we'll get better test scores if we start …
>
> Doreen: It'll accommodate their learning styles, but I don't see that it's going to make a whole lot of difference when you have to put that paper and pencil test down in front of them. We know how we learn best, but that's not the way they're tested. That's where the big problem is. We know how our kids learn best. But when all's said and done, the way that they're tested, it's not the way that they learn.
>
> Tricia: And if that's the assessment that someone's looking at and it's the only picture, you're not . . .
>
> Doreen: And that's how they're judged, that's how we're judged, you know, based upon that test score. And it can be very frustrating in schools like Springfield. Year after year we just keep seeing the test scores go further and further downhill. And we have an excellent group of teachers who are very dedicated.
>
> Cathy: Well, I think that they need to learn to take the test, but I don't think they need to be taught that way. You know, learning every day and taking the test are two different things, and they need to know how to take the test, but I don't think you need to *just* teach to the test. I mean, there are lots of other ways to get kids active and learning and thinking that will help them when they get to the test.
>
> Doreen: That's true.
>
> Cathy: But if they really know something, it will be easy for them to transfer it to the test-taking setting.

It was disheartening for me to hear effective, experienced teachers acknowledge that they understood best teaching practices and how students learn, yet continued to feel that their classroom activities should include a heavy dose of skill-building and test-taking practice in a

decontextualized manner. I hoped that over the course of the inquiry group, by helping the teachers learn strategies using a sociocultural perspective, they would begin to offer similar opportunities to their students. In our final interviews, Doreen and Tricia did seem to make this connection. They both reported that they realized the strategies that were effective for them in the group would be good for their students, as well.

In hindsight, this would have been a good opportunity for me to begin a conversation about politics and power in schools. The political decision to implement the high stakes test made by those in power had ramifications for the teachers, students, and parents with less power. Cummins (2001) proposed a theoretical framework for examining the academic failure of "minority" students and for predicting the effects of educational interventions. He analyzed the educational failure of these students as a function of "the extent to which schools reflect or counteract the power relations that exist within the broader society.

Cummins' framework asserted that the educational progress of language-minority students may be influenced when individual educators promote those students' linguistic talents and actively encourage community participation in developing students' academic and cultural resources. He critiqued transmission models of pedagogy that encourage passiveness on the part of learners. He argued that a model allowing for reciprocal interaction among students and teachers promotes language and literacy acquisition and is a more appropriate alternative. While I did introduce the ideas of accepting and valuing the cultures of students, communicating with parents, and using reciprocal teaching and inquiry learning, I did not specifically address these topics in a political context.

Exploring Language Issues

Tricia made a home visit in March and was ecstatic about the experience. She learned that the mother of Maria, Tricia's focal student, was concerned that her daughters would lose their Spanish:

> Tricia: She wants to make sure her daughters don't lose their language.
>
> Sue Ellen: That's good! That's good because that bothers me. Some of them are forgetting. . . . I don't think that's good. I think we need to deal with English on top of the home language.
>
> Tricia: And she said at this point she was concerned that Maria . . . is already forgetting some of her Spanish. . . . She and her younger sister talk English together at home now. . . and their mom doesn't understand them.
>
> Sue Ellen: And if they lose [their first language], even at 30 years old, they won't be able to communicate really well with their parents.
>
> Tricia: Right! Or to go back and see extended family members who all speak Spanish in Mexico.

I was glad that this topic came out of the discussion of Tricia's home visit. The loss of a person's first language was a fairly new concept to me, and so important to be aware of when working with the students at Springfield Elementary. Many of our students were born in this country and began to lose their first language after beginning public school. I do not think that teachers are always aware of the impact this has on students at home when communicating with their family. Cummins (2000) lamented that "relatively few 'mainstream' teachers know anything about this issue" (p. 6) of first language loss and that few teachers "take proactive steps to help bilingual children feel proud of their linguistic accomplishments rather than ashamed of their linguistic differences" (p. 6). He reported that immigrant children after only two years in Canada refused to use their first language at home and chose to anglicize their names in order to

"belong to the culture of the school and peer group." (p. 13). Like Cummins, I believe that it is important for teachers to communicate to children the value of knowing additional languages and to respect and value their home cultures.

Concerns about Emigration

Sue Ellen increased the group's awareness of families that became separated when only some of them emigrated from the home country. Sue Ellen's focal student stayed in Mexico with relatives for a year while her mother sought employment and became established. She explained:

> They are here with an aunt or a grandparent, or they are left behind. I have two students who were both left in Colombia for 3 years while their parents were here getting established, learning the language a little bit, finding a job, and getting enough money to bring them over. . . . I have a student this year whose parents are both in [the Caribbean]. He is living with a cousin, a young man in his twenties.

I had a student who shared in a reading group discussion a story about when she was 3 years old living in Mexico. One day, her mother told her she was going to the store to buy potato chips. She had actually left for the United States. The child did not see her mother for several years, until she emigrated herself.

It is hard for middle class teachers who have always lived in the "land of plenty" to imagine a situation in which they would leave their children behind in order to seek a better opportunity. However, this is one that several of our Springfield students experienced.

Building Relationships

Conversations about the importance of building relationships between teachers and students and teachers and parents became a common theme in the inquiry group. After reporting on her home visit, Tricia reflected on the difference it might make in her year if she visited each child at home in the fall. Doreen agreed:

> Doreen: The way to really make a difference with minority children . . . or any kids, is to build relationships from the beginning. . . . If those children feel like you care about

them, they're going to work for you. If not, you can just forget it. Nothing you do is going to . . .

Sue Ellen: [If they don't think you care about them, they're not going to . . .]

Doreen: [They're just not going to do it.] You know, some kids are going to work no matter what. In their home, academics are instilled from the beginning.

Tricia: Right.

Doreen: But for minority children I really, truly believe it's the relationship you build with them.

Cathy: Well, Sue Ellen, mentioned that she was talking with Isabela this week, and they both thought that the inquiry group would be different, that it would be more oriented to reading strategies, right? But you know, if we don't work on relationships, and connecting to parents, and understanding the culture and making the children feel accepted no matter what their culture or language is, it doesn't matter how good our strategies are. We can have the best strategies in the world. But if we're not teaching in a style the kids will relate to, and if we're not getting them actively involved and hooked into us personally, they they're going to tune out. They're going to say, "This person doesn't like me." They're going to fail. So we have to teach the academics, but we have to teach the child first.

This dialogue highlighted the strong beliefs held by the group that were brought to the forefront and validated through our readings and conversations in the inquiry group. Knowing that others believed as we did helped to affirm our convictions to teach children first and to work on relationships with parents. Tricia's experience with the home visit was a turning point for her. My contributions to the conversation highlight my strong presence in the group. As the facilitator, I made every attempt to interject my own theory and highlight my own beliefs about student learning and student relationships with teachers. Next, I describe a project I implemented in my own classroom practice that incorporated student research skills, literacy skills, and student publishing in conjunction with strengthening relationships between home and school and valuing the home culture.

I shared a project with the group that I had worked on to help make connections to parents. In February, I started a long-term parent involvement project in 3 of the 4 classrooms I worked in. In these classrooms, I modeled writing mini-lessons to the whole class once a week. Students worked on self-selected writing during our guided reading groups. The lesson for this project was more extensive. I modeled a process for non-fiction writing using family inquiry. In the first lesson, I showed students how to brainstorm and list questions that they wanted to ask a member of their family. We talked about ways to interview. In the next lesson I taught them how to group their answers by category, and finally I showed them how to write up their research reports. The project lasted for several weeks, culminating in a classroom book that went home in time for Mother's Day in May.

Students wrote some very diverse and interesting reports. One girl found out that her grandfather escaped Cuba during the revolution. Another recorded her grandmother's family story about a cousin who was lynched. One young man painted a picture of life in Mexico. This project, in the process of reinforcing core curriculum writing and researching goals, gave students an authentic purpose for writing, involved family members, and provided a legitimate reason for editing and revision.

The Achievement Gap

I obtained a copy of standardized achievement test summary scores for Springfield students with data organized by various groups. The data showed that White, Asian/Pacific Islanders, and Hispanic students not served in ESOL scored at the national average level. Black students and ESOL students, however, scored below average. The difference between the mean scores of White and Black students was 19 percentile points. We talked about reasons why this occurred.

> Tricia: Our Black students are the transient ones, huh, Doreen? They're the ones that leave throughout the year and come throughout the year.
>
> Doreen: Right. More than anything else.
>
> Tricia: More than anything else. And I think that instability is a big factor. I've had kids come to my classroom who have already been in 3 other schools this year!
>
> Cathy: Yea, so you think that's part of it?
>
> Tricia: [That's part of it.]
>
> Doreen: [I think a lot of it.] Also, the kids are just coming to school not prepared to learn.

Tricia and Doreen felt that the low scores of Black students could be attributed to the fact that their families were so transient. They felt that these students, more than others, accounted for the high mobility rate at Springfield. It is easy to blame factors beyond our control. I felt that, as an educator, it was my responsibility to bridge the achievement gap using factors within my control. I decided to "push the envelope" a bit with the group and talk about factors they could change.

> Cathy: Well, what can we do to help those kids once they're here? What can we do better? Because, you know, I walk down the halls and almost every day I see these little Black boys sitting in the hallway. And they can't learn anything if they're out in the hall. And I've never seen a little White boy sitting out in the hall.
>
> Doreen: I don't know, my heart has always bled for African [American] males who are just really struggling in society. They're just struggling, period. And I don't know why. I've always wondered, "What is the reason to have such attitudes?" . . . I don't know what it is. Nor do I know how to remedy it. But I look at the statistics from prison. I think African American males make up a small percentage of the total population in this state but are the largest percentage of prison inmates.

I felt that the issue of how White teachers may be treating Black male students was being ignored. I asked Doreen about this as I revised this section. She told me that she had tried to express that many Black males come into school, first thing in the morning, with a poor attitude. From there it escalates during the day. She believed that the negative student attitudes caused

conflict with their peers and teachers because the students were neither motivated nor positive. She did stress that in these instances, teachers need to be sensitive to how students arrive at school and implement positive interactions with them. She conceded, however, that most teachers do not have time to do this. Her assertion was that teachers responded to the attitudes of Black males rather than their color. When I asked her if racism might also be involved, she admitted that this could not be ruled out. This topic, however, was never discussed in the inquiry group. In my experience, it is against the culture of teachers in public schools to "air our dirty laundry" and critique oneself and our peers about serious issues in a group. It is seen as the wrong thing to do.

Personal Reflections

I believe my greatest shortcoming as facilitator of this group was that in spite of the fact that I addressed the importance of "seeing color" in our second meeting and taught several strategies that would help teachers understand students with cultural differences, I never explicitly taught them ways to learn about their students' cultural background in the context of everyday literacy activities. I had been doing this during guided reading lessons and writing conferences in an effortless way, and it did not occur to me that these needed to be highlighted and discussed. However, when I was in the process of doing member checks with Doreen, she commented on how difficult it would be to learn about students' cultures in addition to the other responsibilities teachers already have. I realized then that I had not addressed these kinds of strategies adequately.

Teachers at Springfield Elementary were feeling tremendous pressure to raise standardized test scores, as evidenced by topics of conversation. Doreen, in a conversation outside of the inquiry group, told me that she did not feel that she had time to learn about all the

different cultures in her classroom, know each student as an individual, and help them to master the curriculum. In recent conversations when I asked teachers at Springfield who were not in the inquiry group about what country their struggling student was born in or what the student's first language was, the response is something like, "I don't keep track of those kinds of things," or "I don't know." My belief, based on sociocultural learning theory, is that to help students master the curriculum, teachers must help students make connections to what they already know and understand from their own points of view. This makes it crucial that teachers understand students' points of reference and understanding. Becoming familiar with a student's first language, cultural background, and background knowledge is a starting point for this understanding.

If I were facilitating this class again, I would share some strategies that were not covered in the group. One is to have students share their culture through a "show and tell" activity during the first month of school. Students can prepare an oral report and bring in artifacts to share family culture, religion, country of origin, language, hobbies, and photographs. This activity, adapted from one I learned in a staff development class from Betty Bisplinghoff, helps students practice oral language skills that are part of the county curriculum while helping teachers get to know the students.

While completing an initial running record on students at the beginning of the year, I take two minutes to ask them what country they were born in or what country their parents were born in, what states they have lived in, what their first language is, and whether they can read or write in another language. I jot this information on the outside of the file folder in which I place their literacy assessments. Throughout the year during guided reading groups, I can refer to the information I learned to draw students into conversations about texts. I try to choose books that

reflect the cultures of the various students whenever possible. During writing conferences, I suggest that students write more about what they know and make appropriate suggestions. These are relatively simple ways to integrate cultural recognition and understanding into the literacy curriculum that require teachers to see the whole child and to "see color."

Another shortcoming I believe I had as a facilitator of this group was discussed in the earlier section of this chapter on "Discussion Topics" under the section, "Concerns about Testing." I did not explicitly address issues of politics and power in school with the teachers. Cummins' (2001) framework, which explains the failure of linguistically and culturally diverse students and provides interventions to help these students achieve educational parity, would have been useful in the inquiry group setting.

Closing Remarks

At our last group meeting, I asked the teachers how participation in the group helped them understand linguistically and culturally diverse students, parents of those students, and strategies to help them work with those students in their classrooms. These responses are excerpted from that discussion.

> Sue Ellen: One thing that I learned from my inquiry and study is the written expression. I look at their writing samples, and grammar is another thing that they really need help with. So for one of my centers in literacy time, I'm adding a grammar center. And they're going to do something with grammar—with verbs or nouns and using correct sequencing and wording. . . . I guess that's a good thing that came out of my case study. . . . Also I learned how to do an informal reading inventory and how to stage the writing process. Then from the reading, I learned some new little activities and different things to do with my students.
>
> Doreen: You know, learning. When you can't learn anything new from anybody, you're probably not teaching anymore. . . . I think being able to dialogue in a group where I felt free to say what was on my mind is helping me to grow.
>
> Sue Ellen: We all had the same interest. We all wanted to know how we could work with these students better.

> Tricia: I tried some of the teaching strategies, and I did like those, I'd like to use those again. I think being in this group influenced my attitude a lot. That eventually does change the way you do things. It did for me. I handled my second conferences a little differently. I listened before I started saying anything, and took more time to let the parents talk. In the past I might have thought that was off the subject and try to steer it back to the task at hand. . . . How many times have we learned that learning has to be meaningful to students? Well, we're students, too! And if staff development is not meaningful to us, it's going to go in one ear and out the other. I think what made this group so successful is that we shared a bit about our personal history. After that, people felt that they could talk about anything. I've never really used a lot of centers. So in hearing some of the discussion and some of the things you were saying, Sue Ellen, about ESOL students, I really changed my approach. . . . I've learned more from my peers than from anyplace else. . . . I'm trying to allow for smaller group instruction which facilitates more discussion and more dialogue and allow them to learn some things on their own. I think this has helped me to make my classroom more literate. . . . . In this profession, you're always learning.

These excerpted comments from our last inquiry group meeting in April indicated a positive response to a peer-led inquiry group model of staff development. The teachers reflected upon the changes they felt they had made, the power of sharing personal histories, and the benefit of sociocultural approaches for both children and adults. They found the inquiry group experience to be a positive one that reportedly impacted their classroom practice and interactions with parents. The self-critique and challenging of one's own practice that came through self-reflection and later through the co-construction of stories during member checking was difficult. The teachers, however, remained open to learning and were willing to change.

The next four chapters present the analysis of each of the four inquiry group participants, beginning with myself, who stayed in the group until the final meeting and completed and shared a case study. The chapters begin with a biographical history, highlight participation in the group, and end with reported changes in classroom practice and beyond. In this way I answer the

question: How does participation in a peer-led inquiry group influence teachers' (a) understanding of linguistically or culturally diverse students, (b) teaching practices with those students, (c) interaction with parents of those students, and (d) reflections on their teaching and learning?

CHAPTER 5

CATHY'S STORY: THE BROADER PERSPECTIVE

Hanging above the sofa in the room next to my basement study is a photographic quilt that portrays several facets of my life: graduate student, wife, mother, collector, dog-owner, staff developer, teacher, spiritual being, and exerciser. I made the quilt as part of an assignment in a doctoral seminar on representation. I look at it now as I think about representation in regard to the participants in my study, myself included. Composing this "data story" from my data was a bit like making that quilt. I needed to decide what to portray, and then craft a product that would communicate this knowledge to an audience and fit together in a pattern that could be recognized as a doctoral dissertation. Chapters 5 through 8 paint portraits that represent the participants; just as each of the nine photographs on my quilt portray a scene that represents part of my life. The chapters are the focus, or center of the dissertation, as the photographs are the focus of my quilt. Each portrait will also tell a story of sorts, as photographs often do.

Gazing at the quilt, I realize a problem with this representation for the dissertation. While my portraits portray temporality on a small scale, they are still in essence frozen in time. The dog pictured on my quilt, for example, has been gone for four years, and I now have three new furry companions who live with me. The photograph of me in the school of education was taken on an escalator that was permanently sealed behind a wall last year. I still have the short auburn hair that contrasts with my pale skin color, as seen in that picture. My role as graduate student, however, is fast approaching its end, and my role as teacher has evolved to teacher-leader. Likewise, the teachers as portrayed in this dissertation continue to learn and grow. These portraits are part of their history now.

In writing my chapter, I selected events that showed my early struggles with understanding people I cared about who were culturally different from myself. These included the two sides of my family, an early caretaker, and my first steady boyfriend. I also selected critical incidents from my professional life that led me to my current position and interest in working with linguistically and culturally diverse students. In addition, I included vignettes of Springfield Elementary that set a broader context for my study as well as incidents surrounding my focal student. These include examples of linguistically and culturally diverse students who are alienated in their mainstream classrooms. In my data story and the chapters that follow, I included stories of each participant's early history, participation in the group, her focal student, connections with parents, connections with practice, and self-assessment. In these four chapters, quotes are drawn from either audiotapes of the inquiry group meetings or audiotapes of teacher interviews.

My History

At the first inquiry group meeting, I explained that I grew up in the Midwestern United States in a White, middle-class Protestant family. Both of my parents spoke English. My father was a second generation Portuguese from the Madeira Islands. His father immigrated at a young age and died when my father was only nine. My mother's family was of mixed European and Scandinavian heritage. They were farm people from rural Illinois. I explained to the group the different ways these sides of the family impacted me:

> Although I took it for granted at the time, looking back I can see that my father's side of the family had a minimal influence on me compared to my mother's side. It was odd, because they only lived a few miles apart from each other. My grandparents on my mother's side were very important to me, but the relatives on my father's side were not. Looking back and reflecting on things it seems like they weren't valued the same way. I took my mother's lead in these attitudes, I think. Visits to my mother's parents were occasions of great anticipation and celebration. When we visited we'd spend a week or two at a time, sleeping over at their house. In contrast, we'd spend only an hour or two of

> awkward visiting with my father's mother, aunts and uncles five miles away. So it was kind of weird. I wonder, was my father ashamed of his working-class or immigrant roots? His mother had cleaned houses for a living.

I always sensed from my mother that my father's side of the family had little worth, outside my father himself. We shared no family stories of my father that dated prior to the time he met my mother. Recently, however, now that my father is no longer with us, my mother has devoted much time to researching this side of our family history, and has learned that many Portuguese emigrants left the Madeira Islands due to religious persecution.

I shared my first experience with diversity with the group. When I was five, my mother told me she had hired a "colored lady" to help her clean the house. I pictured a rainbow-hued, chameleon-like person. I was disappointed when my mother introduced me to Vera. I had seen women like her when my mom and I went shopping in downtown Springfield, Illinois. My mother would comment about their babies, "Isn't that a cute little pickaninny?"

I grew quite fond of Vera. She babysat for my brothers and me and told us Bible stories. I remember one time when she killed a snake in the back yard with a hoe and hung it in a tree to make it rain. She frightened us with stories of the "bogeyman" to keep us from straying too far from our house.

My parents raised us to be accepting of differences; they never blatantly discriminated against or insulted those who were different. However, subtle behaviors revealed their prejudices. For example, my father's yearbook had a picture of him in blackface for a minstrel show. He wrote letters to my mother during World War II that referred to the "Japs." My mother used demeaning terms to describe Black babies. When questioned, she explained, "That's just the way things were back then."

In the 1960s, when I was a teenager, my family lived in Duluth, Minnesota. Schools there were never segregated by law but were de facto segregated by neighborhoods. There were few Black people living in the area. My oldest brother's best friend, Thomas Smith, was a frequent visitor in our home. He was the only Black student at my brother's high school. His sister was probably the only Black student at my junior high and the only Black girl in my Girl Scout troop. When I was fourteen, Thomas gave me his class ring. I wore it on a string around my neck. We met downtown at the movies and went to football games together. When my parents found out, they demanded that I break it off.

Being extremely naïve and sheltered, this was one of my first experiences with prejudice and discrimination. Even though Thomas was welcome in our home, my parents did not want their daughter dating him or, God forbid, marrying him someday. This was very confusing for me in my relative innocence. They even sent me to our Presbyterian minister for counseling. I remember how hard it was to break up with Thomas, and how much it hurt us. It felt so bad.

I moved to a Southeastern college town my senior year of high school. It was the first year that the county schools had been fully integrated. I was snubbed by the local girls and called "Yankee." I was the only White girl enrolled in the school's new Black history class. I was in culture shock. My twin brother and I tried to stick together, but we were out of place.

The next year I enrolled in college at the University of Georgia. One of my two best friends there was a Black graduate student I worked with. However, I don't recall any Black classmates in my undergraduate classes. I did have one Black professor in the special education department. There were no other non-White students or professors that I knew of.

While writing this section, I recalled two other stories from my past that I failed to talk about to the inquiry group – the nine months I lived in Houston, Texas, and my student teaching

experience. I married in the middle of my sophomore year. When my first husband graduated, he had no goals or direction. I wanted to do something more meaningful than sit in a college classroom all day. So in between my junior and senior years, we took a job in Houston as resident counselors in a group home for teenaged girls. I was only 21 years old, and responsible for shopping, cooking, and cleaning for eight teenagers, taking them to the doctor, attending parent-teacher conferences, and accompanying them on outings. A couple of the girls were Mexican Americans. Still naïve, I was hurt and bewildered when one of the girls, when denied privileges as a consequence for her behavior, accused me of being prejudiced against Mexicans. Having never lived in the Southwest, I didn't even know that they *were* a group that experienced second-rate treatment.

After nine months, my husband and I had already outlasted the three previous sets of resident counselors. It was time for me to return to academic life and complete my student teaching. I had a Black supervising teacher and many Black students while student teaching. I noticed that the teacher's yardstick was broken, and replaced it for her. One morning I looked on in horror as my supervising teacher broke the new yardstick over the back of a Black female student for "sassing" her. When I questioned her about the act, she protested, "You can't stop and get a witness for every paddling you need to do to a child. You'd lose control of your class."

I said and did nothing about this incident. The school system was a strange and new culture for me, and teachers were expected to administer corporal punishment in 1975. However, I knew this defied the protocol for paddling, which required a teacher to take the student out of the classroom, explain to the student the rule that was broken, and get another teacher or an administrator to witness the punishment. Beating a child over the back, in anger, constituted abuse. My university supervisor was rarely there, and I did not feel comfortable talking with him.

I was not raised to express the anger I tried to control, so fear took its place. I knew that this teacher who beat her students would be writing a letter of recommendation for my first teaching job as well as evaluating my strengths as a student teacher. She already seemed threatened by my training, as she had "added on" her special education certification. I felt powerless as a young woman about to enter a new career, so I did nothing. I still regret my lack of courage to stand up for this child.

My first five years of teaching were in the foothills of the Smokey Mountains. All of my students were White. They were mostly from lower income, rural families employed in the poultry industry. Later I worked in different systems with more diversity. Most students, however, were English speakers. My first experience with teaching linguistically diverse students was near Fort Lauderdale, Florida. There, I taught students including those whose families emigrated from Cuba, Haiti, and Italy. All of them spoke good conversational English. I did not question the appropriateness of their label as "learning disabled." In hindsight, I wonder how many of them were just struggling with learning the English language needed to master academics.

I was a special education teacher for 21 years. Because I worked with so many students with learning disabilities in reading, I made literacy a focus of self-study. I spent 10 years focusing on staff development, classroom practice, and research to develop skills in teaching decoding and comprehension. Most of my "learning disabled" students accelerated their skills. One third-grade student made such excellent progress in a few months that she read on grade level and was dismissed from special education. Her mother and classroom teacher were pleased that she was reading well and making average grades. That spring, she scored in the average range on the state mandated standardized reading test. My principal, however, was livid. She

called me into her office and informed me, “We are not in the business of curing learning disabilities at this school.” She looked at me with disdain when I replied, “I thought that was my job.” She asked me to turn my attention to teaching the students coping skills rather than reading skills, and made sure that an administrator was present at annual review meetings, to make sure my students were not mainstreamed back into the regular classroom.

As confident as I had been of my teaching skills, this encounter with a disapproving administrator totally devastated me. I had admired her greatly; I became depressed. This “critical incident” (Newman, 1987) forced me to face my assumptions about teaching and special education. I did not believe that every student with a label must be seen in terms of that label. I did believe that many students were placed in special education when they began to struggle for a variety of reasons. The factors for the struggle might include family difficulties, divorce, cultural differences, or a poor teaching history. I believed that it was my responsibility to help students accelerate learning and overcome their learning “deficits.” Later, as I reflected on this critical incident under the guidance of Dr. Michelle Commeyras in a course on sociopolitical perspectives of literacy and articulated it publicly (Bowles, Commeyras, Moller, Payne, & Rush, 2001), I began to realize that teaching was a political activity.

I had already enrolled as a graduate student in the Reading Department at the university. Although I had only taken four courses in reading education, I passed the state certification exam and became a reading specialist. I was unable to find a fulltime position in reading, so I took a significant cut in pay and accepted a half-time position teaching second grade language arts at a nearby school, Clay Elementary. After all, I reasoned, as a reading specialist I would be expected to teach students how to read rather than be criticized for it. I closed the door on teaching special education and turned my energies toward helping all struggling students succeed.

At Clay Elementary School I faced 18 students unlike those I had ever worked with before. Many of them were English language learners (ELL). Their backgrounds included Hmong, Egyptian, Thai, Korean, Mexican, and Black and White American. I had some students who could sound out words perfectly but not understand the passage they had just "read" at all. I was unprepared for this. I set out to learn as much about each of them as I could. Due to a change in program funding, I transferred to Springfield the following year, where I faced a very similar student population. My search for understanding led, eventually, to the design of this study.

My early experiences, of course, have influenced my thinking. I still tend to be naïve about people's willingness to understand and overcome differences between diverse people. I sometimes fail to recognize that many people prefer not to talk about the differences between cultures. It is considered too sensitive a subject.

As a participant in the inquiry group I facilitated, I was eager to learn along with the rest of the teachers. Even though I was the facilitator of the group, I was by no means an expert. As I stated in my introduction, I had no preparation for working in a school like Springfield. I had taken a single course in language acquisition. So I spent a year of self-study on linguistic and cultural diversity while preparing for my preliminary comprehensive examinations and writing the prospectus for my inquiry. I saw the inquiry group as an opportunity to grow along with the other teachers. Like them, I chose one student that I worried about as my focal student.

Personal Observations

As I went about the business of teaching at Springfield during the time of my inquiry, I took notes to record observations I made in the course of my regular teaching day. Through these observations, I gained an increased awareness of issues relating to cultural and linguistic diversity. Many of these observations regarded issues of language and translation. The insights

that I gained from these observations are shared in the next section. I place them here to provide further context for the remainder of the chapters. I also share examples of acceptance versus alienation of culturally diverse students.

Language and Translation Issues

Springfield staff members were making efforts to communicate more effectively with the school's large Spanish-speaking population. A bilingual ESOL facilitator worked in the front office to assist in registration of students, make telephone calls to Spanish-speaking parents, and translate documents for the school. Commonly used forms were available in Spanish, Korean, and Vietnamese, and most flyers sent home to students were printed in English on one side and Spanish on the other.

My husband and I had out-of-town guests as I was writing this chapter. At dinner one evening, one of our guests commented negatively about the practice in his local school system of sending home notices in two languages. His wife agreed, stating, "They are in this country and they should learn English." I quickly explained why I supported this policy. This conversation made me more aware of a general prejudice in the larger community against the plurality of languages spoken in this country and a preference for a one-language nation.

Many Springfield teachers may not be aware that some of our Spanish-speaking parents, mostly those from rural Mexico, lack literacy in Spanish as well as English. When I interviewed Mrs. Jiménez, the mother of my case study student, during my home visit with her, she stated that she reads very little Spanish. She was too ill to attend school beyond grade three. Her husband attended only primary school, so his reading was very basic. Therefore, the forms sent home in Spanish might not bridge the communication gap as much as the school intended.

During lunch at school one day, I commented on the struggles some of these parents have with the language and the need for teachers to be sensitive to it. A staff member scowled at me, "These people are in America now, and it's time they learned how to speak English! Don't get me started!"

The following year, I collected and analyzed data for a Title I survey. A staff member wrote in response to the question, "What additional support or supplemental services are needed at Springfield to increase student achievement?" the comment, "Insist they learn English and quit sending everything in 2 languages. We are enabling them to live in our country and not be responsible Americans." Another question asked, "What resources can the school provide parents to support the curriculum and student achievement?" The response from one respondent was, "Close the borders!"

Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings included a Spanish translator whenever one was available. Recently, issues of communication were brought to light at one of these meetings. We had two curriculum nights in order for parents with siblings to meet with more than one teacher. The first evening, there was no translator. A staff member noted that many Spanish-speaking parents talked among themselves during the meeting and that their children were restless. At the next curriculum night, a translator was secured. Whenever the translator was speaking in Spanish, the Spanish-speaking parents were engaged and kept their children quiet, as well.

Welcoming and Understanding versus Alienation of Diverse Students

In the process of team-teaching language arts in one fourth grade and four fifth grade classrooms, I was able to observe teachers working with linguistically and culturally diverse students. Students must feel welcome, accepted, valued, and empowered by their school

experiences before they are able to learn (Cummins, 2001; Krashen, 1981; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). At Springfield, as at other schools, there are teachers with inclusive attitudes toward diversity and those with more exclusive ones. By exclusive, I mean teachers who expect their students to reflect the teachers' social or economic background and who teach accordingly without making needed adaptations. A teacher with an inclusive attitude will try to learn the backgrounds of her students and how to pronounce their names correctly. She will read the students' educational files to learn about the students' previous schooling experiences, assess academic strengths and weaknesses, and determine what modifications need to be made to insure academic success for her ESOL students. She will try to find a way to include second language learners in all activities but offer an alternative or adapted activity as needed.

One of the teachers I worked with in my role as a language arts teacher was Tanya Nichols, a White teacher with several years of teaching experience. She had high expectations for all of her fifth grade students. The year of my study, she had a large number of struggling students, a few average ones, and a couple who were high average. Several of her students attended ESOL classes. Three of these spoke very little English at the beginning of the school year. We worked collaboratively to teach language arts. Each student was placed into one of four small, flexible reading groups. We rotated the groups frequently so that each of us taught every student in the classroom. Although Sue Ellen, the ESOL teacher, wanted to pull the lowest ESOL students out of her room during that time, Tanya argued to let them stay to receive the additional period of language arts instruction. The results were so successful that the following year, Tanya and I presented our model for instruction at the state's reading council annual conference.

Tanya created a sense of community in her classroom where students worked cooperatively, followed directions, and met goals. Her second language learners were included in

all academic activities, with modifications. I brought in Spanish and bilingual books from the public library for their free reading time. Students unable to write well in English were encouraged to attempt assignments in Spanish. We used computer software and bilingual students to translate stories and determine ways to confer with the students to improve their writing skills. A student who had recently emigrated from Columbia often flipped through his Spanish-English dictionary looking for just the right word. Students in Tanya's class were engaged in learning.

It was a challenge to find ways to assist the more limited-English-speakers to understand the books we read in our small groups. We pointed to pictures, brought in artifacts, drew diagrams, and asked other Spanish-speaking students to translate and clarify for us. Sometimes we used rhyming passages and readers' theater to build fluency. Tanya and I respected the students as learners and expected them to perform in spite of their language difficulties. Later in the day they received two more periods of language instruction when they worked with Sue Ellen in her ESOL class. The additional small group instruction helped immensely.

Another teacher I worked with was Sherry Smith, a Black teacher who was in her third year of teaching. Sherry was a highly regarded teacher known for her well organized, nurturing classroom. She had a diverse group of students including many average and above-average, some struggling, some in special education, a couple who attended classes for gifted students, and 5 ESOL students from Mexico. She had some of the highest and the lowest achieving students of the four classes I worked in. Two of her ESOL students spoke very little English and attended ESOL classes in lieu of regular language arts. The other 3, including Manuel, my focal student, worked with me. Sherry initially did not rotate her reading groups. Therefore, I taught

the students who were identified as struggling, including the ESOL students who attended language arts in her class.

I also worked with Mary Mayfield. She was an experienced White teacher who had always worked at a small parochial school with a fairly homogeneous group of White, middle-class students. The year of my study was her first year teaching in a public school, and the students were very different from any she had ever worked with. Mary held high expectations for all of her students, and she made efforts to include her ESOL students in all activities. However, I do not believe that her prior expericence prepared her to adapt her teaching methods to meet the special needs of her diverse student population. In her classroom I observed how simple instructional decisions made by teachers confuse and frustrate students who do not have the background knowledge necessary to be academically successful.

Cultural Mismatch

The Monday after the Thanksgiving break, Mary assigned the writing prompt, “Describe your Thanksgiving dinner. Include the five senses.” When I arrived in the classroom, Juan, a Mexican immigrant, approached me. “Mrs. Payne,” he stammered, “We didn’t celebrate Thanksgiving at my house.” Darryl, a Black student, added, “We didn’t have no turkey or anything.” This writing prompt, that was probably highly successful with students in previous years, caused a stressful reaction from students whose experience deviated from the mainstream norm. They seemed to feel that the teacher would not only evaluate their writing, but also the way that they celebrated the traditional American holiday.

I learned from this observation that an innocent writing prompt, appropriate for some students but not for those who are poor or from other cultures, can cause students discomfort and misunderstanding. After reading this section, Mary responded:

> I realized the problem with the prompt when some of the kids struggled with it. So we went back and talked as a class about a special or favorite meal they had over the holiday and I asked them to describe that. All of them were able to do this – some more successfully than others.

My personal philosophy is that writing topics should be self-selected on a daily basis. Students can then choose topics for which they have background knowledge. This increases their opportunities for success. Students do need to learn how to write from prompts to pass the state writing test. However, these must be thought through and will be more successful when they involve universal themes.

Invisible Students

In two classes where I worked, I believed, based on my observations, that the ELL students were, at times, treated as if they were invisible. By this I mean that the teacher did not direct lessons to them, assuming they could not understand English well enough, and seemed not to notice when they were there or what they were doing. This came to my attention on days that ESOL classes were cancelled. The ESOL students with the most limited English skills attended ESOL during the time I co-taught language arts. Occasionally I would notice that the students were present, because ESOL classes had been cancelled. The classroom teachers, however, had not planned any activities to include these students in the language arts class, leaving them sitting and staring into space.

When this happened, I usually tried to find a book written in Spanish, or I included the student in my group. One time when I approached a student like this, the others nearby announced, “He doesn’t do any work here. He doesn’t speak English.” When I asked his teacher if she remembered this, she explained, “It wasn’t as if he didn’t do anything in the class. My expectations for him were low—almost zero, really. He sat next to someone who could speak Spanish, and that helped. He still had to go through the motions of what we were doing.”

Introducing Manuel

I chose a Mexican American student, Manuel Jiménez, for my case study. I worked with his teacher, Sherry Smith, for 50 minutes a day during language arts. Manuel was born in the United States and attended bilingual classes in a Southwestern state for kindergarten and first grade. His family moved back to Mexico in second and third grade. The previous year, when he transferred to Springfield as a fourth grade student, was really his first year of total English instruction. His school records from both first and fourth grades showed a pattern of difficulty getting along with others and completing work. (No records were available from the two years he was in Mexico). These difficulties continued in fifth grade. Because of this, I was concerned that he was not meeting his learning potential.

Even though Manuel was completing assignments for me in our small language arts group, he was only completing one out of ten assignments in his other subjects for Sherry. In my group he progressed from reading and comprehending second grade level books to fourth grade level ones. He had completed at least one good writing sample at an acceptable fifth grade standard. I knew that he could do much better than he demonstrated for Sherry. Manuel's ESOL modifications form stated that he would give verbal responses to simple questions, spell half of the spelling words required for fifth grade, would be allowed extra time to complete research, more time and collaboration with partners for math, open-book tests for social studies, rewording of assignments, and would not be held accountable for reading grade-level science and social studies. I felt that if these modifications were provided, Manuel should be able to succeed.

I had three questions for my inquiry with Manuel. My first question was, "What might I learn by having a conversation with Manuel and his parents?" I planned a home visit to find out what "funds of knowledge," (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) or interests and abilities he

may have learned at home, that I could tap into in the school setting. Manuel had recently been having problems with social interaction with the other students in both his regular and ESOL classrooms, in addition to the work completion problem. My second question was, "Will the use of a behavior contract or a daily checking of Manuel's assignment book in addition with suggestions to his classroom teacher about modifications help him to complete his work?" I developed a yes-no checklist for Sherry to monitor (see Appendix C). I also constructed a summary sheet, written in both Spanish and English, to take home to his parents on Fridays. My third question was, "Will the use of a dialogue journal help to motivate Manuel?" I purchased a notebook for Manuel to write down his thoughts to which I could respond.

Working with Manuel

In January, I spoke with Sherry Smith about my concern with Manuel's social skills and work habits. I wanted to conduct and document a meeting to include Sherry, Susan (his ESOL teacher), and myself. This documentation would be shared with the school's student study team (SST) coordinator, who would then schedule an SST meeting. The purpose of an SST meeting is to pull together parents, teachers, administrators, counselors, and the school psychologist as a team to brainstorm ideas to assist students. I told Sherry how surprised I had been in December to find out how little work he was completing for her. I was also surprised that she was assigning zeros in his grade book for grammar, spelling, and basal reading assignments. She taught those subjects when the ESOL students were out of the classroom, and I believed he should not be held accountable for those grades. Sherry agreed to require spelling only.

Upon reading a draft of this section, Sherry wanted to explain why she expected Manuel to complete all assignments. One of her five Hispanic ESOL students was a highly motivated, American-born student who had good work habits. When this student returned from ESOL, she

asked what she had missed in grammar, then made up the assignments. At the time, Sherry did not understand why the other four students, recent immigrants from Mexico, could not make up the work they missed, as well. Looking back in hindsight, she said, she realized this was not a fair expectation. However, Manuel, she recalled, “didn’t do any work at all” in her classroom. He tended to spend a lot of time drawing pictures, she reported.

Manuel was a sweet, affectionate student who loved to volunteer to help teachers with housekeeping or manual tasks. He was sensitive to remarks made by peers. This caused him to react, which resulted in him getting more than his share of teasing. Sherry noted that he had difficulty with transition periods such as lunch and recess, but that he usually complied when verbally redirected. She was confused about what I hoped to accomplish by bringing Manuel to the student study team. Susan, Manuel’s ESOL teacher, and I discussed with her the advantage of using a behavior contract to improve his behavior with peers and to focus on work completion. Sherry was reluctant to give Manuel extra time and attention for “doing what was expected of him.” I asserted that this intervention might be necessary to help Manuel achieve his academic goals, and could be part of his ESOL modification.

I explained to Sherry that Manuel was speaking very limited English only a year earlier and that he had never had instruction all day in English until fourth grade. She was surprised to hear this, because his conversational English was very good, if heavily accented. Susan and I explained that content reading and writing would be difficult for him because it is more abstract and decontextualized than conversational English. At the time, Sherry was not familiar with the difference between basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). Manuel’s ESOL modifications form stated that he would not be required to read and write on grade level for science and social studies. I suggested that someone

read the tests to him to answer orally. We discussed ways to modify daily work. We all agreed to monitor Manuel's daily assignment book. I would then set up a behavior/work contract for him and provide rewards.

Positive and Negative Reinforcement

A few days after we implemented the contract, Manuel started to change his behavior. He copied his assignments from the board to his assignment book for the first time. Sherry confessed to me that she fussed at him for being out of his seat. Another day, she called out the names of students who had not turned in their math assignments and needed to sit out during recess. Manuel's name was not on the list, but she called it out anyway, assuming that she had made a mistake. Manuel insisted that he had turned it in. She checked the papers and realized that he had. When she recognized her error, she apologized in front of the class. "He's doing such a good job I'm afraid to say anything to him," she confided to me.

When we reviewed this section, Sherry explained that she wanted Manuel to accept responsibility for his behavior and wanted him to help himself. This is why she would not ask him for the checklist or initial it unless he remembered to bring it to her. She affirmed that the previous story is an important one to include here. "It shows that when you start off one way with a child, even though they try to change, it is hard to see them differently."

In late January, Sherry administered a grade level reading running record to each of her students. Since Manuel had not been participating in her small reading groups, she was not aware of how well he read and how many details he had recalled.

Three weeks after initiating the behavior and work contract, I checked with Sherry. I was disappointed to find that his row in her grade book held mostly zeros, even though his assignments had been modified. I hoped that February's parent conference would help us learn more information so we could work together to support Manuel.

Connections with Parents

Home-school Communcication

The morning before Manuel's conference, Sherry became very ill at school and had to go home. She was still absent the next day. I contacted Mr. Jiménez and asked him to meet me after the sister's conference. Mrs. Jiménez stayed home with Manuel's younger sibling.

An interpreter was unavailable, so Mr. Jiménez and I communicated the best that we could. We discussed Manuel's failure to complete assignments, the behavior contract, and the way he was having difficulty getting along with other students. I explained the home visit and consent form for it. I told Mr. Jiménez how smart I thought Manuel was. I wanted Manuel to get a good education so he could get a good job one day and provide for his family.

Mr. Jiménez apologized for taking his family back to Mexico for 2 years and the subsequent loss of his English development. I told him no apology was needed, and that it was not a problem. Manuel was speaking conversational English well and reading and writing almost at grade level. The problems concerned his work habits and social skills. I wondered how well he would be doing if he really applied himself.

The next morning, I asked Manuel what his father told him. First he gave me the signed consent form for the home visit and stated, "Well, he told me about this."

"What else?" I asked.

"I have to do my work," he responded.

"What else?" I repeated.

"I have to bring my assignment book home," he replied. He continued to relate the various things his father and I had discussed. I felt that my points had been communicated effectively. However, a week later, Manuel was still not completing his work for Sherry and had not completed a writing assignment for me, either. I called Mr. Jiménez at home to talk about this with him.

Mr. Jiménez gave Mrs. Smith permission to keep Manuel in for recess or deny ice cream buying privileges if he did not complete his work. I asked to speak with Manuel. He told me he had lost the essay he needed to complete for me and did not have any paper at home. I hoped that Manuel would begin to complete his work to avoid missing his privileges. I was surprised to discover that even though Mr. Jiménez and I communicated fairly well in a face-to-face conference, it was almost impossible to speak on the phone. Apparently, I had depended more on context, body language, and facial expressions than I had realized. I encountered this difficulty whenever we had a phone conversation. I was uncertain that Mr. Jiménez even knew who I was when we spoke by phone.

The Home visit

I made my home visit to the Jiménez family in March after school (see interview guide, Appendix C). I took Maria Santez, a bilingual paraprofessional from Puerto Rico, with me to translate. The Jiménez's lived in the apartment complex near the school. One thing that I immediately noticed when we arrived was the lack of evidence of any reading or writing material in the home. This could have been one reason Manuel was struggling with literacy activities.

Mrs. Jiménez stayed at home with her 2 year-old daughter, Itzal. Manuel greeted us at the door with his 7-year-old sister, Rosa. Manuel was quick to offer the information that he helped

his mother around the house by emptying the trash cans, cleaning the restroom, and making the bed. Rosa added that she cleaned her bedroom and helped with the laundry.

We sat down at the small kitchen table—Mrs. Jiménez, Maria, Manuel, and myself. Rosa took Itzal into another room. Mrs. Jiménez explained that it was difficult to support a family in Mexico. They moved to the Southeast for better economic opportunities and a better life for her family. Other than a brief babysitting job, she had never worked outside the home. Mr. Jiménez was employed in the construction business. Mrs. Jiménez said that she missed seeing her mother and brothers, who remained in Mexico, and that sometimes she felt melancholy.

I wanted to determine what "funds of knowledge" the family had to survive in the city without English literacy. I asked how the family was able to pay bills without being able to read. Mrs. Jiménez explained that she learned to differentiate between the electricity and gas bills. She walked to the nearby grocery store and purchased money orders with cash. The family did not have a checking account. I thought about the amount of time and effort it took to pay bills this way, and how overwhelming it must have seemed at times.

Mrs. Jiménez appreciated the way Manuel cared for her and offered to help make her life easier. When he was only 4 ½ years old, she experienced a high-risk pregnancy with her second child. The doctor ordered bed rest. Manuel noticed when his mother was in pain and brought her water and medicine. He told her to lay down, relax, and sleep. I agreed that Manuel was very sweet and eager to help.

I waited for a good opportunity to bring up the issue of homework. However, Mrs. Jiménez addressed it first. She said that Manuel had a quick temper, which gave me the opportunity to address the behavior concerns at school. I gave Manuel some school supplies, since he had told me on the phone that he did not have these materials. However, he exclaimed,

"Oh, I already had [supplies]!" revealing the fib he had told me before. Mrs. Jiménez shared that Manuel often denied having homework when he really had it. We talked about giving him work to do at home when he did not bring the assignments. I gave her some math workbooks and fraction flashcards to keep, and some books in English and Spanish to borrow. I reminded Manuel of the assignment he owed me. I went over the grades he was missing for Mrs. Smith—he had completed 11 out of 49. I also gave him a new assignment book to replace the lost one. I told Mrs. Jiménez he would have homework every night.

Knowing that Mrs. Jiménez rarely visited Springfield, even though it was next door, I asked about the bilingual school Manuel attended in the Southwest. Did she ever visit there? The quick reply was, "Every day." Earlier she had commented that she wished Springfield were more bilingual. I suspected that she felt uncomfortable coming to the school because of her inability to communicate. I gave her information about English classes offered in the county, but she did not have transportation, due to her husband's work schedule.

Mrs. Jiménez told us that Manuel's reading and writing in Spanish had been on grade level, according to his fourth grade teachers in Mexico. I had him read a page or two from one of my Spanish books to Maria. She agreed that he read fluently in Spanish. I told Mrs. Jiménez that Manuel read and wrote well in English. The problem was that he was avoiding writing. We talked about the importance of retaining his Spanish as he learned English. Mrs. Jiménez told us that she wanted Manuel to better himself. She wanted him to have better job opportunities than his father so he wouldn't have to work such long hours. I told Manuel that if he had a high school or college education, he could work less but get paid more.

As we left, Mrs. Jiménez thanked us for the visit. She appreciated the time we took. The translator related, "She said that she's very happy that we came out and she's very thankful that

we took time out of our day to do this. Her only sadness is that her husband is not here to take part. She really wanted him to be here to complete the family—to be whole and complete." I felt good about the visit and was happy to learn that Manuel had such a good support system at home.

I was anxious to share my newly discovered information with Sherry. I let her read my transcript of the visit, which I had recorded. I pointed out to her that Manuel already had more education than anyone in his family and had English skills superior to those of his parents. If there was something he did not understand, there was nobody to help him at home. He needed lots of support. She responded that this made her "feel sad on the inside." She said that if she had known this I about Manuel at the beginning of the year, she would have been more nurturing to him, and more willing to offer help. "It did change things for me," she stated during a member check. "Maybe it would have been a more productive year for him. It was information I needed to know." She explained that now she gives parents a questionnaire she designed to find out about students' home lives. This helps her to understand students better and treat them as individuals.

Supporting Manuel

At the end of March, a student study team meeting was scheduled for Manuel. His parents were unable to attend the meeting, but Sherry, an assistant principal, the school psychologist, the ESOL teacher (Susan), a school counselor, the intervention specialist, and I were there. Susan and I expressed our concerns about Manuel. Sherry asserted that Manuel needed to be more responsible with the behavior contract. We tried to find out what she did naturally that was reinforcing for Manuel. She told us she ate with the boys at lunch every day.

We asked her if she could withhold privileges of eating beside her if he did not do his classwork. She teared up at the thought of doing this. Later, she told me she never did follow through with this strategy, because “It meant a lot to him” to eat with her.

At the end of the SST meeting, Sherry apologized to us. She admitted that she had not wanted to have the meeting. She did not understand how it could help Manuel. She conceded that she felt good about how everyone was trying to help Manuel, that she had a better understanding of his problems, and that she would try to do more to help him. During the member check process, Sherry explained:

> My whole feeling about SST meetings and the way I approach them has changed because of that meeting. Before, I never knew what it was about. I thought it was a time for other people to criticize the teacher for not doing enough to help the student. Now I understand that it is mediation, and a chance for everyone to come up with something together that will work with the student. It’s a chance to document a plan. If the plan doesn’t work, then you document that and try something else. It took [the experience with Manuel] to change the way I thought about this.

Case Study Results and Self Assessment

Our last inquiry group meeting was in April. I shared the results of my case study (see Appendix C) with the rest of the group that included Doreen, Sue Ellen, Tricia, and myself. My first question was about communication with Manuel and his family. I was able to learn a lot about Manuel’s background and current situation from the home visit with Mrs. Jiménez and Manuel and the conference and telephone calls with Mr. Jiménez. I saw firsthand the difference using a translator made in improving communication, and how helpful it can be to let a student know his parents are working with the school. I was able to share with Sherry information about the family’s level of literacy, and I discovered that his mother was aware of and shared my concerns about Manuel’s behavior and work habits. I learned a little about Manuel’s home life and background that I might have applied in the classroom. However, Sherry, as the classroom

teacher, decided to rotate reading groups for the last 9 weeks of school. I was pleased that she gave that time to Manuel, but disappointed that I was unable to apply the information I had learned to his reading group.

My second question involved the use of a behavior contract, daily assignment book, and suggestions to Sherry Smith for modifying Manuel's work appropriately to increase work completion. I learned that it was unrealistic to set goals for things beyond my control. As a support teacher in Sherry's room for 50 minutes a day, I had limited input into Manuel's contract and assignment book. Manuel's work completion improved from completing 0 assignments to completing 1 out of 5. This was not enough to raise his grades, since the 0s brought his average down. Sherry noted that later, she took a staff development class that changed her feeling about averaging in 0s. She now believes that grades should be determined by the quality of the work the student does complete. Averaging the 0s gives an inaccurate picture of the student's ability.

The third question had to do with the use of a dialogue journal. Manuel wrote in this only intermittently. Mostly he wrote empty promises to work harder and complete assignments, but did not follow through. He seemed to enjoy reading my entries and writing back to me. Perhaps if I were his teacher for more than an hour a day I could have earned a deeper level of trust and commitment from him and this would have been more effective. There is no way to tell.

Moving into the Future

The school year following the study brought great change to my professional life. I returned to fulltime work in my new role as student study team coordinator. In this position, I worked very closely with administration and counselors. I was able to use my new knowledge

about teachers' attitudes and the needs of culturally diverse students to influence school policy in subtle ways through weekly meetings, casual conversations, development of school surveys, and participation in a school-wide Title I study.

Every week, I met with culturally and linguistically diverse parents to help improve learning opportunities for their children. I made sure that a translator was present at the conferences, when necessary, to facilitate team communication. I encouraged parents to support literacy in their first language at home by reading to their students in their first language and allowing them to draft stories in their first language. I informed parents of opportunities to learn English. I helped classroom teachers understand the difference between problems learning content and problems learning English. I assisted classroom teachers in understanding the ESOL modifications form and demonstrated reading and writing strategies. I bore the wrath of parents who believed their children were being labeled because of their color—parents who did not trust the educational system to make the best decisions for their child.

Over and over again I found myself revisiting lessons learned from our inquiry group lessons—those that I facilitated and those I learned from the teachers in the group, from Manuel, and from my experiences as a support teacher. I continued to reflect, learn, and grow as a teacher.

A Metaphor

A photograph of the roses now sitting on my kitchen table might represent my portrait on the metaphorical quilt that forms this section. Seven pink roses are growing from a single base stem. They are at various stages of budding, blooming and dying. My professional life is like that. I question, experience, grow, and change in ever changing cycles, but remain essentially the same teacher who began teaching over 26 years ago. The process is sometimes thorny, but sweet

nonetheless. I experience times of dormancy and withdrawal, followed by surprising spurt of growth and change. I know that I need to continue to listen, read, observe, and learn. My practice has changed, but I always have room to grow. Springfield has a new principal, and his theme for the year is “teamwork.” I hope that under his leadership, teachers will have increased opportunities to collaborate and form professional learning communities where we can focus on improved student learning for all students.

CHAPTER 6

DOREEN: RELATIONSHIPS, RELATIONSHIPS, RELATIONSHIPS

The Beginning

Doreen and I did not know each other prior to our experiences in the inquiry group because I had not worked with any students in her class and we had not served together in any committees. A Black third grade teacher with a wide smile, an engaging presence, and a rich contralto voice, Doreen had completed over 15 years of elementary school teaching at the time of my study. Doreen grew up in the Midwest. Before attending elementary school, she seldom saw anyone other than Black people, even though they comprised only 2% of the larger community's population. Most of that 2%, she reported, lived within a few blocks of her neighborhood near a railroad line. After Doreen grew up, she understood that often "Black and other poor people lived in the section of town across the tracks." The people in Doreen's community had close relationships with each other, and they valued education, she stated.

In the writing of Doreen's chapter, I selected data events that led toward her strongly expressed theory of the importance of relationships in teaching. These included her own relationships with teachers as a child, her relationships with students during the study, and relationships with other participants in the inquiry group. I also included events that illustrated her increased awareness of students who are culturally and linguistically different from her and the mainstream group, and teaching practices that are effective with those children.

Early Years

Five-year-old Doreen was not prepared for the isolation she experienced on her first day of school. She still keeps a photograph of her kindergarten class. The photograph is typical of those printed in the 1950s and 1960s in the Midwest. Twenty-four individual black-and-white photos are lined up in four rows with the teacher's photo front and center. Doreen is the last student on the bottom row, isolated in the corner, and the only dark face in the bunch. On the first day of kindergarten, she was put in the corner most of the day for saying something her White teacher deemed to be "totally inappropriate." Doreen explained:

> I said a word. I don't even remember what the word was . . . maybe it was cursing. I don't recall. But I *do* recall being in a corner. Not for 20 minutes, but for all day. . . I still remember very well, being in that corner and the other kids sniggling at me. And this teacher was just heartless. She wouldn't let me out of that corner. . . . And I go out to my car where my mother is the rock. She is . . . the disciplinarian in our family. . . . And I go out there on the first day and I take her this note, and she just breaks down and cries. And I'd never seen her cry. . . . She cried because they said in the note if I didn't improve they'd just put me out of school. . . . So after that, I just really became a very quiet kid . . . because I was afraid.

After this first traumatic year, Doreen felt that her elementary teachers treated her kindly, but they made patronizing comments to her. She recalls her first-grade teacher, Mrs. Wilson:

> She was very kind to me. But she was one of those little Southern belles. (Imitating her teacher in a high pitched drawl) "Come on here, you li'l ole pickaninny!" You know, she would, even though she was sensitive and loving, treat us like, "Ooh, you little ol' cute thing! What are those in your hay-er!"

Doreen had no relationships with a teacher of color or teachers who appeared to accept and value her cultural identity. Her mother expected her to get an education:

> So the teachers and the principal always knew that they could call my mother and count on her support. It was one way or another. In fourth grade she physically walked into the room with her purse, took out a belt, and beat me in the fourth grade classroom, in front of my peers, for misbehaving.

Doreen stated that she was a "major discipline problem" at school during her junior high years. A large girl, sensitive about her weight, she dealt with taunts from peers by responding aggressively. She often mimicked and quoted herself when telling her story ("Okay, you call me fatso, I'll stomp you in the ground.") Doreen expressed remorse for her behavior during this time:

> I wish I could go back and do it all again now. I'm very embarrassed by some of my behavior. I'm very, very sad about it and I wish I could go back and apologize to all those teachers that I talked to in disrespectful ways. I'm very saddened by that now. But I guess you have to go through some things in order to learn and to grow and become the person that you become.

Doreen recalled other diverse memories of her academic experiences. She watched the riots of the 1960s on TV but did not experience them in her hometown. She discovered that she had a talent for singing and joined the choir. When pictures were taken for the yearbook, she noticed that all but one of the Black girls were placed in the back row. It was because of their "Afro" hairstyles, the teacher explained. Height was not a factor, Doreen explained after reading this section, but race most likely was.

Doreen's eighth-grade teacher, Mrs. Pryor, was "wonderful." She told her, "Doreen, you can be more. I can see the talents in you." Doreen recalled, "She got me into the reader's theater where I learned, you know, I'm a pretty good little actress. And it helped to change my spirit."

It was the teacher who believed in Doreen and developed that relationship with her who helped to turn her around. However, Doreen credits her mother's strong hand of discipline with saving her "from prison or worse":

> Because some of the people, almost all of the people I associated with, have ended up dead, in prison, on drugs, or what have you. But I did finally get myself together by the time I'd gotten into high school, and I think I was involved in an after school program and I decided that I really wanted to teach. So I really have pretty much dedicated my life to that. . . . I've always wanted to teach where I really felt like I was needed. . . . They needed someone who really cared. And I've also worked primarily with a lot of students

> who are at risk academically because I felt like I was one of those students and I might identify with them quite a bit. . . . I never had a Black teacher throughout my entire school life. First time was in college.

Adult Years

Doreen moved to Lyman County from Ohio in the fall of 1987 to marry her husband Edwin, a childhood friend since age three. Her father warned her against the racism that he was certain she would encounter. Doreen's friends told her that Lyman County was a "cool progressive place." She viewed her new home through the rose-colored lenses of a newlywed and was prepared to embrace her new community.

During her first week in Georgia, Doreen and Edwin drove to the grocery store in Taylorsville to buy "some good country food." Driving down Main Street, Doreen exclaimed to Edwin, "This is so wonderful! Look at all the people lined up in the streets wearing little ghost costumes! All those little kids! Aren't they cute? They must be dressed up for Halloween." Adults and children wearing white hoods lined the street on both sides.

Edwin replied in horror, "Girl, those ain't no damned costumes! That's the Ku Klux Klan!" At that time, Doreen reported, "I became so frightened I could no longer control the car. I began shaking and to cry hysterically. . . . I had never seen anything like that before." Her husband grabbed the steering wheel and got them into the store parking lot. After shopping they had no choice but to return on the same road. Edwin defiantly declared, "They scared our ancestors, but they're not gonna scare me. We didn't come to Georgia to be afraid."

At the traffic light, the young couple noticed that White drivers were being given a newsletter as they stopped, but Black drivers were not approached. Edwin rolled down the car window and requested one of the documents. Doreen was surprised that the newsletter, full of propaganda, appeared to be written by what she described as a "highly intelligent" author. It

included frequent references to Black people as *nigger* and referred to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as "Martin Luther Coon." In general, Doreen stated, it "blamed the ills of the world on colored people." In this way, Doreen was welcomed to Lyman County.

In spite of her early experiences, Doreen learned to get along with teaching peers both Black and White. She did not report any isolation from the White teachers at the schools in which she taught. There were no Hispanic or Asian teachers at Springfield until very recently. Doreen was embraced by her peers as an exemplary teacher who truly cared about her students, and earned teaching awards testifying to her dedication to them.

Participation in the Inquiry Group

Doreen was not a bit shy about speaking out in the inquiry group. The first session she attended was our second meeting, in January. She often introduced topics to our group discussions that were "on my heart," as she expressed it. Many times these topics addressed communication problems between Black parents and the White-led Lyman County School District. Doreen emphasized problems that occurred when Black parents felt misunderstood and alienated from the mainstream. For example, one week Doreen brought up a news item featured in the local newspaper and broadcast on a radio station that catered to Black listeners. A neighboring school, Clay Elementary, was criticized for the way it was celebrating Black History Month. The activities, planned by a Black kindergarten teacher, were considered demeaning by some vocal parents who thought they were the idea of the White principal. Doreen helped the rest of the group become aware of these community tensions, felt by many parents of students at Springfield, that were not readily apparent to all of us.

Another issue Doreen addressed was the difference in discipline styles between Black and White teachers. She stated that one reason Black students may have trouble behaving in school is that the discipline styles of White teachers varied widely from those used in the home:

> I think that discipline is just so different in African American homes versus, maybe, our counterparts. Corporal punishment, or spanking, is still very prevalent. In our churches we believe in spanking a child to get across your message. And the way we talk to our children is different—more aggressive, you know threatening kinds of things. So I think a lot of times when African American children come to school and we approach discipline like, "I really want you to sit down, now, Johnny. I really don't like the way that I see you acting. You know, I really like the way Bobby's acting." It doesn't reach them.

Connections with Parents

Doreen responded to my presentations on cross-cultural parent conferences with enthusiasm. Her comments showed that she was reflecting on the way she dealt with parents in the past and a need to change tactics:

> It's always been our goal to try to get more parents involved, and get the parents involved, and get the parents involved. And in the article it just stuck out to me, if we try to get them to take on our values, then we're going to further alienate those children from their parents and further alienate those parents from the school – thus really destroying everything that we're trying to build. Because I think we all know that the parent-teacher relationship is going to be really the key to success.

Doreen reported that she always enjoyed parent-teacher conference night, because she likes to talk and enjoys relating to people. However, she noticed a different tone in her February conferences after applying some cross-cultural conference strategies:

> You know, we talked about allowing the parents to have this little bit of time to talk with you about things that might not be directly related to all the academic achievement, what have you. And I found in this last group of conferences that my parents have so many personal problems themselves. By just allowing them that time to open up, they began to tell me so many things that were very sad. . . . I was really in tears several times.

I asked Doreen if these stories helped her to understand her students and their academic problems better. She replied:

> Absolutely, absolutely. One child in particular has not been doing any homework and he's relatively new. And based on what the mother said, I understand why he's been slipping through the cracks. There's not anyone home except an older brother to give him any supervision. And he's just not doing it. So we're trying to come up with some strategies to help him be more successful. Another mom had to leave [the city she lived in]. Her husband was a high school teacher and was having relations with his students. She left to get away from that situation, and the child is absolutely an emotional wreck all of the time. . . . So you know, when I opened up those doors I just probably heard more than what I ever expected to hear. . . . I have a better understanding of my students because they shared some of these things. I had no idea those things were going on.

In our final interview, Doreen stated that one understanding from the inquiry group that had the greatest impact on her practice was the concept of cross-cultural conferencing. Another was the need to work with students in small groups.

Supporting Inclusion

Several of the students in Doreen's class were English language learners receiving ESOL services, and several qualified for reading support from the Title I teacher. The thought of losing time with her students to pullout programs was discouraging to Doreen, so she agreed to have both the ESOL teacher and Title I teacher join her for an inclusion model of services. She commented:

> It has been extremely successful. . . . After you get through that language barrier, they've made beautiful progress. In most cases they've done better than some of my other kids. . . I love having them in the classroom because they don't miss anything. But the inclusion has been a lot of work. There have been many Fridays when I've had to stay for planning so when she [ESOL teacher] walks in, we know exactly what we're going to do and we just really break them up and do a lot of stuff with smaller groups.

Self-Assessment on Connections to Practice

Doreen discovered that working in smaller groups and dialoguing with students helped them acquire language and academic skills more effectively. She reflected on this in our final interview in March:

> I feel like I have a more literate classroom now. . . . I even think I'm on the cutting edge of things. I see that maybe some of my style needs to be changed and I need to be more

> of a facilitator of learning versus always up and just feeding them instruction, talking to them, telling them everything. As a result of the class I have created four centers. . . . I see the value of going and talking with each other. You know, just as I was saying it's valuable for me to talk with my peers and in that class we had a chance to talk! Well, I can see I haven't given the children enough time to talk.

I was pleased that Doreen made this connection between the sociocultural learning approach I outlined for the inquiry group to a more social constructivist teaching approach in the classroom. While I presented this approach as my own perspective, I never intended to prescribe this method of teaching to the other participants.

Working with Ana

Initial Understandings

Doreen chose a bilingual Hispanic child, Ana Hernández, to focus on for her case study in the inquiry group. For the assignment in which participants wrote everything they knew about the focal student, Doreen wrote, "Ana is the student I've chosen to study. She was born in California. She speaks Spanish in her home. She is in the ESOL program and is making good progress." In her journal entry of January 28, Doreen explained her reason for choosing Ana. "Why? I love her positive spirit. What a worker she is. I see her skills improving daily. Ana is reading better. Comprehension skills are in an average range."

Doreen explained to me later that she was not used to doing assignments to prepare for a staff development class. Usually, teachers are just expected to "show up" with something to take notes on, she stated. She was not expecting to review Ana's file or to question her about her family's country of origin. During our inquiry group meeting in late January, Doreen stated that Ana's parents were from Mexico and she had a brother living there. We operated under the assumption until the end of the inquiry group that all five of us were studying Mexican immigrants or Mexican American children. I was very surprised to read Doreen's case study in

April and discover that Ana's family was actually from El Salvador. For most of the school year Doreen had misidentified Ana's cultural background. While El Salvador has similarities with Mexico including a common language, the cultures are different in many ways. If Doreen had ascertained this earlier in the year, she might have learned more about El Salvador so she could acknowledge and appreciate Ana's heritage.

Communication

Doreen's focus for her case study was to see how setting up learning centers and teaching in small groups would facilitate oral communication and literacy skills with her second language learners. She planned to make a home visit to the Hernández home to learn more about Ana's family and to build a better relationship with the mother. She gave Mrs. Hernández her home phone number to call whenever she could not understand the homework. Just as I found it difficult to communicate with Mr. Jiménez by telephone, Doreen had difficulty communicating with Mrs. Hernández. She usually asked to speak with Ana and explained the homework directly to her. Doreen made extra efforts to communicate with parents by giving up the privacy of her time at home and extending the hours she was available to them

Classroom Strategies

Doreen found that the use of graphic organizers in her classroom was an effective way to help students with reading comprehension and written expression. She stated that her ESOL students enjoyed using the webs so much that they used them spontaneously without being asked. She expressed an interest in the language experience approach described in one of our readings.

Doreen reflected on the change in her classroom by March:

> Now I'm doing small groups all the time and they just lend themselves to more dialogue. Children are talking versus listening all the time to what I have to say. I'm just kind of

> doing some things differently. I wish I had done those a lot earlier . . . There's a lot of positive changes because they're just now talking to each other all the time. And that's hard for me, because I'm used to a very structured classroom. . . . So I'm having to learn that it's not all that important that a classroom is completely quiet when you say it's work time, but that the children are learning.

These comments reflect a change in Doreen's role of teacher-as-giver-of-knowledge to teacher-as-facilitator-of-learning. She also commented, "I've tried to build a sense of community in the classroom so that they feel like they're family." I am certain that the trust she built through these relationships helped them feel more secure in taking risks needed for them to explore and grow as learners.

Doreen never made the home visit to Ana's family due to circumstances beyond her control. Mrs. Hernández rescheduled the visit several times. First she had work conflicts, then a houseful of unexpected relatives. However, she came to the classroom to visit and attended parent conferences. Doreen was able to learn much more about Ana and her family, background, culture, and country of origin. She put together a detailed case study of what she learned (see Appendix D).

Co-constructing the Story

The summer after our inquiry group met, I had a telephone conversation with Doreen to get her response to an earlier draft of this chapter. Her initial response was that my interpretation of her responsiveness to children from other cultures "wasn't fair." I had drawn conclusions in the earlier draft not based on direct observation, and she felt that they showed her in an unfavorable light. These concerns were addressed in later drafts, when I adopted a revised method of analysis, as described in Chapter 3.

When I spoke to Doreen about the importance of knowing a student's cultural background, she seemed confused. She asked why it mattered what country a student's family

came from if she was born in America. I don't think I had a good response at that time, but I assume it would be similar to caring if a student is Black or European American. Just as she might want White teachers to acknowledge and respect their Black students' heritage, teachers should acknowledge and respect other cultural and ethnic heritages, as well. There is a cultural difference between students born in America. Some are descendents of slaves, some are children or descendents of immigrants, and some are from indigenous tribes. Some are born to poverty, and others to middle-class or privilege. Teachers can't afford to assume that all children come to school with the same backgrounds or expectations. Doreen is aware of this because she has studied children of poverty, especially Black male children of poverty.

Doreen was concerned about aspects of my representation of her in the first draft of this chapter, and probably for good reason. I had not yet discovered the method of narrative analysis that helped me frame her story, and I included much less of Doreen's voice. When we spoke about her reaction, I believed she thought that I expected all teachers to go do research on every country of origin of all their students' families. I tried to explain that learning about cultures might occur very informally and become part of daily small group dialogue. This conversation helped me realize that I should have addressed this topic specifically at some point during the inquiry group. It is too important for me to have missed. I discussed these shortcomings in Chapter 4.

I talked with Doreen about the fact that she might ask students to share a bit about their culture and to model an interest in it for the class. I asked her if it would have made a difference to her in school if a teacher had valued and held up the Black culture. She responded, "You didn't go to school to be accepted. I was told from a young age that it would always be hard for me there. I was comfortable at home and with my family. My mother was always able to keep

me in line." I inquired whether there might have been a relationship between her withdrawal and anger in school and the attitudes her teachers held about Black students. She said she had not really thought about that before. She admitted, "My skills aren't the best with Hispanic kids. I'd rather work with children who are like me."

Doreen approved of this revision of her chapter. I appreciate her graciousness in sharing it with a wider audience, and her patience in reading multiple drafts. I think it is important to show that this data story is jointly constructed. It has been written and rewritten to include much more of Doreen's voice and to remove the confusing and misleading analysis I included in the earlier version. It is hard for anyone to admit that we would all rather work with children who are like ourselves and it is hard to understand those from different cultures and with different languages. Teaching as a career can be overwhelming, especially when working with children from diverse economic and cultural backgrounds.

Moving to the Future: Connections with Parents

The symbol for Doreen on my metaphorical quilt is that of a woman extending the hand of friendship to both adults and children. Doreen truly welcomed others with an open spirit and kind heart. After participating in the inquiry group, Doreen faced several personal challenges. She had time to reflect on her priorities and to affirm that Springfield was the school where she wanted to teach. She reported that she was overcoming her hesitancies to work with those parents and children who were less familiar to her. In fact, she was recently responsible for setting up a Hispanic Awareness Month display in the lobby of Springfield, and helped several Hispanic parents borrow bilingual resources for their children. She organized an ESOL class at Springfield for parents who want to learn to speak English. Her understanding of the many

cultures at our school continued to develop. She strived to form healthy home-school relationships with all of the parents that she worked with, and made visits to several apartment communities to communicate with parents there. This transformation has been remarkable.

CHAPTER 7

TRICIA: EMBRACING DIVERSITY, NEW PERSPECTIVES, AND THOUGHTFUL REFLECTION

Tricia's smiling, calm presence and open attitude made it easy for us to work together comfortably the first year I came to Springfield School. Her shoulder length, auburn hair and freckled face hinted at her Irish American heritage. Like all of the teachers in the inquiry group, Tricia, a White teacher, is a life-long learner. She is ever eager to try new methods to challenge her students. She has an endorsement to teach gifted and talented students, so third grade students identified as gifted and talented are placed in her classroom. A woman of middle age, she brings life experiences to the classroom that have influenced her teaching ability beyond what one would expect for a teacher with fewer than ten years of classroom experience. She has a passion for living and a sense of fairness that make her instantly likeable.

In the construction of Tricia's story, I selected events that showed her family background, her contributions to the group, her reflections on her learning, and her open mindedness to new ideas. Tricia was the only teacher to attend every inquiry group meeting, the first to complete an interview, and the first to turn in her case study. She joined the inquiry group because it piqued her curiosity. She explained, "The population we have is so diverse, and I've thought a lot about that. And I always wanted to know more about the population or things I could do, so it was something I was interested in."

Early Years

At our first meeting, Tricia told the group about her family background:

> I was born in [Appalachia], in coal-mining country, and lived there for two years. My grandparents raised me; they were dirt poor. My grandfather was a coal miner. My mom had me out of wedlock, so it was quite different to do that in 1953; that was pretty brave of her. She went up to [the Midwest], when the coal mines closed, with my grandpa to get a factory job because that's where everyone went from [Appalachia] for the jobs. So I stayed with my grandma until they got jobs and moved up to [the Midwest.]

Tricia returned to live with her mother after she remarried to a widower, Tricia's stepfather, a man with three children. Tricia became part of a blended family that was unusual for the time period. They lived in a blue-collar neighborhood employed mainly by the automobile industry. She explained:

> I don't remember seeing people of color unless I went downtown. I went to small Catholic schools all the way to twelfth grade, so again, I was pretty sheltered. But my parents were very tolerant. Growing up in the sixties, I never heard them say a bad word about anybody that was Black or of color. As a family I think we were very open and tolerant but you find out little things as you get older. Even though people have that tolerance, they still have those prejudices.

Tricia has a Black brother-in-law and a Polynesian sister-in-law who, after some initial reservations, have been accepted into the family. She never recalled racial differences or prejudice ever being discussed at school or at home until she was in high school. Her community was predominantly White, but there were ethnic differences in the neighborhood.

> My step-dad was Polish, so as a child going into family gatherings they spoke Polish. So I remember sitting around and we had all the traditional Polish food, and the aunts and uncles were all sitting around speaking Polish. They didn't teach our generation [the language], but I heard it a lot. All my friends were Italian and Irish.

Tricia moved to another Midwestern city after she married; that is where her son was born. They lived there for ten years. Like many cities in the Midwest at the time, that city was predominately White. Tricia was nervous about the prospect of moving to the Southeast because her image of this region was one of racism. Tricia was leery of what she might find in the

Southeastern United States. She was surprised to move here in the late 80s and find that things were "quite different." She found the metropolitan area to be mixed and eclectic. Her perspective was different than that of Doreen's. Tricia did not encounter the blatant racism that her Black friend had experienced when moving to the same community from the Midwest.

After earning her Master's Degree in education, Tricia worked for three years as a teacher with Headstart. This exposed her to children with a diversity of backgrounds and to low-income students. However, she stated, "Springfield has been a real eye-opener for me because it's so culturally mixed. I love it. I think it's wonderful. The diversity is wonderful." She explained a moment in which she realized how much diversity had become a part of her life:

> Last year we went to Australia—my husband, son and I—and we spent two weeks there. Australia is very White. The aborigines are hidden; you don't see them. I saw not one Black person the whole time I was in Australia. And I guess it didn't mentally register. When we got back to the airport and were walking around to get our luggage, I looked around, and I looked at my son, and he looked at me and we both smiled and we went, "We're home!" Because we saw all the Black faces. And I felt comfortable again. So I'm really used to the diversity and I like that. I didn't feel right in Australia, and I loved it there, but that was the one thing that didn't seem right, and I didn't think about that 'til later.

Participation in the Inquiry Group

Tricia's enthusiasm in the inquiry group discussions was contagious. Since she attended every discussion, this added to the energy of the group immensely. She volunteered her comments frequently and responded to the discourse of the group with exclamations of agreement or thoughtfulness such as, "Of course!" "Oh!" "No!" "Wow!" "Right," "Mm hmm," and "Yep."

Tricia's responsiveness to group conversations mirrored those of her grade level peer, Doreen. The year of the inquiry group, they taught side-by-side, supporting each other in the difficult job of teaching and sharing duties, ideas and lesson plans. Doreen and Tricia were so in

tune with each other during our group discussions that they would often finish each other's sentences.

Tricia joined the inquiry group because when I described my concept of learning from peers to her, "it just kind of piqued my curiosity," she stated. She had often reflected on the diversity at Springfield and wanted to learn more about teaching the students in her class more effectively.

Connections to Practice

Tricia enthusiastically shared her ideas with the group and made connections between her classroom practice and the readings we discussed. In a January meeting we were discussing the jigsaw strategy, a cooperative learning technique. Some of the other teachers were having difficulty envisioning how this would work. Tricia pulled out her lesson plan for Egypt and described how she usually had students do research on the topic. Then she explained how she could alter the lesson to incorporate the jigsaw strategy. She answered Isabel's questions about how this would work.

In spite of her enthusiasm in discussion, Tricia was sometimes reluctant to complete reading assignments and bluntly admitted that she hated writing. She noted that she did not have reading models when growing up. "I never saw my mom read a book, ever. They just didn't. Never saw my mom read a book. My dad read the newspaper every day. That was all [the reading] he did." However reluctant, Tricia did occasionally record notes in her reflective journal to document her classroom inquiry. This is an early entry about her focal student:

> I have been observing Maria over the past week and have been noticing a quick sense of humor and some very thoughtful and insightful thinking. She can be very witty at times and is quick at getting jokes. Her thinking process shows some keen insight. She has been making observations and asking great questions.

Week after week, Tricia made personal connections to reading in our discussion group. One Monday afternoon she described her response to a chapter on vocabulary strategies for second language learners.

> I got real excited when I read this vocabulary connection because I had been doing that last year and you know, it really worked. And so I said to myself, "Oh, yeah! I've done that before." I got an ESOL student toward the end of the year. And I just kind of made this up as I went along. I'm looking at this and thinking, "Yeah, I did that stuff." So I felt like, "Wow! I was doing a good job!" That's why I was smiling when I read that.

One week, Doreen shared an article she had read about including students in the parent-teacher conferences and helping them set goals for the coming few weeks. Tricia employed goal-setting with her students as well. In regard to student self evaluation and goal setting, she remarked,

> No one ever asked me those questions [when I was growing up]. …But I don't see why we can't start teaching those students about that now. . . . I ask my students to rate themselves on what areas they were doing well at, what they were having problems with, how they felt about themselves. And I sit down with them and go over how they answered it and say, "What goals are you going to work on? How do you think you'll accomplish those goals? And they're really brutally honest with themselves. They know what they need to work on. And sometimes they can tell me what they'll do. Other times they don't know how they're gonna accomplish this. Then I shared it with parents at the first conference. In January we revisited them and I asked them, "Do you feel that you've accomplished these goals?" And then we talked about setting new goals for the next nine weeks.

Another effective strategy Tricia shared with the group was requiring her students to teach a lesson to the rest of the class. Each student was responsible for a ten-minute lesson:

> And Sartu did it first, and she was so excited, and she couldn't wait until the day came. She was nervous, and she got up there and did a really nice little math lesson, and I just sat in the back and acted like a student. . . . She taught something on the board with math that she had kids do with numbers. Similar to something I had done before. And she gave them the quick introduction and then she had them do something on paper and she actually graded the papers!

Responding to our reading about literacy and collaborative talk (Wells & Chang-Wells,1992) one afternoon, Tricia abruptly left the group to retrieve a lesson she had taught earlier that day. She explained how she used higher-level thinking skills to help them discuss a graph because "I really teach to make kids think, you know." When her students were not able to answer her initial probe, she guided them until a student made the connection. Tricia stated, "It was a good lesson. A good bunch of lessons. But it's connecting things that really is important."

I waited until I was two-thirds of the way into our inquiry group sessions before I introduced theory by name, even though we had been discussing and applying theoretical frameworks from our very first meeting. When I asked the group to share any theories they may have developed while attending the group, Tricia was the first one to speak up. She said that she had been spending a lot of time thinking about Black culture and the way the parents of her students discipline their children. She explained:

> When I discipline students, I try the approach I used with my son. You know, it's the very touchy-feely approach to make them feel good about themselves and rationalize. And I have just been very frustrated and upset to the point of tears that it's just not working when it had always worked for me at home and with other classes. And so with a couple of my students I observed the way their mothers relate to them when it comes to discipline and I've kind of taken a different approach. I'm been more authoritarian, and it's actually working. And when I've tried the touchy-feely stuff they walk all over me! I mean, that's what I've noticed. I don't like disciplining that authoritative way, but it's gotten results. . . . and I've used their parents as back-up to say, "Now, I know your mother…" I think I may have learned some of this by watching Doreen over the years and seeing her switch and put it on differently, too. With those students who have big issues, she takes on that "Mama" role and is a very strict disciplinarian. And they just stop and it changes their attitude.

Tricia developed her theory about behavior management of Black students by observing Black mothers, including her friend, Doreen. She found that when she applied similar strategies, the students responded. By reflecting on her method of learning and verbalizing it, she is more

likely to observe and learn additional cultural styles that will make her a more effective teacher of culturally diverse students. Tricia reflected in her journal following this meeting:

> I am glad you brought up the discussion about theory. It is important to think about how and why you think the way you do—I believe that is metacognition. Understanding why you do things and the reasons or motivations behind them just helps you to be a better person and definitely a better teacher. I spend a lot of time reflecting on how things go in my classroom. I try to analyze what went wrong when things don't work and hopefully learn from the mistakes. More importantly, when things work I want do know what it was that made it work so I can do it again.
>
> I wish that more people would do this; it is just an important growth process. If we as teachers can get our students to stop every so often and think about why they do things, they could become successful learners.

Getting to Know Maria

For her case study, Tricia selected Maria, a Mexican American girl born in the Southwest but raised in the Southeast. The year previous to the study, Maria "exited" the ESOL program. This means that she scored too high to receive direct services from an ESOL teacher but would remain eligible for a modified curriculum and exemptions from passing high stakes tests for one school year. However, Tricia reported that she did not modify the curriculum because Maria was able to get average grades without the modification. Maria is the eldest of three daughters, and her mother was still struggling to master the English language. Maria struggled in reading comprehension vocabulary and math story problems—all language-related weaknesses. Tricia's goal in the group was to learn strategies to help Maria excel and do even better in her classroom. She posed two questions for her classroom inquiry: (a) What is Maria's learning style? Is there a better way to teach this student to increase her knowledge skills based on the way she learns? (b) Would making a home visit help me to have a better understanding of Maria and her needs?

In another journal entry, Tricia penned:

> I have seen Maria grow tremendously since the beginning of school. Her understanding and reading comprehension has been one area of growth. Before the home visit I want to

> do my inventory to find out the ways in which she learns and what her strengths are so I can share this with her mother.

At our sixth meeting, Tricia shared a successful writing lesson that incorporated several strategies effective for second language learners. These included the use of art, prior knowledge, and verbal rehearsal:

> The first thing I had them do was to verbally share an experience they had. Then I asked them to draw a picture and write a sentence of it—something they remembered that they did with a family member. And it came out better than I could have imagined. And then they went to actually go into detail about their sentence and described what happened.

Tricia was excited to learn how to administer an informal reading inventory (IRI) to determine Maria's reading level. She asked me to look over the evaluation to make sure she was interpreting it correctly. She discovered that Maria's decoding was on grade level but her comprehension was one year lower. She realized that Maria needed help with fluency and vocabulary. Tricia enthusiastically explained how she appreciated the information she obtained from the IRI:

> By asking these key questions that are all mixed up with inference and cause and effect and detail, I think it really shows whether or not she got it. And she did only 60% on the third grade comprehension, even though she read 98% of the words correctly.

Tricia has not only continued to use the IRI in the year following her introduction to it, but she has taught other third grade teachers how to use it as well. Tricia's effective, hands-on teaching style carries over to informal teachable moments with her grade level peers.

Connections to Parents

Tricia had made home visits as part of her required duties in Headstart. She and Doreen had discussed the possibility of trying this with their Springfield students and were excited about the prospect of following through with this goal. She explained her interest to the group:

> I think the reason Doreen and I want to do the home visit is because we have talked a couple times this year about what kind of things it would take, not just to reach ESOL students, but just our struggling kids. And we both came to the conclusion that sometimes unless you get the parents to be involved, there's really nothing you can do that will make a difference. Parents have to be real involved. They have to volunteer. And you do the home visits to let them know that we're working as a team.

Conferencing

The week after spring parent-teacher conferences, Tricia shared the results of her conference with Maria's mother:

> I think we had better communication this time. Mrs. Perez may have been more comfortable because she asked me more questions about Maria's progress. And she asked me for some things she can do at home and some extra math work. . . . Her mom is a real caring mom. She sends me little gifts for everything. I don't know anything about her dad yet. I'm real curious to make the home visit.

When I asked Tricia what she had done differently, she replied, "I think I was more aware of the questions I was asking. And I was waiting for answers and letting the parents talk more about things that might not have been so relevant to my agenda." Tricia shared that she let all her parents have more talk time at these conferences and was less likely to steer parents back "on topic" if they got onto something she considered off the subject.

The Home Visit

Bubbling with enthusiasm, Tricia could hardly wait to share her story about the home visit she made to Maria's house. She exclaimed, "My home visit was the most awesome thing! I just left there feeling so happy! I went home, smiling all the way home. It was just wonderful. . . .And it was very enlightening." She learned about the educational backgrounds of the parents, why Maria was born in another state, and Mrs. Lopez' attitudes about school. She found it interesting that one of Mrs. Lopez's big concerns was that Maria do well socially. She realized from our discussions that this was part of her cultural expectations.

Tricia learned of Mrs. Lopez's concern that Maria maintain her Spanish. She asked the group if they could help her recommend English classes for Mrs. Lopez who wanted to improve her English. Sue Ellen provided her with a list to send home.

At the end of the interview, Tricia asked Mrs. Lopez how she felt about the school and its role. She responded, "I'm Mexican and I have my culture and history. And I like for Maria to know it, but I like that she has friends from other cultures and races." Tricia seemed delighted and surprised to learn of this attitude. After the interview, Tricia was invited to dinner. She was very encouraged by the visit:

> [Maria's mother] said it was important for her to get to know Maria's teacher. I loved [the home visit]. It was just so meaningful. And what a relationship you could have if you start that at the beginning of the year. . . . I think the connection you get from something like this is just invaluable.

She wondered if making this kind of connection would help improve parent relations for all her students.

Connections to Practice

In addition to finding out what she could learn from the home visit, Tricia wanted to learn more about Maria's learning style. To do this, she found some reference material on learning styles and developed a simple survey for her students to rate their preferences based on a series of questions.

Tricia discovered that Maria does not like to learn by reading but did like to learn by watching demonstrations, making and doing things. Maria also liked to come up with her own ideas and talking about things with her classmates. She rated herself lowest on asking questions when she did not understand and on doing worksheets.

Sue Ellen explained that second language learners are often embarrassed to ask questions in front of a large group and helped Tricia to understand why Maria may have responded the way

she did. At the bottom of the page, Tricia left some open-ended questions. The first asked the student, "What do you know really well or are good at?" Maria responded, "I learned how to cook very good." Laughing, Tricia explained that on the home visit she was told that Maria often helps her mother with chores at home, including cooking. A second question asked the student to list something she wanted to learn. "She wants to learn more math. She has kind of struggled with math because it's gotten harder since we introduced multiplication." Based on the survey results, Tricia made plans to provide her with more opportunities to work with a partner. Tricia's final case study took the form of a four page typed report, found in Appendix E. Also enclosed is her learning styles survey.

Self-reflection

Tricia found the time to dialogue in the inquiry group to be the most useful aspect of our time together. She enjoyed the diversity of the group and the opportunity to hear other people's thoughts on issues that were on her mind. In her March interview, she explained:

> You know, we talk all the time about teaching students things that are relevant to them and meaningful to them, but we don't tend to do that as adults! I liked the way we started the group by looking at who we are and where we come from and looking at what it is we want to find out. I think making it personal to each person was really great. Maybe some of the readings weren't great for me because I'm just so busy and didn't have time. So I really had to pick and choose what was most important to me. I felt bad sometimes.

When I asked Tricia how participating in the group changed her understanding of culturally diverse students and their families, she summarized:

> I think I've always been open to other cultures. But I think the biggest thing is the response I got from my case study student and her mother. That opened my eyes. Here I am thinking, "What a great opportunity this is" and everything, and then I go to Maria's house, and what she likes about our school is . . . that she's in a school where there are kids from other cultures and races, too. And I never thought about it from the parents' perspective. . . . When I went on the visit, I was thinking that maybe I was imposing . . . but she saw it as a real positive thing. . . . This group was a really good thing for me because I've always prided myself on being real open-minded and trying to understand other cultures. But yet I've realized that I have some set-in-stone opinions that maybe

> others wouldn't see as bad but I don't like, necessarily. Or I'm judging too fast or something. And so I've really questioned some of the things that I always used to think . . . so this was just one more thing that helped me personally to better understand what makes other people think and act the way they do, so I can respond to them in a more positive way.

Moving Forward

The fall after completing the inquiry group study, I decided to make a presentation about the group at a regional conference for ESOL teachers. I invited the teachers in the group to co-present with me. Tricia enthusiastically embraced the idea, and we met to outline the presentation. In our presentation we explained the format of the group, how it operated, and the strengths and weaknesses of the approach for staff development. Tricia confidently talked about the positive aspects of the inquiry group experience and fielded questions from our interested audience. Among those in the room was Sue Ellen, who also attended the conference. She echoed Tricia's comments about the group and told about its impact on her.

Tricia's upbringing did not prepare her for the cultural diversity she would experience as a teacher. However, she was raised to be open-minded and to think independently. She is more of a leader than a follower. Participating in the inquiry group, she reported, changed her attitude. This, in turn, changed her interactions with students. Like Doreen, she began to try to see things from a different perspective than her own. She spent more time listening to parents and observing and thinking about children.

Her presence in the group was invaluable because of her regular attendance, her willingness to share personal connections, and her ability to make the other teachers feel listened to. While she may not have read everything that was handed out, she made sure to comment on whatever she did read. She was insightful and reflective in our discussions. The image that came

to mind when I thought of Tricia's quilt square is that of an outline of a brain with a question-mark hovering above. To me, this represents the sense of curiosity and self-reflection Tricia not only displayed, but also cultivated in her diverse students.

CHAPTER 8

SUE ELLEN: KNOWLEDGEABLE, CONCIENTIOUS, AND CARING

Sue Ellen has a lovely personality that drew me to her immediately when she first came to work at Springfield. She had several years experience as a speech and language pathologist prior to taking her new position as an ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) teacher. Since I worked closely with speech and language pathologists when I was in special education, we had that in common, in addition to our attraction to the ESOL students at Springfield. I was thrilled when Sue Ellen expressed interest in participating in my study.

Because we were studying second language learners, Sue Ellen's training in this area, her training in language acquisition as a speech and language pathologist, and her familiarity with ESOL services offered at Springfield made her an invaluable contributor to group discussions and a good source of information. She frequently answered our questions about state, county and school ESOL policy and procedures. This chapter highlights Sue Ellen's willingness to share her knowledge with the group, her deep caring for children who have recently immigrated to this country, and her critical attention to detail.

Sue Ellen's Early Years

Sue Ellen was Southern-raised, despite having been born in a Western state. She has the distinctive quiet, Southern drawl typical of White women raised in that area. Her dark, straight hair frames her porcelain skin. She has lovely, large, doe-like brown eyes that dominate her face.

Her mother hailed from the mountains of Appalachia, where Sue Ellen also grew up. Her father was from the Midwest. She recalled, “In the county where I grew up there were no Black people at all that I remember.” Sue Ellen shared an early memory of going to her father’s office over a furniture store when she was 3 or 4 years old:

> He had a CPA office. And as we walked upstairs, there was a Black gentleman coming down the stairs from my dad’s office. It was the first time I had ever seen anyone who was Black. I thought he was the Bogeyman, because I had always been threatened with, “You do that and the Bogeyman is going to get you,” or, “We’re going to call the Bogeyman.” They would pretend he was on the phone. So I thought this was the Bogeyman, and … I … squalled! And embarrassed the living daylights out of my parents – both of them. My father had to pick me up to walk past him because I was so frightened

Sue Ellen recalled an experience in her teenaged years that she draws upon when working with students acquiring English:

> I was attending an international school in Frankfurt, Germany. I remember my first day in a math class where the instruction was in Deutsch. The teacher asked me a question. When I did not understand and I failed to respond, she asked me again, only louder. I wanted to tell her I could hear her fine, I just could not understand her. I remember being very embarrassed. My classmates were laughing and another student was attempting to translate for me. Math can be confusing to an LEP [Limited English Proficient] student when the instruction and directions are in English or there are word problems involved

Issues of racial intolerance and bigotry were “not even discussed” in Sue Ellen’s family while growing up in the mountains of Appalachia. Like other White teachers in the group, Sue Ellen asserted that she did “not see color” in her students. In fact, she stated, when another teacher would ask her about the ethnicity of a student she was discussing, she would have to “stop and think a minute” before answering.

Sue Ellen’s first experiences with integrated schooling occurred overseas:

> In sixth grade was when we went overseas and I was exposed to huge diversity. My father worked for the government. I went to international school one year and then two years I went to a school that was on the American base. It included Army and Air Force servicemen’s children. So there were a lot of Black students, mixed Hispanic, and White. And I think that was the time integration started in the Southern United States as well. But in the service schools, they never had segregation, probably. But everybody

> kind of stuck to their own group—even there, where everybody was in housing together. I remember when I was in middle school, and we did not go into the school bathrooms, not White students, because you would probably be jumped.

This description of "integrated" life hinted at underlying tensions that followed the racial and ethnic groups overseas. Her implication in this statement seemed to be that Hispanic and Black teenagers were to be feared due to their aggression toward White teenagers. I wondered if the Hispanic or Black students there would have said the same thing about White students. Sue Ellen gave me written feedback on this section:

> The only part I think might be misunderstood was the paragraph pertaining to my junior high years in Germany. Yes, I really was afraid of being "jumped" or hurt by someone for *any* reason. . . . I think I have always been someone that just really likes people, and I pretty much have always decided who my friends were. . . . When I went to junior high in Germany, I avoided the one particular bathroom on the first floor because it had a reputation for these bad things. . . . where the girls who were really *tough* might do something mean to you, like beat you up, or cut you or something like that . . . I think they went in there and smoked. . . . If you weren't one of them, then you had better watch your back. Yes, all of the girls in this group were Black, but not all Black girls belonged to this group. Not all black girls were mean, tough, or would have anything to do with these girls. However, I don't think they would have fought a Black girl [just for going into that bathroom]. . . . I really don't know. . . . I had some wonderful Black friends during the same time period that wouldn't hurt a flea. They would not have been a part of this group. They would make sure you know not to go in [this restroom] if you were White. You were right about "seeing color."

Sue Ellen first became interested in students learning English as a second language in her work as a speech and language pathologist. She had a few students who were English language learners (ELL) and also had communication disorders. She explained:

> Some of these students had articulation, voice, or disfluency disorders. But the ones that were of most interest to me were the students that had language delays. This means that they had a delay in language in their native language that was at least one standard deviation below the average child of their same age. Thus, these children had an extremely difficult time acquiring a second language due to the weaknesses in their first language, compounded by their low abilities in language learning.

Sue Ellen returned to school in the 1990s to take the courses she needed to earn an ESOL endorsement. She attended a small private college, then continued to work with language delayed students until she decided to make the career change a few years later. She enjoys working as an ESOL teacher very much, she reported.

Sue Ellen explained that she drew heavily from the language acquisition classes she took in college for her speech and language pathologist training when she worked with second language learners. She believed that it is best to learn a second language in much the same way as a first language:

> It should be done in a relaxed, comfortable environment where the student is given plenty of time to acquire receptive vocabulary and then practice it expressively without fear of embarrassment or humiliation. . . . I think now we try to rush these ESOL students so much that we make them nervous, and they're not as relaxed. This makes them apprehensive about learning English.

Participation in the Group

Sue Ellen reported being spellbound listening to stories about Doreen's and Isabella's backgrounds. Their experiences of being the only non-White students in their classes were so different from hers and the other White teachers; she was fascinated. When Doreen asked if she was talking too much, Sue Ellen responded, "Oh, no. I could listen to this all day." She was never a passive member of the group. I knew she listened attentively because she frequently asked questions of the speaker, indicated agreement, or inserted comments reflecting her own understanding of a topic.

Critical Responses

In our discussions about strategies in the Brisk and Harrington (2000) text, Sue Ellen evaluated the various teaching ideas critically, but mostly favorably. She took her reading assignments seriously and wrote in her reflective journal a little more frequently than the other

teachers in the group. She sometimes commented on the readings. She often had ideas on how to adapt the strategies suggested in order for them to better meet the needs of her students.

In January, Sue Ellen made a comment that led me to believe that she thought bilingual education was not only ineffective, but detrimental to student learning:

> Last year we got three students that had gone to school in California – bilingual education. They came to us in fourth and fifth grade and could not speak any English. And they had had bilingual education. It just doesn't work. They've proven that it just doesn't work. Last year Isabel had that fifth grader and she couldn't even say hello in English when she came here. I don't see any difference between them and the children who haven't been exposed at all.

Sue Ellen was knowledgeable of the research findings that a student with a solid foundation in literacy in her first language will be able to transfer those skills to English. Commenting on this chapter, she said she assumed that the students she referred to might have been educated mostly in Spanish, with little English exposure.

Sue Ellen's case study student was Estafania, a Mexican immigrant. When Sue Ellen assessed Estafania's writing, she analyzed both Spanish and English samples. Estafania's writing stage initially was higher in her first language. Sue Ellen also reported that Estafania was most comfortable reading in her first language.

Concern for ESOL students

Sue Ellen took a keen interest in my case study with Manuel because she had worked with him when he arrived at Springfield the previous year. She commented, "When he came to us last year after the school year started, he did not speak any English." She was impressed to hear that he now had good conversational English and was demonstrating literacy skills similar to those of his fifth grade peers. She offered some suggestions for his reluctance to complete assignments:

> His teacher may need to check with him a little more often and ask him if there's something he doesn't understand or something she can help him complete. He needs more of that support. . . . It may mean sitting with a partner and maybe copying, and those kinds of things, because a lot of it he still won't get. When copying, he might make the connection and go, "Oh, I know what we're doing," or "Oh, I see." And a lot of teachers reduce the spelling list by half. . . . I think everything can be done if it's modified.

Sue Ellen had a real passion for teaching and gave a bit of her heart to all her students. She was very concerned about my reporting of Manuel and his experiences in 5th grade. In our last inquiry group meeting she expressed concern for the difficulties Manuel experienced in fifth grade.

Knowledge of ESOL Issues

I appreciated Sue Ellen's knowledge of county and state guidelines concerning ESOL students when questions arose in the group. At one February meeting, Doreen asked about a proposal made by a colleague. She had suggested that, during the language arts block, she be given all of the second language learners from the ten teachers at the grade level and teach them together in a group. The rationale for doing this was never clear. Sue Ellen explained:

> Well, our state's best practices guidelines prevent us from putting more than nine ESOL students in a class in kindergarten through third grade. . . . So how they can pull all the ESOL students and give them to one teacher, I don't know. And we might lose some funding over it. And the other thing is that modeling is very, very important to ESOL students. They need to have good models that are their peers. And if they're in a room together, especially during language arts, they won't get that modeling.

Nothing ever came of this proposal.

Sue Ellen supported mainstreaming most ESOL students, but not those with very low basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) in English. These were previously referred to as non English proficient (NEP). She explained:

> The NEPs and beginners, they feel so embarrassed to try out speaking English when they've never done it before in front of experts who have spoken it all their lives. And it's a little embarrassing for them. Being pulled out gives them that comfort level where they

> can experiment and talk out loud even if they're not sure what they're saying. You're not laughed at because everybody in there is going to be in the same boat, you know?

She explained further that these students are eager to participate in classroom discussions but that they need an unthreatening venue in which to do so.

Unexamined Assumptions about Intelligence

In a January group meeting, Sue Ellen commented that family pressure to please might be a reason for Asian children to strive for academic achievement more than children from other cultures. She commented, "I know that [Asian children are] more intelligent." When analyzing this quote, I reflected on the comment and what may have been the basis for it. Asian children are usually among the finalists of local spelling bees, and are disproportionately referred, if not placed, in our school's program for gifted and talented students. I felt that an assumption of either greater or lesser intelligence for a particular group reflected cultural stereotyping. When Sue Ellen read my notes to this effect in an early draft, she said she was "ashamed" to have made comments of a stereotypical nature.

The issue of teachers stereotyping or making assumptions about intelligence based on ethnic or racial categories was not discussed in the group except for the assumptions about Black males mentioned earlier. This might have been interesting, but difficult, to discuss. Teachers are not usually open about divulging feelings about groups of students. By including my reflections here, I have an opportunity to share them with the other participants in print. It is difficult but important to reflect on our feelings about diversity when we work with students different from ourselves.

Connections to Parents

At the February meeting following parent-teacher conferences, Sue Ellen was eager to share her experiences with the group:

> I started thinking about the article that you gave us about cross-cultural parent conferences. And I thought, "I'm going to use some of these strategies when I talk with my parents." So I started doing that even before I went in with my focal student's parents. And it was surprising to me because they were so much more attentive when I started trying to include statements or questions about how their child related to the class as a whole or a group. . . . It was just so obvious. And the teacher was looking at me, too. I made the effort to make the statement in a way that related their progress to the classroom or the whole group. It seemed to make a difference in their attention!

Connections to Practice

At our final interview in March, I asked Sue Ellen why she joined the inquiry group. She replied that she wanted to learn more about helping her students with reading and literacy. The strategy she felt her students benefited from the most is one I shared with her outside of the inquiry group. This was the Benchmark Reading Program developed by Irene Gaskins in Media, Pennsylvania (Gaskins et al., 1986; Gaskins, Ehri, Cress, O;Hara, Donnelly, 1997; Gaskins, Gaskins, & Gaskins, 1991). This program teaches onset-rime decoding by analogy and other techniques to strengthen phonemic awareness and word identification skills. She felt that it was ideally suited for ESOL students. She explained:

> It includes everything I learned about language acquisition before I even started in ESOL but was working with language delays. All the things, like the repetition, and structure, and predictability, all of those things are good for language learners.

Sue Ellen liked the informal nature of the inquiry group and the ideas that the teachers shared with each other more than any other aspect of the group experience. She lamented that teachers never have time to just get together and talk about their teaching like that. "We all had the same interest," she explained. "We all wanted to know how we could work with these students better." She used the time in the group to get feedback from the teachers about

what concerns they had about English Language Learners to learn how she could be a better support as an ESOL teacher.

She enjoyed learning how to assess students' reading levels with the informal reading inventory and how to assess student writing. She also learned new activities for her students. Although she might not have written her reflections in her journal, Sue Ellen often reported on them with comments such as, "I've spent time thinking," or "I've thought about it a lot, too" when commenting on our group discussions. Her thoughtful perspective made her a valuable contributor to the group.

Estafania Sandoval

The student Sue Ellen chose for her study was a fourth grade girl from Mexico. Her mother had emigrated from Mexico and "settled in" for a year before sending for her children. Sue Ellen gave a thorough report on Estafania that indicated that she had reviewed the child's records and interviewed her, as well. Her written report is in Appendix F. She explained:

> Estafania says that she likes to read, and she will read books in Spanish and English. However, she prefers books in Spanish and doesn't really understand the English yet. I made a note that I've completed an ESOL modification form with her classroom teacher highlighting goals for her to accomplish this year with modifications, interventions, and suggestions for accommodation. These include using buddies or partners for comfort and help in following directions, using visuals, gestures and realia to get points across, drawing pictures of concepts, labeling and translating key works, as well as not requiring grade level reading or writing assignments.
>
> She's doing real well. It seems like about the time they've been here almost a year they start "seeing the light" more. You know, when you're talking in the classroom. They go, "Oh, I understand what she's talking about." Just those light bulbs going off. . . . The reason I chose her is because she's been so successful with learning English. So much more so than her peers. It just seemed like she was learning English with so much more ease. I want to find out why. Because I thought, if I could find her magic, then I could give it to all of them, you know?

She also wanted to determine what priorities to focus on with her ESOL students:

> So when I thought about what I wanted to do with this particular student, I wanted a real specific kind of question. I chose, "What teaching strategies are most effective with this

> student? Least effective? How do I know? What does the research literature suggest I try?" I thought maybe this would help me find the perfect balance.

Connections to Parents

At the February parent conference, Sue Ellen learned that Estafania's progress probably had less to do with anything happening in her ESOL class and more to do with what was happening at home. She explained:

> When I went for Estafania's conference, I immediately understood everything she had told me—how her father speaks good English and her mother is learning. Well, I thought maybe he had been in the country longer. It turns out he was born here and is not even Hispanic. He's her [American-born] stepfather. . . I was all prepared for a [cross-cultural conference]. I had to rethink how I was going to say this.

Estafania's stepfather was very involved with her. He read to her every night and helped her with her homework. He told Sue Ellen what an eager learner she is. She asked questions about everything, in her eagerness to learn.

Connections to Practice and Self-assessment

Sue Ellen discovered that Estafania's fluency in decoding surpassed her level of reading comprehension. She used a lot of picture books with her and talked about the pictures before reading the story in order to introduce vocabulary. She decided that in a two-segment language arts session she could devote time to both reading and writing and vocabulary:

> So I've decided that I would devote the first segment to reading and written expression. The second one would be literacy centers for the students to rotate through . . . so I'm still going to continue with that. But one thing that I learned from my inquiry and study is the need for written expression. I look at their writing samples and the grammar is another thing that they really need help with. So for one of my centers in literacy time I'm adding a grammar center. . . . I guess that's a good thing that came out of my case study.

Afterward

Sue Ellen had another opportunity to work with Estafania when she moved to fifth grade. That year she made great gains in reading, writing, and math over the course of the year. Her teacher reported great academic improvement. She passed [computerized reading] tests on books at third and fourth grade reading levels.

Sue Ellen continued making connections to parents of different cultures. For example, when her students made oral reports on their research on their home countries, parents were invited. They could often be seen recording the event on video cameras. She also reached out to a mother who wanted to learn English so she could help her son with his homework. She allowed the mother to volunteer in her ESOL classroom on a regular basis, toddler in tow. While assisting with small tasks, the mother observed how Sue Ellen worked with her son. She was also immersed in English language conversations.

Sue Ellen returned to graduate school to earn an endorsement in reading education so she could support her ELL students more effectively. She became a support teacher so she could mentor teachers new to teaching careers. Ever a lifelong learner, she continued to grow in order to help others.

I represented Sue Ellen on my metaphorical quilt with the shape of a heart. Everything she did seemed to emanate from a place of deep caring for children. Her study and staff development, the extra hours she put in at the end of the school day, the decisions she made for children, and the way she nurtured her immigrant students all illustrated the love she had for them.

CHAPTER 9

CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE GROUP

In this chapter, I return to my original study question: How does participation in a peer-led inquiry group influence teachers' (a) understanding of linguistically or culturally diverse students, (b) teaching practices with those students, (c) interaction with parents of those students, and (d) reflections on their teaching and learning? I address these questions respectively under the next four sections headed teacher understanding, connections to practice, connections to parents, and reflections on teaching and learning.

Following that, two sections address political issues and staff development issues raised during the study. In the next section, I address the personal and social significance of this inquiry. Finally, in the last section, I raise questions for further study, list suggestions for others who desire to start an inquiry group at their schools, and discuss the challenges of researching as an insider/outsider.

Teacher Understanding

Participation in the inquiry group influenced participants' understanding of linguistically and diverse students and the difficulties they faced in the school. In this section I explain and give examples of some of the understandings that developed. These understandings include an awareness of cultural differences, awareness of difficulties due to bias or misunderstanding, assumptions about ability, and assumptions about ability. I also give examples of how participants in the group welcomed diversity.

Awareness of Cultural Differences

We spent parts of several inquiry group meetings discussing concepts in the *Bridging Cultures* (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001) framework as discussed in Chapter 4. Members talked about examples in their teaching practice and parent contacts when they noticed cultural differences that could lead to a conflict between home and school.

Understanding this framework helped us to think about our own cultural value systems and how they may be different from those of our students and their families. This thinking helped us to be more culturally responsive to the immigrant students in our classrooms and to respond to them in a more culturally appropriate manner. For example, I noticed that in Sue Ellen's ESOL classroom, a single set of supplies was centrally located at each table for students to share. We reported spending more time addressing social behaviors when discussing students with parents, and we observed how attentive parents were to these comments. Tricia reflected on how her comments affected culturally different students.

Difficulties Due to Bias or Misunderstanding

In Chapter 5, I described my growing awareness of bias against English language learners in the larger community**.** In addition to difficulties ELL students encounter as a result of bias or prejudice, there can be misunderstandings of their learning difficulties due to educators' lack of awareness**.** My story about students having difficulty with the Thanksgiving dinner writing prompt would be one example. Teachers forgetting to include their ELL students in classroom activities would be another. Doreen truly cared about her students but may not have been aware of their individual cultural heritages, including that of her focal student. Michaels (1982) observed highly regarded teachers working with children who had different communicative backgrounds. This resulted in unintentional misunderstanding in the classroom. In our group, I

neglected to discuss the importance of identifying the cultures of the students in their classroom, encouraging them to share their cultural perspectives, and becoming as knowledgeable about them as possible.

Assumptions about Ability and Achievement

One of the goals of the federal No Child Left Behind Act is to hold minority population subgroups to standards of accountability similar to that of the mainstream White population not participating in the free or reduced meal programs. All subgroups are expected to make academic progress each year. This is an admirable goal. Assumptions about ability are often made on the basis of a student's cultural or ethnic background, economic level, or English language ability. Doreen and Tricia reflected on assumptions about Black male students' academic performance and behavior. When asked if she still held these assumptions, Doreen responded, "The statistics about Black males in jail and their student dropout rates speak for themselves."

Manuel's teacher expected him to behave similarly to other English language learners in her classroom who were born in the United States. She told me she had trouble understanding why he needed her support to be successful. Only after I shared the information I learned from the home visit did she realize the obstacles he encountered at school. While reviewing a draft of this chapter, she commented, "If I had known, I would have been more nurturing to him. I would have been more willing to ask him for the behavior contract and ask him if he understood the assignment."

The summer following my study, Sherry and I took a staff development class together. The speaker discussed a variety of teacher stances and asked which one was most like ours. One stance was, "My job is to teach. If the students don't get it, it's their fault. I've done my job." Another stance was, "My job is to ensure that students learn the curriculum. If they don't get it

the first time I teach, I need to find another way to help them learn." Sherry seemed to have an epiphany that afternoon. She turned to me and said, "Wow! I never thought about it that way! That's [first stance] the way I've been! I'm going to really do things differently this year!" She continued to hold high expectations of students and expect them to be self-motivated. However, she reported, she does not hesitate to assist a student in developing an individual plan to help the student be more successful. If, after reviewing the plan, the student does not meet with success, she tries another approach. She holds Wednesday morning help sessions for students to ask for help in any subject she teaches.

In order to better understand her students' backgrounds, Sherry now sends home a questionnaire to students and parents at the beginning of the year. She asks questions about the students' home lives to assist her in working with them on a more personal level. She recently started working with a group of ELL students who struggle academically. She wrote me an e-mail commenting, "Isn't it ironic that now I have the opportunity to help other children the way I should have helped Manuel?" As of this writing, Sherry and I are taking a class together on strategies for ESOL students. When the instructors asked us to list what we already know about these students, Sherry wrote, "I know that you can't expect all of your ESOL students to have the same level of ability or motivation."

There were a variety of assumptions about culturally and linguistically diverse students made by staff members at Springfield Elementary, as discussed in Chapter 5. Some teachers assumed that their students would perform to the best of their ability. They maintained high expectations while modifying assignments to allow for student success, recognized cultural differences, and welcomed first language use during writing activities. Their students participated in literacy activities and made gains in reading and writing ability. Others assumed

that if students had a certain proficiency of English literacy, they could all perform adequately to an assigned writing prompt, and did not take into account the mainstream cultural bias exemplified by a particular prompt such as the one used after Thanksgiving. Some teachers assumed that students who were not English proficient were unable to participate in literacy activities at any level, as in the case of the ESOL students who were left with nothing to do. They also assumed that immigrant students with adequate conversational English should participate fully in classroom activities without any interventions or modifications on the part of the teacher, making comments such as, "English is not the problem. She speaks English just fine. Her math is good, too. She just can't read!" If these students failed to make progress, it was assumed that the children might have learning disabilities. Writing down and sharing the stories of these observations with the teachers in the inquiry group increased our awareness of our interactions with linguistically and culturally different students.

Cummins (1997) argued that the coercive power relations that characterize debates about diversity influence classrooms and schools:

> Educators, in their interactions with culturally and linguistically diverse pupils, sketch their ideological stance in relation to issues of diversity, identity, and power. The science and practice of pedagogy is never neutral in relation to these issues in spite of its frequent self-portrayal as innocent and focused only on "learning outcomes." (p. 107)

Interactions between teachers and students and their parents, such as those I observed at Springfield Elementary School, either "reinforce coercive relations of power or promote collaborative relations of power" (Cummins, 1997, p. 110). Students, therefore, are more likely to be academically engaged when educators affirm their cultural identities and assist them in building a sense of efficacy to create change in their life. Instruction that builds on students' prior experience and addresses issues that they find relevant "is much more likely to engage

pupils academically than transmission oriented instruction that effectively suppresses pupils' experience" (p. 110).

Acting on New Understandings

All of the teachers in the inquiry group stated that they valued the cultural and linguistic diversity we have at Springfield. Teaching at a school with this much diversity posed unique challenges. However, we all benefited from what we learned from our students and their parents. Tricia did not realize how much she missed the diversity while abroad, until she returned and noticed the colorful faces in the airport. Sue Ellen obtained her ESOL endorsement so she could spend more time working with English language learners. Doreen became more aware of her hesitancy to work with Hispanic children and their parents and began reaching out to them specifically. I realized that I could not work with struggling readers at my school without learning more about these students. This realization led to my dissertation topic.

Connections to Practice

During the course of the inquiry group, members of the group implemented new projects, methods of assessment, and instructional methods designed to be effective for culturally and linguistically diverse students. We continued to develop our skills after the culmination of the group. In this section I highlight our connections to practice.

Cathy

I implemented a home-school writing project that focused on family history and culture. I made a home visit to Manuel's family and shared my findings with his classroom and ESOL teachers. I continued to apply the skills I learned as I taught staff development classes to teachers, suggested strategies in student support meetings, and counseled parents of struggling students from many cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Doreen

Doreen developed learning centers in her classroom for the first time after discovering the effectiveness of small group teaching. She discussed how she learned how to assess students' reading levels, implemented guided reading groups, and used graphic organizers to assist in reading comprehension. She stated that she realized all of these methods assisted English language learners as well as her other students to make connections between their personal lives and their new learning, to develop vocabulary, and to increase their enthusiasm for English literacy. She reached out to Hispanic parents, made visits in the community, promoted Hispanic Awareness Month, and helped initiate an ESOL class for Spanish-speaking parents at Springfield.

Tricia

Tricia added to her repertoire of cooperative learning methods by learning the jigsaw strategy. She reported using a variety of methods that helped her students make personal connections to abstract academic concepts to help them with higher level thinking skills. Administering an informal reading inventory to her students helped her determine which reading comprehension skills required more instruction. She continued to study cultures different from her own.

Sue Ellen

Sue Ellen, like others in the group, used an informal reading inventory to assess her focal student. She found that Estafania had a stronger level of decoding than she did of comprehension. Her case study reflections helped her determine that her ESOL students benefited from an eclectic approach to literacy. She continued to use the Benchmark Word Detectives program with her newest immigrant students. In addition, she spent time with guided

reading and taught the writing process. She also used literacy centers. As a result of her case study, she reported that she decided to add a grammar center to the ones she had previously used.

Connections to Parents

In this section I summarize what we learned about effectively connecting with parents from different cultural or linguistic backgrounds. These include new knowledge about issues of communication, findings from our home visits, and changes in cross-cultural conferencing.

Issues of Communication

Communicating with parents who are linguistically and culturally different from the teacher can be difficult. There is the obvious struggle that comes from not having a shared language as well as the cultural differences that are less obvious. I tried to involve our ESOL facilitator to interpret whenever possible to insure the best possible communication to Spanish-speaking parents. Other group members believed that having too many school personnel at a conference was intimidating to parents. Sherry believed that an interpreter interfered with her ability to communicate emotionally with the parents, since the interpreter translated the words without the affective component. Many teachers preferred to make the attempt to communicate directly. Tricia opted not to take an interpreter with her on her home visit, thinking that it may be intimidating.

Doreen and I discovered how difficult it is to speak with parents with limited English ability over the telephone. I had not realized how important it is to have personal context and body language in order to communicate. Mr. Jiménez and I communicated very well when we met face-to-face. On the telephone, however, I was never quite sure he even knew who I was. I had to repeat myself several times in my attempts to convey my information. Even then, he may

not have understood me. Doreen had a similar experience when Ana's mother called to clarify a homework assignment. She found it easier to speak directly to Ana, rather than to her mother.

Home Visits

Doreen was disappointed that she was unable to make her home visit, but two years later, she went out into the community in the evenings to make personal contacts. Tricia was so encouraged by her home visit experience that she vowed to continue it for all of her students the following year. However, new school initiatives usurped her extra time outside of the school day, and this has not yet happened. My home visit experience helped me to understand Manuel and his family situation. I shared this knowledge with his classroom and ESOL teachers so they could better understand him. I continued to make home visits along with school counselors or administrators, usually when parents were not able to attend meetings at school.

Cross-cultural Conferencing

When Doreen, Sue Ellen, Tricia, and I met with parents for the spring parent-teacher conferences, we implemented the cross-cultural conferencing techniques that we had discussed in the inquiry group (Quiroz, Greenfield, & Altchech, 1999). Quiroz and colleagues explained:

> Parents from Mexico and El Salvador who arrive with little education do not necessarily realize that their children will be asked to give up collectivist values in pursuit of educational achievement. In the interdependent perspective of Latino immigrant parents, education is a tool not for developing the individual potential of each child, but for enabling each child to help the family as a whole. (p. 68)

We learned that we engaged our immigrant parents if we did not dominate the conversation and if we did not limit our information to cognitive development and individual success. We spent more time listening to the parents and giving them opportunities to ask questions. Conferences conducted this way were markedly different. We engaged the parents' interest by focusing on the social behavior of their child in addition to academic achievement.

We allowed them time to ask questions and raise concerns. We noticed that the parents were more open, shared personal stories, and used body language that indicated their interest in the conference. We welcomed whole families to the conference, including younger siblings in strollers and older siblings or cousins who served as translators. We learned information that helped us to better work with students.

Reflections on Teaching and Learning

In this section I summarize examples of how participation in the inquiry group affected the participants' reflections on teaching and learning. Each participant is listed in turn. The inquiry group provided ample opportunities for teachers to reflect on their teaching and learning. Occasionally this reflection was in their journals, but more often it was expressed during meetings. The written case studies include reflections on how their original questions had been answered. Additional reflection occurred during the final interview and through discussions during co-construction of our stories for this dissertation.

Cathy

In the process of transcribing, analyzing, and writing about my inquiry, I spent the better part of two years reflecting upon my own teaching and learning. The reflection and analysis that I did for this dissertation has greatly heightened my awareness of social, political, and pedagogic issues at Springfield Elementary. I see school issues from a more general perspective than a personal one. Dialogue in the inquiry group helped me to learn from different perspectives and to understand the issues that classroom teachers face every day.

Doreen

Doreen reflected on the changes she made in her classroom and the positive effect this had on her students. She was proud of breaking out of her mold of whole-group teaching to work

with students in small groups. When she began reading drafts of Chapter 5, she was initially resistant to seeing herself as a teacher who might not be equally sensitive to the cultures of all of the students in her classroom. She has done a lot of soul-searching since then and has made very positive efforts to reach out to the Hispanic children at Springfield and their parents. She saw the process of co-constructing her chapter as a beneficial one. She recognized that education is as much about learning as it is about teaching, and that she will always be learning.

Tricia

From the very first inquiry group session, Tricia shared her reflections with the group. Usually these started with "I've been thinking a lot about that" or "I wonder." Tricia often made connections between our theoretical learning and her classroom practice. She also assisted her students in making connections between classroom learning and their personal lives. She talked about the importance of teaching students about metacognition. She reflected on the effectiveness of different approaches to discipline with different students.

Tricia also reflected that she might be somewhat judgmental or less receptive to certain ideas. She reported that participation in the group was beneficial in that it helped her better understand that other people think differently than she does. This understanding helped her respond to students in a more positive way.

Sue Ellen

Sue Ellen regularly reflected upon connections to practice and what we were reading. She made these connections both orally and in her journal. The fact that she usually had ideas on how to make suggested activities even more effective for English language learners demonstrated the

depth of her reflection upon the activities. She shared with me that she reflected upon the inquiry group discussions to help her think about how she could better support classroom teachers in her role as an ESOL teacher.

Political Issues Raised

No Child Left Behind Act

Anxieties about the No Child Left Behind Act and its effect on teachers, schools, and students were evident during our group discussions. At the time of the study, the ramifications were unclear to us. Articles in the press alluded to the fact that staff and administration could be replaced if a school did not make "annual yearly progress" (AYP). None of us knew how that would be evaluated, and neither did administrators. Each year the data used to support annual yearly progress have been different. The teachers at Springfield and elsewhere felt under great pressure. I have even heard about an administrator in another state who committed suicide at his school shortly after a newspaper article announced that his school did not make annual yearly progress.

The press has created a negative image in the minds of the public concerning schools who did not make AYP. Typically, this is reported as a "failing" list. What is not clear to the public is how progress is actually measured. Attendance problems, for example, can cause a school not to make AYP. At the elementary school level, attendance is largely out of the control of students or teachers. It is parents who determine whether or not the students attend. The school must communicate the importance of regular school attendance to the community and create an ambience that is welcoming to parents and students.

Another area of accountability is the percentage of students in each subgroup who take standardized tests. Each subgroup for which there are at least 40 students must have 95% of them

take assessments. For example, if the grade being assessed has 40 Hispanic students, 38 of them must take the assessment. If 3 are ill or visiting Mexico (a frequent occurrence with students at Springfield) and do not take the test, the whole school is cited for lack of AYP. If this is the second year of not making AYP status, the school must allow parents a choice to attend a different school and offer free tutoring for students who are having difficulty.

High Stakes Testing

Several of our conversations revolved around teacher concerns about high stakes tests that determined promotion to the next grade level. Black students were the majority of students who failed the test after summer school or did not retake the test. Some parents believed that the purpose of the test was to keep Black students out of our county.

Sue Ellen was concerned that even students who did not speak English were required to take the high stakes test. Students who were enrolled in ESOL or within 1 year of exiting the program, however, were not held accountable for passing the test. Therefore, several ESOL students who were born in the United States and have attended school here since kindergarten failed the test but were not required to attend the transition class. New guidelines for an additional high stakes test, however, held all students, including non-English speakers, accountable for passing a reading test for promotion to the next grade level. This is due to the way our state interpreted guidelines for the No Child Left Behind act. Sue Ellen and I discussed our concern for these students and whether retention in elementary school would result in an increase in the already high dropout rates of Mexican-origin children (Valdés, 1996) in later years.

There are school and county policies that help determine which ESOL students take the high stakes test and which students are held accountable to pass the test for promotional

purposes. Springfield staff members are in the process of interpreting and implementing these policies in a consistent manner. There are other policies, problems, and issues that cannot be discussed in this dissertation for political reasons.

It is very difficult to acquire and retain experienced teachers at Springfield in the grade level at which the high stakes test is administered due to the high level of stress this places on teachers. More first year teachers are hired at this grade level than at other grade levels in the school, and the most experienced teacher at the grade level has taught fewer than 10 years.

Affecting School Change

One of our group meetings in the winter followed Technology night, which was held the previous week. On technology night, teachers set up a display showcasing how technology was used in their classrooms. Attendance was mandatory for teachers, and preparations for the event could be quite extensive. About 80 teachers were prepared to demonstrate their skills, but only 50 parents attended the event. The teachers in the inquiry group talked about how discouraged they were about this and how it had negatively impacted teacher morale.

Doreen questioned why Springfield continued to hold this event when there was so little community response. She suggested serving a spaghetti dinner on Technology Night to help bring parents in. Tricia suggested that we pair it with parent-teacher conferences. “It’s the perfect time to do it. . . . While they’re waiting for their conference, [parents] could be looking at all of that stuff and maybe experiencing some of it. Why didn’t we ever think of that before? That would be much better.”

I brought up Tricia's suggestion at the school's summer planning retreat. The group adopted the suggestion, which has now become a Springfield tradition. I was very pleased to see parents in the hallways enjoying the displays and knowing that the teacher's efforts were being appreciated.

This was not the only time that group members questioned the way decisions were made at the school level. We frequently discussed suggestions on doing things more effectively. Doreen asked me to share some of our ideas and concerns for Springfield with administrators, so I made a list of suggestions from the transcripts and asked for the teachers' input. I was able to share these suggestions, such as the one about Technology Night, both at our summer retreat and at grade level planning sessions and leadership meetings the following year. Looking at our original list two years later, I see that at least five of the group's suggestions are currently being implemented at Springfield: (a) the school holds Technology Night in conjunction with parent conferences, (b) parents and their families are frequently offered a meal, (c) educational information is shared with parents at school and in the community, (d) first year teachers receive one-on-one mentoring, and (e) staff development on strategies for ELL students has been offered on site.

Issues about Staff Development

In this section I highlight themes of staff development that were addressed in the group. These include issues of choice, sociocultural perspective versus transmission approaches to staff development, and opportunities to dialogue with peers.

Choice

In the inquiry group, each member was able to choose a question to explore, a student to focus upon, and topics to address during discussion. Tricia stated that if we are to make lessons

relevant to students, we should do the same in adult education. “I’m a person who likes to choose. I like to have choices because I’m going to pick something that I know is of value to me that I know I will go back and use. . . I don’t want to waste my time.” She appreciated having the choice in the inquiry group. Participants also chose whether or not to make a home visit as part of their group experience and were allowed to present their case study in a format of their choice. Doreen stressed the fact that what she needs from staff development as a veteran teacher is different from what a beginning teacher might need. She mentioned choice several times during her final interview, usually while tapping the desk with her pencil for emphasis.

The least favorite activities in the group were those that did not involve choice, such as assigned reading for the week and written responses to it. The teachers commented that they felt guilty because they did not always have the time to complete this work between sessions. One participant asserted early on that she would attend the meetings, but that her reading time was reserved for her graduate school assignments.

Sociocultural Perspective versus Transmission Approaches

Most of the group members appreciated the format of the inquiry group and the opportunities to learn from peers in connection with classroom practice. Each member, in their final interview, commented that they enjoyed the diversity of the group and the opportunity to hear others’ beliefs. Doreen had strong opinions on the other staff development offered at school the year of the inquiry group:

> There’s not really a chance to sit and talk. . . . we’re so inundated with staff development! We don’t have time to come and plan it and then put it into use! You know, you have to have time and opportunity to plan and put it into use. So a lot of staff development classes we just attend and then it’s over and you have another notebook. . . . But this inquiry group has been very different. I feel very relaxed, and always walk away feeling like I’ve learned something.

Some teachers, however, may prefer the structure of a transmission approach to staff development. Isabela, in her final interview, stated that she had not expected as large a commitment as the group required. She liked the dialogue with teachers and the small class size, but thought that the readings, journaling, and case study involved "too much extra work" on her part. She stated that she would have preferred more demonstrations of strategies and a list of activities to use with English language learners. She did not make connections from the inquiry group to practice, she reported.

Staff development using the inquiry group approach is much more time-intensive than most. It is long-term and requires teachers to think, make connections, open themselves to others, and apply what they learn in a classroom situation. Some teachers may prefer and benefit from more traditional staff development models.

Opportunities for Dialogue

All of the inquiry group participants commented on the positive aspects of dialogue between and among teachers. They noted that the small size of the group and the sharing of personal history created a safe haven for the expression of opinions. Even though the tape recorder was running, they knew that group members considered their discussions confidential. Several members talked about the benefits of this dialogue to their team members outside of the inquiry group. Tricia told me that the dialogue was the most beneficial aspect of the inquiry group. Doreen commented:

> [Tricia and I] were talking about [inquiry group dialogue] in our grade level just the other day, that the format [of this class] has really opened up a lot of dialogue. . . . Just allowing teachers to talk and to share. And I said, "That is so rich!" We don't necessarily have to have someone come in and teach us all this stuff. We have people here in the building such as yourself and many others who have great knowledge on many issues. But allowing teachers to come together, empowering the teachers, allowing them to talk through things [is so important].

Sue Ellen also commented on the dialogue time:

> I liked the informalness of it. We got ideas from each other and discussed things. What I really enjoyed more than anything was listening to the other teachers. We never have time to get together and talk like that. . . and get ideas and thoughts from them. . . . I wish we could have had everybody that started out with the group finish, because I felt like they had a lot of things they could contribute to the group.

This aspect of our group allowed us to learn from each other about cultural and linguistic diversity. Each person in the group had much to contribute to the others.

Even though each member of the group valued dialogue, not every topic was open for discussion. For example, teachers did not want to consider the idea that racism might be involved in discipline methods at Springfield. Nobody wanted to comment on my idea that it is important to recognize color and that "not seeing color" was a disservice to students. Four months is still a short time to get to know teachers. Some topics may never be discussed in a group such as ours.

Personal and Social Significance of the Study

Personal Significance

This dissertation holds much personal significance for me. For the last several years, I have spent many hours of my life at Springfield working with students, administrators, counselors, parents, and teachers. This inquiry gave me the opportunity to focus on issues at my school in a depth I had never focused on at a school before. I am much more aware of the issues that concern culturally and linguistically diverse students, their parents, and the adults who work with them.

I had an opportunity to become intimate in many ways with the teachers who were participants in the inquiry group. I spent numerous hours listening to their voices, hearing their stories, learning their history, and co-creating their representations here. We have bonded in a way that is different from relationships I have previously held with my peers. We are frank and

honest with each other, and we trust each other with our confidences and concerns about Springfield Elementary. I value these friendships greatly. Doreen and I, especially, share confidences and concerns about students, issues, and school policies on a weekly basis.

Social Significance

This dissertation focused on several areas of social significance to elementary education. These included the main problems I introduced in my "statement of the problem" in Chapter 1: (a) the academic difficulties encountered by linguistically and culturally diverse students, (b) the lack of relevant professional development opportunities for teachers to learn effective teaching methods for these students, (c) the need for teachers to update their teaching methods, and (d) the alienation of linguistically and culturally diverse students in mainstream classrooms. In addition, this dissertation focused on teachers' conceptions and awareness of their linguistically and culturally diverse students, as interpreted through conversations about and written observations of those students.

I presented the peer-led inquiry group model as a method of staff development appropriate for learning about culturally and linguistically diverse children in an elementary school. The model, with its sociocultural orientation, allowed teachers to apply knowledge-in-practice, knowledge-of-practice, and to adopt inquiry as a stance. This dissertation contributes to the literature in staff development, teacher knowledge development, and methods for working with English language learners. It is my hope that reading it will be informative to teachers as well as qualitative researchers.

Peer-led Inquiry Groups in the Elementary School

In this section I reflect on what I learned about peer-led inquiry groups in the elementary school that I could share with others interested in similar projects. I list questions for further exploration, offer suggestions on ways to organize and implement an inquiry group, and discuss sociopolitical considerations of having a group in the school.

Questions for Further Exploration

Researchers interested in inquiry groups may want to explore further issues. There are several questions not addressed in this study that could contribute to the field:

- What skills are needed to facilitate an inquiry group?
- How can facilitation be shared among group members?
- What topics are elementary teachers most interested in studying?
- How do teachers develop conceptions of their students?
- What impact does administrative support/participation have on an inquiry group?
- Does participation in an inquiry group empower teachers politically?
- How do issues of politics and power relations influence teachers in the classroom?
- How can an inquiry group for teachers support inquiry learning for students?
- How can home visits improve parent – teacher relationships?
- How have the inquiry group participants continued to reflect, develop and change in the years since their participation?

Suggestions for Implementing an Inquiry Group

In the course of my study, I learned about both more and less effective strategies for implementing an inquiry group. Here I discuss organization, implementation, and sociopolitical aspects of a group.

Organization. I found the small group size to be conducive to serious conversations about students and classrooms. In a larger group, people might be more hesitant to talk about critical issues. Several of the participants commented on the benefit of a small group for our discussions. A group of four to ten members is likely to be manageable and still have enough people to contribute differing points of view. A group that includes more than one grade level and has a mix of classroom and non-classroom teachers offers a diversity of backgrounds and ideas to pull from.

The facilitator should choose a day and time to meet that is convenient to members of the group. Our inquiry group met on Mondays to avoid conflicting with days reserved for faculty meetings, committee meetings, and other prescheduled activities. Depending on school hours, the group could meet either before or after school. A regular time to meet will be beneficial to help members bond and to keep discussions alive. I suggest no more often than once a week and no less often than once a month. A long-term commitment will make the group most effective. The group should meet for at least one or two semesters, or 18 to 36 weeks.

Make arrangements with your administration to provide teachers with staff development credit for the time they spend in the inquiry group. Since teachers need this credit to keep their certification current, it is an excellent incentive to continue attending the group. There is usually a minimum attendance requirement, such as 80%, in order for teachers to earn the credit.

Implementation. Members of our inquiry group commented on how beneficial they found the sharing of our autobiographies at our initial sessions. This was an excellent icebreaker, and helped us to reflect upon our personal experiences with diversity before exploring these issues professionally. I highly recommend the sharing of autobiographical stories and reflections to begin an inquiry group.

The group needed to have guidelines for discussion so that everyone understood the norms, at least at first. My guidelines included maintaining confidentiality, limiting discussions to those within one's control rather than complaining about things over which one has no control, expressing disagreement in a constructive manner, and expecting us to share individual expertise with our peers.

One concern several inquiry group members had in our group was the expectation for reading outside of the group. This is something that I would definitely negotiate with the group. Some groups may be willing to complete readings in between group meetings. Others might prefer to spend a portion of time reading in the group itself. In our group, we practiced the reciprocal teaching strategy (Palincsar & Brown, 1986, 1988) while reading about the bridging cultures framework. If your focus is on reading strategies for students, these can be modeled and practiced with the teachers while you discuss the shared reading. Strategies that lend itself to this include reciprocal teaching, literature study circles (Samway & Whang, 1996), Book Club (McMahon & Raphael, 1997), and guided reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001).

Within the inquiry group, include opportunities for knowledge-of-practice. Allow time for members to critique the theory and research of others, and for critical reflection and discussion of what is effective, what is ineffective, and why. Encourage group members to theorize their own practice and generate local knowledge. Allow members to discuss "off topic" issues that are school related but not on the planned agenda. These issues may generate your richest discussions and greatest interest.

Find some way to document what the group has learned. Group members can determine how this will be accomplished to meet their needs. It could be as simple as minutes of the meeting or as involved as written case studies or action research projects.

Sociopolitical considerations. Once group members have documented their knowledge development, this should be shared with non-group members. Those teachers who are not in the group may consider them to be a clique. Sharing what you have learned with others can serve to demystify the group. Sharing the group process and knowledge with a wider audience such as an educational conference can be a validating and affirming experience for teachers.

Communicate with administrators about what the group is doing and issues that are raised, when appropriate. It is beneficial to the group to have the backing of administration. They need to know that the time teachers spend in the group benefits the wider school community. The group may want to address local policy decisions with administrators and lobby for change, as our group did.

Challenges of Researching as an Insider/Outsider

Working at my study site as an insider held many advantages, including access to information, knowledge of participants, and an insider's perspective. It was challenging, however, to cross back and forth between my roles as a teacher and researcher at my school. When I first began creating stories from my data, I felt a bit like a spy or a "tattletale." I was not accustomed to "airing my dirty laundry" for others to see. It was difficult to dig into my personal background and discuss issues in my family that were troubling to me. I worried about what my mother would think when she read my story.

Negotiating the final drafts of the teacher stories was challenging for all parties. I struggled to maintain issues of confidentiality and honest portrayals while retaining enough details to enable the reader to learn from the stories. It was sometimes difficult to find a convenient time to discuss a recent draft with participants in order to record their perspective or response.

As a researcher, I found myself minutely analyzing conversations or statements made by the participants close to two years ago. To the teachers, the statements were long forgotten, as evidenced by their comments. To me, they were as fresh as a moment ago. During our frequent member checks, they were sometimes surprised when confronted with their own words. Statements in my analysis might have appeared judgmental. However, the teachers reflected upon their practice or their words to determine why I made the statements that I did. At times they experienced dissonance, conflict, and transformation through reflective action (Saavendra, 1996).

Concluding Remarks

The inquiry group at Springfield was an effective way to learn about diversity. The teachers in the group reported making changes in the way they thought about themselves as educators and in the way that they implemented strategies with their students from varying backgrounds. As a group, we bonded in a way that is unusual for teachers taking a class together. The key factor in this, I believe, was the time we spent reflecting on our backgrounds and the time we spent in honest and open discussion. These opportunities are rare in teachers' busy lives. For myself, I value these new relationships and the knowledge I gained from them. I have new awareness of the challenges facing classroom teachers. The teachers in our group were dedicated professionals willing to share their experiences with others. For this I have the greatest respect and will always be grateful to them.

EPILOGUE

The School Day Ends

It is 6:00 in the evening. I glance at the clock, frown at the pile of incomplete work on my desk, sigh, and log off from my computer. I pick up my bag, turn off the lights, and lock the door. The hallway is empty and silent except for Daniel, the night custodian, and the whir of the buffing machine he pushes slowly ahead of him. Several teachers remain in their classrooms, still preparing for the next day.

I wave and nod to Isabela as she exits the building for home. I walk by Doreen's room, but she is still meeting with a parent, so I just say **"**Good night**"** as I pass. A few doors down, I reach Sue Ellen's room. She is also working late. I ask her about an ELL student who is struggling in the regular classroom. She fills me in on some details about his home situation that I can share with the teacher. I say "Thank you**,"** and gently scold her for working late again.

Outside, the light has faded. The leaves on the dogwood trees have turned a deep magenta. Only the Bradford pears have retained their green color. There is a chill in the air. A cool breeze blows crisp, brown leaves swirling around my feet and scurrying across the pavement. A line of cars, headlights glowing, is backed up in front of the school, so I wait for an opportunity to make my exit from the school's driveway. Behind me, several cars remain in the parking lot. I reflect on a parent conference I had earlier in the day as I drive home. Another day has ended at Springfield Elementary School.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What prompted you to be part of my study?
2. How did the experience of being in the inquiry group compare to other staff development classes you've taken?
3. Have you ever done a case study on a student in your class before? Did you find the process helpful?
4. Do you see applications for student support team?
5. Would you recommend a class like this to your peers? Explain.
6. What was most beneficial about the inquiry group? Least beneficial?
7. What is something you would change?
8. Has participating in the group changed the way you think about the students in your class? Explain.
9. What have you done differently in the classroom as a result of being a member of this group?
10. Do you view parent conferences any differently than before? Will you approach conferences differently next year?
11. Do you have any additional comments?

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

Parent Consent Form for Focal Students

Dear Parent or Guardian of _____,

I will be taking a class after school on Mondays with Cathy Payne, Springfield's reading specialist. This class is part of a research study being done by Mrs. Payne. The reason for the study and the class I am taking is to help other teachers and myself learn about students who are learning English as a Second Language so we can help those students.

Each teacher in the class will choose one individual student to study, and I have chosen your child. I would like to collect samples of your child's work and talk with other teachers to get ideas that will help me become a better teacher for your child. The collection of work samples may involve audio recording. Your child will not be identified except by first name and will not be discussed outside the class setting. The results of this participation will remain confidential. In any publication of the research, your child will be given a pretend name. Tapes will be destroyed when this project is complete.

This study should not cause any stress to your child. No risks are expected. The only people who will know that your child is a participant are Cathy Payne and myself. All information about your child will be kept private.

The study is titled, "Knowledge Development in a Teacher Inquiry Group: Professional Development for Literacy with Linguistically or Culturally Diverse students." Cathy R. Payne, doctoral candidate in the reading department at the University of Georgia, will be conducting the study. This research is under the direction of Dr. James Baumann, Reading Department, (706) 542-3811, and Dr. James McLaughlin, Department of Elementary Education, (706) 542-4244.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your child does not have to take part in the study, and his or her grade will not be affected in any way. Your child can stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty. You may ask to have information related to your child returned to you, removed from research records, or destroyed. The study will begin in December and end around spring break time.

Mrs. Payne will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at home, (770) 682-8708, or at school, (770) 682-4221.

Sincerely,

_____ (teacher)

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to allow my child to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____ _____

Signature of Researcher Date Signature of Parent or Guardian Date

Note: Please sign both copies. Return one and keep one.

For questions or problems about your rights please call or write: Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-6514; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

Parent Consent Form for Home Visit

January

Dear Parent or Guardian of _____,

With your permission, I would like to visit you and your child at home so that I can learn more about your family in order to be a better teacher. For example, I want to know what kind of knowledge the family uses that may help me in the classroom. Also, I would like to learn more about your culture so that we all understand each other better.

This visit can be scheduled at a time convenient to you. I will come with a Spanish interpreter, if needed. Mrs. Payne, the reading specialist, may also come with me. We will ask some questions to get to know your family better. We will take notes and tape record the conversation to help us remember what we discuss. This visit is part of the study in which your child is participating.

Only the translator, Mrs. Payne, and myself will have access to these tapes and notes. Nothing will be discussed about the visit outside of the study. The results of this participation will remain confidential. Any publication of the research will refer to the student and your family by pretend names only. An exception to confidentiality involves information revealed concerning suicide, homicide, or child abuse, which must be reported as required by law or if we are required to provide information by a judge. This interview should not cause any stress to you or your family. No risks are expected. All information about your family will be kept private.

The study is titled, “Knowledge Development in a Teacher Inquiry Group: Professional Development for Literacy with Linguistically or Culturally Diverse Students.” Cathy R. Payne, a doctoral candidate in the reading department at the University of Georgia, will be conducting the study. This research is under the direction of Dr. James Baumann, Reading Department, (706) 542-3811, and Dr. James McLaughlin, Department of Elementary Education, (706) 542-4244.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to take part. Your child’s grades will not be affected in any way. You may change your mind at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty for your child. You may ask to have information related to your family returned to you, removed from research records, or destroyed. The study will begin in December and end around spring break time.

Mrs. Payne will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at home, (770) 682-8708, or at school, (770) 682-4221.

Sincerely,

_____

teacher

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to allow my child to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____ _____

Signature of Researcher Date Signature of Parent or Guardian Dat

Inquiry Group Participant Consent Form

I agree to participate in the research study titled, "Knowledge Development in a Teacher Inquiry Group: Professional Development for Literacy with Linguistically or Culturally Diverse Students," which is being conducted by Cathy R. Payne, doctoral candidate in the Reading Department at the University of Georgia, (770) 682-8708. This research is under the direction of Dr. James Baumann, Reading Department, (706) 542-3811, and Dr. James McLaughlin, (706) 542-4244. I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary; I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that it can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me:

1. The reason for the research is to study a teacher inquiry group to investigate how the teachers interact with each other to construct knowledge about literacy for linguistically and culturally diverse students.
2. The benefits that I may expect from this research are (1) staff development credit, (2) the opportunity to increase my knowledge about linguistically and culturally different students in my classroom, (3) the opportunity to reflect on my teaching practices, and (4) the opportunity to collaborate with my peers.
3. The procedures are as follows:

My part in this study will last for approximately five months, during which time I agree to attend 12 inquiry group meetings after school on Monday afternoons. Each group session will be 90 minutes long. During the group meetings I will focus on one student in my classroom who is culturally different from me and struggling with literacy. I will share work samples and informal

observations with the group. I agree to collaborate with other group members to assist them with their focus students.

Any discussions about students in the inquiry group will remain confidential. Pseudonyms will be used in all written material and only first names will be used in discussions. I agree to be interviewed once during the study at a time and place that is convenient to me for a period of one hour. The interviews will take place after the inquiry group meetings. Interview questions will be like the following: “What are your students like this year?” “Can you explain your philosophy of teaching?” “Which, if any, members of your class struggle with reading, writing, and oral language?”

I agree to keep a reflective learning log in which I record my thoughts on the readings and discussions that occur in the inquiry group. This log will be turned in to Cathy Payne at requested intervals. Interviews and discussions in the inquiry group will be audio-recorded. I will keep all information about students discussed in this group confidential, sharing only with members of the inquiry group. Whenever writing about or discussing a student, only first names will be used. These will be changed to pseudonyms on all resulting transcripts or documents.

If I so desire, I can contribute any additional writing I do about my focus student or the group to the researcher’s study. If I do contribute, pseudonyms will be used in the writing. If I so desire, I can assist the researcher with the interpretation of the data she collects.

4. No discomforts or stresses as a result of this study are foreseen.
5. No risks are foreseen.
6. The results of this participation will be confidential and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent, unless otherwise required by law. The only person to have access to audiotapes will be the researcher. Tapes will be safely stored in her home in a

secure place. My name and any details that might identify me will be changed in any written reports in order to protect confidentiality, and tapes of the interviews, interview transcripts, and fieldnotes will be destroyed upon completion of the project or no later than January 1, 2012.

7. The researcher will answer further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached at (770) 682-8708.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Please sign both copies of this form. Keep one and return the other to the investigator.

Signature of Researcher _____ Date _____

Signature of Participant _____ Date _____

For questions or problems about your rights please call or write: Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-6514; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

Educator Consent Form (non inquiry group participants)

I agree to participate in the research study titled, "Knowledge Development in a Teacher Inquiry Group: Professional Development for Literacy with Linguistically or Culturally Diverse Students," which is being conducted by Cathy R. Payne, doctoral candidate in the Reading Department at the University of Georgia, (770) 682-8708. This research is under the direction of Dr. James Baumann, Reading Department, (706) 542-3811, and Dr. James McLaughlin, (706) 542-4244. I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary; I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that it can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me:

1. The reason for the research is to study a teacher inquiry group to investigate how the teachers interact with each other to construct knowledge about literacy for linguistically and culturally diverse students.
2. The benefits that I may expect from this research are to have an opportunity to reflect on ways to best help students who are linguistically and culturally diverse and improve the knowledge base for other teachers.
3. The procedures are as follows:

   Mrs. Payne is focusing on one student in my classroom who is culturally different from her and struggling with literacy. She will be trying various strategies to help this student increase his learning and performance in my classroom. In the course of her study she will take notes on meetings and discussions involving this student. My contributions to the discussion, including my opinions and classroom decisions, may become part of her data.

Any discussions about the student will remain confidential. Pseudonyms will be used in all written material. This student's parent has already given informed consent for his participation.

I agree to allow Mrs. Payne to include my comments and classroom observations concerning her focal student in her study.

4. No discomforts or stresses as a result of this study are foreseen.
5. No risks are foreseen.
6. The results of this participation will be confidential and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent, unless otherwise required by law. The only person to have access to audio tapes will be the researcher. Tapes will be safely stored in her home in a secure place. My name and any details that might identify me will be changed in any written reports in order to protect confidentiality, and tapes of the interviews, interview transcripts, and fieldnotes will be destroyed upon completion of the project or no later than January 1, 2012.

7. I will have an opportunity to read the sections of the report that include my comments before it is completed.

8. The researcher will answer further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached at (770) 682-8708.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form. Please sign both copies of this form. Keep one and return the other to the investigator.

Signature of Researcher _____ Date _____

Signature of Participant _____ Date _____

APPENDIX C

CATHY'S DESCRIPTION AND CASE STUDY

Assignment #1 Cathy Payne

Background

The student I selected, Manuel, is in fifth grade. He came to Springfield in fourth grade, transferring from another Lyman County School. Prior to that he attended a school in [a Western state], where he received bilingual instruction. I saw his first grade report card from there. I'm not quite sure where he spent second and third grade, or what was his language of instruction for those years.

Personal and family

Manuel was born in the United States. He is now eleven years old. Spanish is spoken at home. He receives services from ESOL one segment each day. I work with him for 50 minutes in language arts, mostly with reading. His teacher has chosen to turn the students I work with over to me, so he does not receive any reading instruction from her. I give him grades in language arts. Manuel has two siblings attending Springfield, but I do not know their sex or grades or if there are younger or older siblings as well. The family lives in apartments walking distance from Springfield School.

Academic

Manuel seems to be a very bright young man who is not achieving up to his potential in school. Problems with work completion are long-standing. On his bilingual first grade report card he received mostly "Gs." However, he did receive "Ns" in the following areas:

the writing process, work completion, using time properly, cooperating with teachers and students, self-control, and completing homework. At that time he knew his alphabet and numbers to 89 and was beginning to read.

When Manuel transferred to Springfield in September of his fourth grade year, he scored at the first percentile on the Language Assessment Battery (LAB). By May his score was at the 15th percentile. This still is considered Limited English Proficient (LEP). His ESOL teacher reports that he had little verbal English last year. His conversational English is adequate for communication this year. He still maintains an accent.

I screened Manuel in reading on August 17. His independent level for decoding isolated words was 3rd grade on the Burns-Roe IRI, with frustration at fourth grade level. He read a fourth grade passage on the IRI with 90% decoding but only 20% comprehension. On the Developmental Reading Assessment, (DRA) he read a level 30 passage (third grade). Decoding was instructional and he gave an adequate retelling. He was placed in a small reading group reading trade books with approximately 3rd and 4th grade reading levels. When he is not in the reading group he is expected to work on independent reading or writing, self-selected.

We have read a wide variety of genres including historical fiction, informational books, biography, fantasy, and realistic fiction. Manuel participates enthusiastically. I have been using the reciprocal teaching model and recently started introducing literature circle roles. Since clarification of vocabulary is modeled heavily in the reciprocal teaching model, Manuel is not at all shy in the small group to stop reading to ask about English words with which he is not familiar. His grades for the first quarter averaged 75, increasing to 85 for the second quarter. His writing has improved from stage 1 to 3. He is able to edit papers to reach stage 4 with feedback.

In spite of his potential for learning, Manuel is doing very little in the regular classroom for his fifth grade teacher. This was also true in fourth grade. His 4th grade teacher gave him Ns for self-control, talking, and working and playing with the group. He also received Ns in work habits, including completing assignments, completing homework, and using time wisely. His fifth grade teacher complains that he should be failing because he is not doing his work, but that ESOL students are not allowed to earn grades lower than a D. She showed me her roster of student assignments. Manuel completes and turns in about one out of ten assignments in each subject. This includes math. His teacher reports that he is able to answer questions in class and can demonstrate problems on the board, but does not complete assignments. He does not keep up with his assignment book.

Summer school was recommended last year, but I don't know if he attended. His discipline log in 4th grade indicated problems with name-calling and use of profanity. I have seen him lose his temper with students this year, but not to the point of disruption. He took only the math section of the high stakes assessment, as he was exempt from the reading portion due to his ESOL status. He achieved a minimal passing score.

ESOL modification includes giving verbal responses to simple questions, spelling 500 (as opposed to 1000) words, extra time allowed for research, more time and working with partners for math, open book tests for social studies, rewording assignments, and allowing work with partners.

Manuel Jimenéz: A Case Study

by Cathy R. Payne

Manuel Jimenéz, a fifth grade student in Mrs. Smith's class, was born in [a Western state] almost 12 years ago. His parents, Mexican immigrants, moved to this country for better economic opportunities for Manuel and their future daughters. Mr. Jimenéz speaks English well enough for basic communication tasks, while his wife speaks only Spanish.

Manuel attended a bilingual kindergarten and first grade class, as only Spanish was spoken at home. His report card indicated good academic progress, but he had problems in the areas of the writing process, work completion, using time properly, cooperating with teachers and students, self-control, and completing homework. He knew his alphabet and numbers to 89 and was beginning to read by the end of first grade.

When Manuel was six, his father lost his construction job and returned to Mexico for three years. He worked construction in Mexico while Manuel attended school there in grades 2 and 3. The family moved to Lyman County at the beginning of Manuel's 4th grade year, when he arrived at Springfield Elementary. He began to attend ESOL classes. He scored at the 1st percentile on the Language Assessment Battery (LAB) in the fall of that year but raised that to the 15th percentile by May. This is still considered Limited English Proficient (LEP). He receives one segment of ESOL services per day from Mrs. Ross, his current ESOL teacher. His conversational English is now adequate for communication, but he maintains a heavy accent.

I chose Manuel for my study because I was interested in him as a student and concerned about the poor work habits that could affect his literacy progress. When I tested him in the fall, he was decoding and comprehending at the third grade level. Just prior to the beginning of the study he was decoding and comprehending at the fourth grade levet. In the fall, his writing was at a stage 2. At this stage topics are just beginning to be developed. At the beginning of my study, with the support of writing conferences and the writing process, Manuel had written at least one story that was a stage 4 and had achieved stage 3 on the writing standards.

Research Questions and Results

When I began this project I had three questions. 1) What might I learn if I sat down and had a conversation with this child and his parents at a home visit? 2) Would the use of a behavior contract or daily checking of Manuel's assignment book in addition to suggestions to Mrs. Smith about modifications help him get his work completed? 3) Would the use of a dialogue journal help motivate Manuel?

Communication with the Home

My first home contact was with Mr. Jimenéz through an interpreter on the telephone, in the attempt to schedule a parent conference in February. Mr. Jimenéz had received the conference note from his daughter in first grade, but no note from Manuel. Mrs. Smith, the classroom teacher, had sent this home but apparently Manuel misplaced it. The conference time scheduled was during a time that Mr. Jimenéz worked, but he said that he would get off 2 hours early in order to attend. He was informed of Manuel's conference time as well.

Parent conference

On the evening of the conference, Mrs. Smith was ill. Someone had called all of her students' parents to cancel the conferences. Knowing that Manuel's father was missing work and may misinterpret the message to mean his daughter's conference was cancelled as well, I called to talk with him. I told him I would meet him after the daughter's conference.

During the conference Mr. Jimenéz apologized for his poor English skills, but I felt that communication was adequate. There was no translator available for the conference. Mrs. Jimenéz, who does not speak English, stayed at home.

I asked Mr. Jimenéz if Manuel ever brought work home from school. He stated that Manuel tells him he leaves it at school. I told him he had been telling me that he left it at home. We had a problem to solve. Mr. Jimenéz blamed himself for Manuel's difficulties due to the move back to Mexico and his subsequent language loss. I explained that Manuel is very bright and that his level of English was not the major problem. He has made good progress in reading, writing and speaking. The problem was not completing work except in small group settings. I suggested that Manuel could be given homework at home if he didn't bring it from school. I also told Mr. Jimenéz that he could call me at home if he had a question.

Mr. Jimenéz asked about Manuel's behavior. He said that he had talked with his son about the use of inappropriate language and warned him about accidentally bumping into children in school to avoid instigating a fight. He also told him to be quiet and not to talk too much. I told him I was not aware of Manuel swearing this year but that he did tend to argue, tattle and fuss with the other children in his class. And he does not complete his work.

Mr. Jimenéz supports the school and believes that education is important so Manuel can get a good job. He has to work long days and some weekends to support his family of five. We

talked about using the library to get books in English, Spanish or bilingual books. He seemed very appreciative of my interest in Manuel. We talked about the home visit and he read the Spanish consent form. He said he would talk with his wife about it.

The next day Manuel returned the signed consent forms. I asked Manuel what his dad had told him about our conference. He related that he had to do his work and bring home his assignment book and his Friday folder. This showed me that Mr. Jimenéz not only understood our conversation, but had related it accurately to his son.

Home Visit

Mrs. Rodriguez, a paraprofessional at Springfield and a Puerto Rican immigrant, accompanied me to Manuel's home visit. It was a rainy Tuesday, and neither of us had ever been to the apartment complex next door to the school. It was much larger than we expected, and it took us a few minutes to find the correct building. When we did, Mrs. Jimenéz welcomed us, along with her three children.

Manuel sat with us in the dining area, participating in the interview in both English and Spanish. I learned about his parents' academic background and came to realize that he is probably the most literate member of his family in both English and Spanish. His mother attended very little school and did not learn to read or write in Spanish. His father has a 6^{th} grade education.

I held off addressing my concerns about Manuel and was glad I did, because his mother brought up both the homework issues and the fibbing before I did. This confirmed that we are on the same wavelength working together to support Manuel's learning and development. I left a gift of school supplies and some workbooks as well as some books on loan. Mrs. Jimenéz

expressed her sorrow that her husband was not there “to complete the family circle.” She was very appreciative of the visit.

Behavior Contract

I set up a behavior contract with Manuel’s classroom teacher and his ESOL teacher. This was implemented in January after the winter break. It required a checkmark after each classroom activity. After the first few days, Manuel continued to have very little work completed for his classroom teacher and had not done any of my required writing assignments at mid-term. This left him with only a reading grade.

At the end of February I simplified the contract by using the Friday summary form that only had to be checked once at the end of the day. Manuel agreed to be responsible for carrying the contract to Mrs. Smith at the end of the day. It was his responsibility to record his missing assignments. I talked with Mr. Jimenéz on the telephone to get his approval for Mrs. Smith to withhold either recess or ice cream privileges as a consequence for Manuel not completing his work. He agreed to this. I also talked with Manuel on the phone. He told me that he lost the essay he owed me. When I asked him to work on it over the weekend, he told me that he had no paper at home.

At this point the behavior contract has had very little effect on Manuel’s work completion. He had some assignments rather than none completed this 3rd six weeks, but I expect much better compliance than that.

Dialogue Journal

Manuel wrote only intermittently in his dialogue journal. He seemed to enjoy reading my entries and writing back to me. He made many empty promises to work harder and complete assignments, but he did not follow through.

Summary

The home visit and parent conference were very beneficial in unearthing information to help Mrs. Smith and me to work with Manuel more effectively. It was good to know that we had the support of both parents behind us and that they expected Manuel to do well. It was also revealing to find that Manuel's literacy development in both English and Spanish had surpassed that of both parents. Knowing this, we can modify assignments, especially homework, to help Manuel be more successful.

The use of the behavior contract was not effective for Manuel. I believe that the teacher implementing the program needs to be the one that instigates it for there to be any kind of success. I spend less than an hour a day in Manuel's classroom and cannot control how the contract is presented to him.

The dialogue journal was a pleasant experience for both Manuel and myself and gave him practice in some authentic literacy activities but did not have the desired effect of motivating him to complete the work he needed to do in the classroom. In the future I would use it more as a vehicle to improve relationships with a student and a way to practice writing than to use it as a motivational tool.

Jiménez Home Visit Interview Guide

Purpose: To find out more about Manuel's strengths at home, the family's funds of knowledge, how the parents perceive the school, and how we can strengthen relations between the home and the school.

Introduce myself, tell about my grandfather's immigration, show pictures of my son, granddaughter and dogs. Tell about my research at UGA. I'd like to know more about families who have moved from Mexico and how the school can make them feel more welcomed here.

May I use the tape recorder?

I understand Manuel was born in California. What first brought your family to the United States?

What kind of work have you (your husband Manuel) done?

How high did you get in your education? Manuel?

Do you read and write in Spanish? English?

Offer ESOL classes to parents. Explain the program.

Do you miss family and culture in Mexico?

What languages are spoken at home?

How do you get the bills read and paid?

Manuel's siblings.

What do you like best about Manuel? (Share what I like about him.)

Concerns: not getting work completed.

Does he ever do homework?

Give books for homework.

Tell about school in LA, CA and Mexico.

Does Manuel read and write in Spanish?

What does Manuel like to do after school?

Attitudes about Spanish? English?

Responsibilities and chores?

Family skills / trades / knowledge?

Have you been to the school? Do you feel welcome there? Does your husband? How can we help families such as yours to feel comfortable at the school?

What do you think is the most important job of the teacher? The parent?

Any other concerns you would like to share?

Manuel's Behavior Report Date: _____

Time of Day	Shows Respect to others	Completes Work	Work Needed to Complete:
7:45-8:25 arrival	Yes / No	Yes / No	_____
8:25-9:05 special	Yes / No	Yes / No	_____
9:10-10:05 math	Yes / No	Yes / No	_____
10:05-10:55 ESOL	Yes / No	Yes / No	_____
10:55-11:40 language arts	Yes / No	Yes / No	_____
restroom break / lunch	Yes / No		
recess	Yes / No		
1:00-1:40 science MTTHF	Yes / No	Yes / No	_____
1:15-1:55 computer lab (W)	Yes / No	Yes / No	_____
1:40-2:20 social studies	Yes / No	Yes / No	_____
2:20-3:15 read aloud / SSR	Yes / No	Yes / No	_____

Check all that apply:

_____ 1. Manuel is showing respect for peers.

_____ 2. Manuel has shown responsibility for completing his work.

_____ 3. Manuel needs to get along with others.

_____ 4. Manuel has work to complete at home. (See list)

Manuel's Friday Summary

Nota Viernes

Week of _____ Nota de conducta (Conduct Grade): _____

	Lunes Mon.	Martes Tues.	Miécoles Wed.	Jueves Thurs.	Vienes Friday
1. Demonstro respeto hacia otros. (Showed respect for others.)	____	____	_____	_____	_____
2. Completo su trabajo. (Completed work.)	____	____	_____	_____	_____
3. Tiene problemas llevandose con sus campaneros. (Problems getting along with peers)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Necesita completer su trabajo. (Needs to complete work.)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Trabajo para comptetar (Work to complete):

APPENDIX D

DOREEN'S DESCRIPTION AND CASE STUDY

Assignment #1 for December 17

Doreen Thomas

Ana Hernández is the student I've chosen to study. She was born in [a Western state]. She speaks Spanish in her home. She is in the ESOL program and is making good progress.

Case Study on Ana

Doreen Thomas

Ana is an eight-year-old, third grade girl whose family immigrated to the United States from El Salvador. Her grooming and physical appearance are impeccable. She is always clean and keeps her shining hair neatly coifed with barettes and headbands in various styles. She likes to wear “little girl” jewelry.

Ana was born in [a Western state] shortly after her mother was reunited with her grandparents, who had emigrated to the United States in search of work. Ana’s grandfather left his wife and children in El Salvador for thirteen years before the family joined him in this country. He visited El Salvador to see his family only once during that time, after ten years of working in the United States.

Ana lives in a house in Taylorsville near Springfield Elementary School with her mother, her aunt, her uncle, and two cousins. Ana’s parents are divorced. Her father lives in [in a Southwestern state] with a new wife and two young sons – Ana’s stepbrothers. Ana’s mother and aunt are very supportive of her school, the teachers, and their children’s education.

Ana’s mother works as a cashier at [a fast food restaurant] about 20 minutes’ drive from her home. She goes to work at five o’clock in the morning and usually gets off about four o’clock in the afternoon.

Ana and her family return to El Salvador each summer in July and August to visit their extended family of aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and cousins. The grandparents who had immigrated to [the United States] are now living in El Salvador.

Ana's family speaks Spanish at home. Ana reads and speaks Spanish. She is progressing nicely in conversational English and is helping her Mother to learn to speak English. Ana's Aunt is younger than her sister and has better comprehension and fluency with the language. Ana's Uncle speaks very little English.

Ana is learning to read and write in English. She does better with her oral skills than with written English. Ana is receiving academic, social and emotional interventions in addition to the regular classroom environment. She is enrolled in Title I remedial reading, Title I remedial math, after-school tutoring in reading, ESOL inclusion, the Early Intervention Program (EIP), and small group counseling.

I have observed and worked with Ana in her regular 3rd grade classroom, her ESOL inclusion class, her Title I reading and math, in the media center, and at PTA and Title I meetings. She is a shy girl who is very well liked by her peers. She is very conscientious and her work is always neat.

Ana takes care of her younger cousin by walking her to school, to her second grade classroom, and handling her money for lunch and ice cream. She also baby-sits and takes care of her baby cousin.

The schedule for adults at home is different from the schedule we follow at school. Ana did not want to call home early in the morning to set up a conference time with her mother and aunt because the adults would be sleeping. We waited until later in the day to call.

The types of food prepared and eaten in Ana's home include vegetables, fruits, corn, rice, and beans. Mrs. Hernández invited me to dinner at their house and described the food they would prepare. One dish is called "pupusas." It is a large, thick tortilla stuffed with pork, lamb, beans, and cheese. "Baleadas" is another food. This is soft flour tortillas filled with beans and various

combinations of butter, eggs, cheese, and cabbage. “Tamales” is another favorite dish. They are made of corn dough with a mixture of fillings including rise, tomatoes, chilis, potatoes, and meat wrapped in a large banana leaf. Flan is usually their dessert of choice.

Punctuality is not mandatory in El Salvador. Arriving for an appointment a little late is acceptable. These people as a whole function on “polychronic” time, with a much looser notion of what is “on time” and what is “late.” Human activities are not expected to proceed like clockwork. Interruptions are common and delays can be expected. However, Ana’s mother called me within 5 minutes of the time she promised.

Ana is a very loving, affectionate little girl. She sits close to me in reading group and often hugs me in the hall when we walk together. Her aunt and mother now hug and kiss me but did not do that until I had earned their trust. Ana always makes eye contact. She is very trusting. Her face “lights up” with a smile when her mother and aunt come to school.

Mrs. Hernández has the primary authority over her daughter but allows her sister and brother-in-law to share parenting responsibility. The entire family belongs to a [protestant] church. Mrs. Hernández and the other adults were raised Catholic in El Salvador and converted to [a protestant religion] after moving to [the Southeastern United States]. In El Salvador everyone is given a 2-week vacation during the Christmas season. They also celebrate “Holy Week” at Easter for two weeks each spring.

Through observation and experimentation I discovered that Ana’s dominant learning modality is auditory. We tried learning the multiplication facts by writing them repeatedly, using flash cards, building sets, and counting blocks. It was not until I played the facts to music with repetition that Ana began to memorize them.

I am now using this auditory modality with reading. I am providing books on tape with accompanying texts so Ana can follow the written word as the story is read to her. She can use these during school and is encouraged to take them home to share with her family. She is always very responsible and conscientious about returning them to school. Ana seems to perform better when instructions are given orally rather than written. In the computer lab she uses headphones to listen to stories, directions and vocabulary while she sees English and sometimes Spanish words.

Ana's reading on the county's reading standards is at the "exploring" level - reading is slow and choppy with occasional fluent reading of short familiar phrases. She has a limited sight vocabulary and understanding. However, listening comprehension is higher. After listening to a story, Ana can adequately retell it including characters, beginning, middle and end. Writing is between developing and focusing. Her topics are clear but development is incomplete. She uses minimal variety of word choice and sentence structure.

Ana's curriculum is modified because of her ESOL status and needs. Some modifications include having partners to give directions and explain them orally, rewording questions and assignments for improved comprehension, additional time allowed for task completion, allowing verbal responses to simple questions, and allowing her to use a bilingual picture dictionary.

APPENDIX E

TRICIA'S DESCRIPTION AND CASE STUDY

Assignment # 1 for December 17

Tricia O'Neal

Maria is Hispanic. Her mother and father are from Mexico. She has been at Springfield since kindergarten. She began in ESOL and was in the program for 1st and 2nd grade, and was exited at the end of 2nd. I have not had to make any modifications to her learning. She is a solid B student. When I conferenced with her mother we had a slight language barrier. Mom's English is not as good as Maria's. There are 3 younger siblings.

Maria is a good student, works well independently. Her weaknesses are in reading comprehension, word problems in math.

Maria Lopez: Case Study

By Tricia O' Neal

Initial Interview

Maria, a 3rd grade student, has been at our school since kindergarten. She was born in the Southwestern United States, but has lived most of her life in the Southeast. Her mother and father are from Mexico. She began in ESOL and was in the program for kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade. She exited ESOL at the end of 2nd grade. I have not had to make any modifications to her learning, she is a solid B student. When I conferenced with her mother we had a language barrier. Mom's English is not as good as Maria's. There are 3 younger siblings. Maria is a good student and works well independently. Her weaknesses are in reading comprehension and word problems in math.

Research Questions and Results

As we began meeting a couple of questions came to mind. 1) What is Maria's learning style? Is there a better way to teach this student to increase her knowledge and skills based on the way she learns? And 2) Would making a home visit help me to have a better understanding of Maria and her needs?

Home Visit

I set up a home visit with Maria's mom when we met during parent conferences. She seemed receptive to the visit. Maria was thrilled. I went to her house after school. She and her sister were playing in the living room. They were all very excited. I sat down with her mother and began asking my questions. I discovered quite a bit of things that I hadn't intended to ask.

Some of my questions her mother didn't fully understand and Maria was most helpful in translating. We still hit a few barriers but I tactfully moved on.

Maria's parents are from Mexico, her mother coming from a large city. Dad is a builder and mom is a homemaker. She told me she has had jobs in the past as housekeeper in a hotel, cafeteria worker, and baby-sitting. She is not working now because her husband wants her to stay home with the children. The two at home are 4 and 2 years.

I asked about Mrs. Lopez's schooling. Her husband went through high school, but she only had 6 years of elementary and 3 of middle school. She is a resident but not a citizen, so she doesn't go home often and misses her family. Her husband has family here. She moved to the United States, then got married.

When she was pregnant with Maria, her husband sent her to his relatives in the Southwest. That is why Maria was not born in the Southeast. The family speaks Spanish at home so Maria only knew Spanish until she attended Pre-K. Now a younger sister is in Pre-K. She and Maria are speaking a lot of English at home and sometimes it confuses Maria's mom. Dad speaks fairly good English but Mrs. Lopez wants to learn English so she can help her daughters in school and speak to her neighbors. Mrs. Lopez is concerned that Maria is losing some of her Spanish because she says she has forgotten some words. She encourages her daughters to speak Spanish at home. She is afraid they will lose the language.

I asked her what she sees as most important for Maria as a student and she feels it is to study hard and do what she is supposed to do. She would like her to work on writing. Mostly she means penmanship, and her social skills. It is important for her to get along and cooperate with other children. I asked what she saw as her role and it is to help with homework (even though her English is limited, and this bothers her). She reads Bible stories to Maria in Spanish.

We ended the interview with my last question, what does she feel about our school and its role. She said, “I’m Mexican and I have my culture and history and I like her to know it. But I like that she has friends from other cultures and races.” At the end of the interview she invited me to eat dinner, Maria had expected me to stay.

We had the most delicious soup and while we ate we discussed living in Mexico. I told her about my visit there and we talked a little of the city. She became more relaxed. After dinner she gave me a box of Mexican cookies and thanked me for coming. She said she was glad that I came because she wanted do know more about Maria’s teacher.

In conclusion, I had a very enjoyable visit and learned a lot about Maria and her family. Mostly I came to view this Hispanic family a little differently. They are very hard working people who have some of the same goals that I have for their child. I understand now the frustration that she feels at times. Maria’s mother wants to learn English and has called around. I am going to try to find other places where she can check. This visit has me considering doing this at the beginning of the next school year. The connection that I got with my student and the parent were invaluable.

Learning Styles

In looking at learning styles I did a little research into what I know and have done in the past on a personal level. I came up with a couple of forms that seemed student friendly. The three main areas I looked at were visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners. Based on the information I had I made a one-page questionnaire that a student could take. It asks them several questions about how they learn and hopefully will get them to think a little about learning (see attachment).

I gave the questionnaire to Maria and got some interesting results. Some of the ways she rated herself I have seen but others I wasn’t aware of. She rated herself as *strongly agree* on the

question, “I like coming up with new ideas and trying them out.” She very strongly likes to learn by seeing and watching and listening and talking about it. She didn’t agree that she likes to learn by reading and doing worksheets. These two fit with what I know about her, she has difficulty in comprehension and reading and understanding directions. This survey gave me some insight into Maria’s thinking.

In summary doing some sort of questionnaire or maybe a personal interview with students will give me a better idea how to plan my lesson. In Maria’s case I will make sure she has more opportunities to discuss things we are doing with a partner, and let her take off on her own ideas. Next year I will plan to give this to all my students. I few questions in mind but not really knowing what to expect. When I arrived her mother was in the kitchen working on dinner. Maria and her two younger sisters will rework the questions somewhat and follow up with students on some group discussion and personal writing about themselves and how they learn. I think it is important not only for teachers to know what ways she can best meet the needs of students but for students to understand how they can achieve the things they need to fit in the classroom.

How I Learn and What I Know

(Tricia's Questionnaire)

Read each question and circle the number that tells about you: 4 being strongly agree to 1 don't agree at all.

	Strongly Agree	Agree a little	Agree	Don't agree
1. I learn by reading about it.	4	3	2	1
2. I learn by watching demonstrations.	4	3	2	1
3. I learn by listening to the teacher and others.	4	3	2	1
4. I learn by doing things and making things.	4	3	2	1
5. I like a challenge.	4	3	2	1
6. I like trying out new ideas.	4	3	2	1
7. I like to sit in the same seat and dislike change.	4	3	2	1
8. I like to ask questions when I don't understand.	4	3	2	1
9. I like doing worksheets and using paper and pencil.	4	3	2	1
10. I enjoy talking about things with my classmates.	4	3	2	1

In the space below, tell:

One thing I know really well or am very good at:

What I would like to learn this year:

APPENDIX F

SUE ELLEN'S DESCRIPTION AND CASE STUDY

Student Description: Sue Ellen Simpson

I have chosen a 4th grade female student, Estafania, who has resided in the U. S. for approximately 11 months and is considered to be NEP (Non-English Proficient). Estafania came to Springfield at the beginning of this school year from another metropolitan-area school. In January, upon entering a U.S. school, Estafania scored 1 %ile on the LAB (Language Assessment Battery). This means that she had no English comprehension at that time and was unable to complete the test.

Estafania, born September, 1991, is 10 years old and from Mexico. She is the youngest of a family of four. She says that her father can speak some English and he is a kitchen manager at a local café. Her mother speaks a little English and works at a restaurant. She has an older brother that attends 6th grade at the middle school.

Estafania is a very sweet and obedient student that seems to be happy most of the time. She does not seem to be stressed by lack of understanding instruction, comprehension of curriculum content, or complexity of assignments. If she does not understand something she does not give up easily. She continues to try to get an explanation from the teacher until she is satisfied that she understands it well enough to complete an assignment satisfactorily.

Estafania says that she likes to read and she will read books in Spanish and English. However, she prefers books in Spanish.

Estafania Sandoval Jackson: A Case Study by Sue Ellen Simpson

Esafania Sandoval Jackson is a fourth grade student at Springfield Elementary School. The school is located in Lyman County which is in [a Southeastern state]. Estafania was born in Mexico where she lived until she moved to [this state] in January of last year. At that time she scored a 1%ile on the Language Assessment Battery (LAB). She was enrolled in 3rd grade with the support of ESOL classes at that time. At this time Estafania is a very enthusiastic 4th grader that is experiencing great success with learning English.

Estafania attends my ESOL class for two 50-minute segments every day. In the first segment we work on reading skills and written expression. In the second segment the students rotate through literacy centers after listening to an audiotape that accompanies a content area dictionary. They listen to and echo the correct pronunciation of the vocabulary words from the particular topic they are studying for the week. The vocabulary words are then used in a dialogue that is illustrated in the dictionary. After listening to this the students act out and chant the choral reading that is set to music on the tape. When this is completed the students rotate through the different centers that are teacher developed to enhance to topic of the week. They include listening to illustrated books on tape, completing worksheets, making flashcards, spelling, writing stories, computer games, and self-selected reading.

I wanted to learn more about Estafania as I was interested in the reason she seemed to be learning English with much more ease than her [LEP] peers. I felt like she would be a good candidate to help me discover which strategies are the most effective and their importance in language acquisition. I wanted to know what methods she felt had been most important in her second language acquisition. My main inquiry was to learn the importance of studying reading

strategies as well as vocabulary development and which had been most significant in gaining English competency.

When I met with Estafania's parents at her conference I discovered that her mother spoke very little English and her step-father was [born in America and not Hispanic]. He was extremely articulate and discussed the very supportive role he had been taking with helping Estafania with her schoolwork and her new language. It was evident that his modeling of good English in the home as well as assisting with her schoolwork had made an enormous impact on Estafania's progress. I continued to believe that Estafania was a good student for by focus and could clarify my investigation.

I continued to work with the students using the same format: spending half of their time with me on reading and the other half on vocabulary and other literacy skills. During the reading segment I use the Benchmark Word Identification Program (Gaskins et al., 1986) along with reading tradebooks. The Benchmark Word Identification Program has proven to be an excellent resource for teaching reading strategies to my ESOL students. It is formatted using a repetitive patter of activities that the students become familiar and comfortable with. I supplement with the Ready Readers to give the students actual books to read. The students learn new vocabulary with both programs.

After administering an Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) to Estafania, I confirmed that I was using the correct reading level for her instruction. Even though Estafania was able to read fluently at a higher level, her understanding of the text was limited. I also used some writing samples to assess her stage of writing according to Lyman County Writing Standards. [These standards correlate with state writing stages which range from 1 (low) to 6 (high). A passing

grade on the 5th grade writing test is a 3 and expectations for 4th grade level are to write at stage 4] I used one writing sample in English and two writing samples in Spanish for this assessment. Estafania's writing stage was a 4 in Spanish and a 3 in English.

After focusing on Estafania's language and reading learning this year and discussing with her what strategies and methods she feels have been the most beneficial to her I have concluded the following. ESOL students need to spend an equal amount of time on reading as they do on vocabulary development. As they become more skilled in English they will also increase vocabulary understanding. Complementing reading with vocabulary study will increase reading comprehension. ESOL students also need instruction in grammar to facilitate better writing skills.

I have determined from my study of this particular student that I should continue teaching reading for one of the segments each day. I should also continue the cooperative literacy center time with the addition of a center concentrating on English grammar. I feel that this will help me to be a better facilitator to my students learning a very difficult language.

From my study in the inquiry group I have learned how to administer an Informal Reading Inventory, assess writing stages, and learned some new strategies for the teaching of reading and written expression. I also reviewed the importance of the teacher familiarizing herself with the students' family backgrounds and their home environments. I believe that all this has made me a more effective teacher.

APPENDIX G

SOURCES OF HOME-SCHOOL CONFLICT

Individualism	Collectivism
Child as individual	Child as part of the group
Independence	Helpfulness
Praise (positive self-esteem)	Criticize (normative behavior)
Cognitive skills	Social skills
Oral expression	Listening to authority
Parents'role is to teach	Teacher's role is to educate
Personal property	Sharing

(Based on Quiroz & Greenfield, 1996)

APPENDIX H

PROTOCOL TO GATHER INFORMATION

Adapted from Brisk & Harrington, 2000

Student Name _____ Grade _____ Teacher _____

External and family Characteristics

Country or place of child or family's origin _____

Reason family came to United States _____

Parents' occupation Mother _____ Father _____

Parents' education Mother _____ Father _____

Parents' language and literacy ability (native and English) _____

_____

Uses of literacy at home (specify languages) _____

_____

Family attitudes toward native language and culture _____

Language(s) used at home for speaking _____

Language(s) used at home for reading and writing _____

Siblings, sexes and ages _____

What do the parents like best about this child? _____

What is this child's role in the family? (helpful one, funny one, studious one, etc. _____

_____

Personal Characteristics

Age _____

Level of oral proficiency in first language _____

Level of oral proficiency in second language _____

School experience in United States _____

Language(s) used in school _____

School experience in home country _____

Where _____ How long _____

Language(s) used in school _____

Attitudes toward native language _____

Attitudes toward English _____

Personality traits _____

Interests _____

Home responsibilities / chores _____

Family skills / trades / knowledge _____

Where does the family spend summers? _____

Characteristics as a Reader and Writer

Language(s) in which literacy was initiated _____

Literacy level in first language (how determined) _____

Literacy level in English (how determined) _____

Attitude toward reading and writing _____

Language preference for reading and writing _____

Preferred strategies for reading _____

Preferred strategies for writing _____

Other characteristics _____

APPENDIX I

READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE INQUIRY GROUP

Session #1

Preparation: Personal autobiographies Description of focal student

Session #2

Preparation: Choose a topic of inquiry (examples provided)

Continued sharing as in session #1 for those who were absent.

Session #3

Preparation: Read chapter 4, Brisk and Harrington (2000): Approaches with Choice of Focus

Respond in journal about readings or group discussion

Mini-lesson: Reciprocal teaching strategy workshop with handouts provided

Session #4

Preparation: Fictional writing assignment: Write your students' "autobiography" to include life at home using the first language and at school using English. Use this to help determine what stereotypes you may be holding about the child's culture or how you may be prejudging the child.

Read chapter 2, Brisk and Harrington (2000): Approaches with focus on writing

Mini-lesson: Introduce Bridging Cultures framework

Handout: Rosthstein-Fisch, Greenfield, and Trumball (1999). Bridging cultures with classroom strategies. *Educational Leadership 56* (7) 64-67.

Session #5

Preparation: Read chapter 4, Brisk and Harrington: Approaches with focus on reading

In Group: Read Chapter 3, *Bridging Cultures* (2001): The Cross-Cultural Parent-Teacher Conference

Handout: Quiroz, Greenfield, and Altchech (1999). Bridging cultures with a parent-teacher conference. *Educational Leadership 56* (7) 68-70.

Shared local newspaper article about Black History Month controversy

Shared local newspaper article about Asian stereotypes that supported the Bridging Cultures framework.

Session #6

Preparation: Quiroz, Greenfield, and Altchech (1999) handout (above)

Shared experiences with cross-cultural conferences

Mini-lesson: Informal Reading Inventory introduction

In group: Read Wells and Chang-Wells (1992) Chapter 1: Introduction to Collaborative Research in Multilingual Schools

Session #7

Mini-lesson: Using the Informal Reading Inventory to guide instruction; writing conferences.

Doreen shared an article from NEA about conferencing at a school in Tacoma, Washington.

Handouts on culturally relevant teaching:

Summary of bulleted points based on Moll, L. C. (1988). Some key issues in teaching Latino students. *Language Arts, 65* (5) 465-472.

Summary of bulleted points based on Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal 32* (3) 465-491.

Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., and Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory into Practice 31* (2) 132-141.

Brandts, L. (1999). Are pullout programs sabotaging classroom community in our elementary schools? *Primary Voices K-6 7* (3) 9-16.

Session #8

Helped teachers interpret their IRIs.

Mini-lesson: Theory – how teachers connect theory to practice; sociocultural learning theory; ZPD. If you know your personal teaching theory, you can use it as a guidepost to help make daily decisions in the classroom.

Discussion about students served in ESOL who only speak English

Session #9

Discussed local newspaper article about the “Failing schools” list

Mini-lesson: Sue Ellen presented ESOL eligibility guidelines

Vicky shared results of her home visit and final case study results

Cathy shared home involvement project and results of home visit

Session #10

Discussions on staff development

Presented case studies: Cathy and Sue Ellen. (Doreen turned hers in later in the week)

Sue Ellen shared Benchmark reading by analogies strategy.

Discussed changes in classroom practice, parent interactions, learning from peers.